

My Testimony

Thank you for the invite to give my testimony at ViZion's "I don't go to church" service.

Family Life

I was born and brought up in Perth with a younger sister and brother before moving to Helensburgh with Debbie in 2004.

My mum passed away in 2011. Her side of the family were believers, and it was their faith that sowed the seeds of faith in my own life. My father didn't come to know the Lord till a few weeks before he died in 2018 but, praise the Lord he confessed Jesus as his saviour in those last few days of his life.

Now, my mum's family were from the Island of Lewis and I have a lot of memories from those summers in Stornoway.

Her family were strong Church of Scotland, Free Church of Scotland and Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland members and some were involved in ministry but while they were very staunch in following the Bible there was also a lot of legalism. This was a nightmare on a Sunday during school holidays when we weren't allowed out to play or watch TV. In these times on a Sunday, I used to get really bored so would tease and annoy my wee brother and sister! Worst part is that I would often trick my parents into thinking they started it so they would get into trouble instead of me.

I know now that we're born sinners. Nobody teaches their child to lie and be mean to their siblings but if we're honest most kids do it to each other sometimes!

While visiting Lewis as a youngster in the holidays I started trying to read the books in the house, but they were often hard to understand. They were all biblical ones, but I was most interested in the one my granddad had, his Bible.

I was interested in this one because he had it with him for his own reading and what we called 'the books' a time of family devotional and prayer. He did this everyday morning and night with amazing dedication.

My Granddad's life was one of prayer and he always said, "don't underestimate the power of prayer". My aunty Marian would also remind me often of the power of prayer and its importance in your walk with Jesus.

As George Mueller said "Prayer is not overcoming God's reluctance. It is laying hold of God's willingness."

My Granddad glowed with a presence of peace and humbleness about his nature. I knew he got it from this Bible and in prayer.

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Before and after.

I attended church and Sunday school at Perth Knox Free Church where the Rev. David Paterson was minister and Miss McLennan was my Sunday school teacher. She also taught at my school and did Scripture Union.

These were instrumental days of my life and I'm so glad my mother took me, my sister and brother to church, where seeds of the Gospel were planted.

The influence of these people in my life was invaluable in growing to know Jesus.

There was a children's story that David Paterson taught us of it was called "**Timothy String**", David had a prop of a boy's head called Timothy with a long piece of string hanging down from the neck.

The story was related to Jesus speaking of the Narrow and Wide Gates in **Matthew 7:13-14 Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. 14 Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.**

David Paterson had a picture board; I can't remember what was on it but there were various places on the board that where Timothy had sinned in his life.

Each time he sinned; David Paterson would tie a knot on the string to represent that sin.

Timothy by this time had a few knots on him and on the story board, there was **two gates, one narrow gate** by the way of the CROSS and **one wide gate**.

As the story went on, Timothy knew, **one way** was easy, and the **other way** was hard, he had to choose which gate to go through, and I understood as a young child that the **narrow way** would lead me to eternal life to Heaven! The **broad way** would lead to destruction in hell.

Timothy String chose to go through the **narrow gate**. He chose to go by the Cross, where Jesus died and shed His blood for us, He said sorry for being a sinner and repented, turning from his sins.

And as the head was pulled through the gate the knots representing all that sin broke away lose to where there were no more knots, **NO MORE SIN**.

When I was converted

All of these early seeds being planted led to my conversion as a young boy. I was around 7 years old, and I was up in the Island of Lewis.

I used to have a picture on my bedroom wall in my Granddads house of a wee boy kneeling at his bed.

So, one night, I went on the floor at my bed like the boy and prayed my heart out to the Lord telling Him I want to know Him like my grandad did and to save me, forgive me for my sins and to come into my life.

I wanted what Timothy String had, I believed Jesus died on the cross for my sins and had all my sins past, present and future taken away.

I cried to sleep that night in the presence of the Holy Spirit. In the matter of that single night, I woke up next day with something I can't describe. It was a sense of peace that the Lord knew me, and I was safe in His hands.

I was a changed, regenerated young boy, and knew that I wanted to serve Jesus. I was on fire for Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit in me was strong.

I remember coming back home from the Isle of Lewis and I told my Sunday school teacher Miss McLennan that I got saved, and she understood!

I loved attending Sunday school and the yearly bus trip. The older I got we had youth clubs at the manse where Mr Paterson would answer all my questions and I loved the fellowship with my church friends.

My mother took us to the Gospel Hall in Perth where they had a wooden hut on the Letham Road. The preachers Jack Hay and John Campbell were passionate about Jesus and after they preached, they had a question-and-answer quiz where if you got the right bible answer they would throw a sweet - of course I loved getting the answer right! As Debbie will tell you I still love a good sweetie!

In those young teen years, I used to have a radio by my bed and late at night I used to twiddle the tuner to listen to foreign garbage, but I came across Trans World Radio and found Billy Graham on Hour of Decision and I loved listening to it.

Drifting away

However, in later teen years and my twenties I drifted away from the Lord and lived a prodigal life, I backslid, and the world got in the way. I spent lots of my time training as a sprinter doing athletics and started an apprenticeship as a decorator in Perth where I had my own business for several years.

I still prayed to Jesus at times, and I had moments of "getting right with God", but in all honesty, they weren't heartfelt, and I had no love or hunger for the Bible or to hear God voice.

But God didn't give up on me. He never let me go. I was the sheep who went astray but He came searching for me. Matthew 18:12

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In my early 20's during I went through an especially difficult time in my life.

I got into drinking, partying, and other things that go along with that broken lifestyle. Drinking became more of a need, like an addiction.

I hated the grip alcohol had on me; I was a real mess with it. I had no control of my life.

But through desperate times I still had a Gideon New Testament Bible, and I would read the Bible verse helps that were in the beginning of the Bible.

These helped me with prayer & seeking help, guidance, and forgiveness.

In these times, I always felt the Holy Spirit, I felt His love, "I love you Peter" He would say, I would crumble in His presence. He would convict me of my sin, and I knew I needed to change my ways but then I would pull away and regress back into the pattern of worldly ways. This went on for quite a few years.

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BUT then one morning a strong tug of the Holy Spirit really got me, it was like a supernatural thunderbolt.

I wasn't sure what was going on but all I wanted was Jesus, I was craving Him.

I felt a need to get back to church and went back to enjoy the fellowship and ministry at Perth Knox Free Church where the Rev. Duncan MacLeod was now minister.

Under Duncan's preaching the Holy Spirit was really convicting me.

I drifted back and forward from church. Duncan always called me the prodigal son, but he was so gracious towards me. I think deep down he was angry with me for the way I lived but he knew if he approached me about these things, I would have put up more walls. I was stubborn and proud, and he knew it!

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So, in my late 20s my Christian life was a rollercoaster, and I was still a real mess. I was watching and listening to prosperity teaching on the radio and TV, and this gave me a false view of the gospel.

I was a living example of Ephesians 4:14 *Where I was being, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men...*

I was watching "**Hyper-grace liberal teachers**", teaching that you can do anything sinful, and you don't need to confess your sins because you have no responsibility for them.

Conversely, I was listening to other false teachers of the "**holiness movement**" that teach you can and should live in sinless perfection like Christ if you really are saved. I was really confused by all these mixed messages.

Meeting Debbie

I met Debbie in 2002 and later she became my wife. We didn't have the perfect relationship before the Lord, but we had faithful Christian friends who supported us and Pastor Kevin Gresham who helped restore us after we repented.

Debbie and Kevin helped me straighten out some of my wrong theology. Kevin helped guide me away from the grips of liberal and legalistic teachings and I was beginning to disentangle myself from the false things I had learned previously but it was a slow process.

Things got better.

In 2005 I was looking at a website called Sermon Audio and I found the ministry of the Free Presbyterian Church and listened in to Dr. Alan Cairns of Greenville USA. He has since passed away, but his preaching moved the spirit within me. I felt a stirring in my heart to dig deeper into the Word of God.

I would listen in regularly to Dr. Cairns and through his verse by verse preaching I was beginning to understand the Word of God more accurately, but I was still drawn to listen to some of the old prosperity teachers I had listened to in the past. Each week the Spirit convicted me to 'tune out'

these people and to listen to preachers who were faithful to the Word, teaching exegetically instead of the 'feel good pastors' who I was beginning to realise rarely mentioned the Bible in their sermons.

The closer I walked with Jesus the more I felt years of tension and confusion fall away.

Now I have a restored relationship with Christ, I am the prodigal who came home. I returned to the Father and He embraced me with mercy and lovingkindness. It's great to walk and talk with Jesus every day. I have never turned back to that prodigal life in over 20 years, but I know that it's important to remain walking closely with the Lord.

When you become a Christian, Jesus takes all your sins upon Him and He gives you all His Righteousness. As you've heard in my testimony, I didn't have the perfect walk with Christ. I fell into sinful ways, and I am constantly accused by the devil for my failures. But I tell the devil that I have the righteousness of Christ my life. (2 Cor. 5:21)

The path through the **narrow gate** for me, was a tough journey, I have had many bumps on the route, and many obstacles in my Christian walk, through trials and tribulations.

But through that journey the Lord has strengthened me, never left me, or given up on me.

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I pray that my testimony might be a blessing to you all and my hope is that if haven't already professed faith in Christ as your Saviour you might go away from today considering all that you've heard, and you consider your own eternal destination. The way of salvation may be narrow but it's also liberating.

I'll finish with these last verses which I can attest to being true -

John 8: 31-32 "So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him (those who believed He was the Messiah), "if you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth and the truth will set you free."

Thank you.