

Testimony

Micah Wilder Tells His Story

Former Mormon missionary finds Jesus after attempting to convert Baptist pastor



Growing up, Micah Wilder was the model Mormon. From rigorously observing the laws of his religion to serving in leadership positions in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Wilder did everything he could to establish right standing with God.

“In my family, the Mormon religion wasn't just the church we attended on a Sunday morning. It was really part of the identity and the fabric of our lives,” he told *The Christian Post*. “Mormonism was who we were. Everything else was subservient to our religious identity in Mormonism.”

“We were the prototypical wonderful, happy family. But yet, we didn't have the knowledge of God in Christ,” he added.

After graduating high school, for one semester Wilder attended Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah, where his mother worked. During that time, he worked in a Mormon temple to prepare himself for the most important two years of his life: his full-time LDS mission.

“Mormonism is a works-based faith,” he said. “So I was faithful in my church attendance. I tithed, I followed the moral codes and went to the Mormon temple and so on, believing these things contributed to my right standing with God. I longed for intimacy with Him.”

“I tried so hard to live out the tenets of my faith. I had a desire to be everything that I thought that I needed to be, according to the standard of my religion,” he recalled. “Of course, unfortunately, that bred a burden on my shoulders where there was an uncertainty as to whether or not I'd ever done enough.”

At the age of 19, Wilder was sent to Orlando, Florida, as a missionary for the LDS church. Just months into his mission, the teen confronted a Baptist minister, Pastor Alan Benson, with the intention of converting him to Mormonism.

“I was as confident as a Mormon missionary as you would ever be, and I really had a sincere desire to bring other people to what I believe was the truth,” he said.

Wilder viewed Christians as a specific challenge, he said, because growing up, he was taught that evangelicals practiced a “cheap faith,” that they believed their lives didn't necessarily need to reflect the faith they claimed to profess.

“We were taught that Christians would claim to be born again and then they would use that grace as a license to sin and to live as they pleased in the flesh,” he said. “Of course, I didn't understand what grace meant and what the Gospel really means and how saving faith transforms the heart and the individual.”

Benson listened to Wilder's presentation before gently responding with his own.

“He presented the Gospel to me,” Wilder said. “He told me about the depth of God's love for me in Christ and that Christ's love for mankind was so great that He died on the cross and paid for our sins in full measure. He told me that God's grace is given to us as a gift, that our sins can be washed away and forgiven. It was the first time I'd heard the Gospel presented that way.”

The idea that salvation and eternal life are a free gift from God and did not need to be earned was “not only completely contradictory to what I had taught and believed growing up,” but it was also “something that I would have seen as foolishness,” Wilder shared.

“My main response was, ‘That’s just too simple,’” he said.

“I was very taken aback by that and felt unprepared to really defend my own faith because a lot of these Bible passages I never really heard growing up, so I didn’t necessarily have a defense for them. It was a very frustrating experience for me, even to the point that I would say I was angry.”

The pastor then presented Wilder with a challenge.

“He told me to read the Bible as a child,” Wilder said. “Essentially, he was encouraging me to approach God’s Word without presuppositions; to separate it from the religious lenses of Mormonism, and just approach it in humility and seeking for truth, allowing God through His Word to reveal the truth.”

His interest piqued, the devout Mormon spent the next 20 months reading the New Testament from start to finish, over and over again.

Over time, his eyes were opened to the truth of the Gospel: “I realized I could have good standing with God, not based upon my goodness or our righteousness and not contingent upon my works or efforts or merits, but based solely on the finished work and merits of Christ.”

Less than a month left on his two-year mission, Wilder was confronted by his LDS leaders about his newfound beliefs. His mission cut short, the young man returned to Utah to face discipline from church leaders.

“I was told that I was filled with the spirit of the devil and being deceived,” he said. “I was told I was on the path to Hell. They threatened to excommunicate me because of my testimony.”

Undeterred, Wilder shared his discovery with his family, friends and high school girlfriend, Alicia, who at the time was a student at BYU. Incredibly, he said, the “dominoes started falling, one by one.”

“God worked in their hearts and minds,” he said. “Alicia read the Bible and embraced the true Gospel. My mother and father left the Mormon church, and my mother walked away from her job. They lost everything in the world but they gained life in Christ, which we know is the greatest trade that we can ever make.”

Wilder shares his story in his new book, “Passport to Heaven: The True Story of a Zealous Mormon Missionary Who Discovers the Jesus He Never Knew”.

.... *Gleaned from Christian Post*