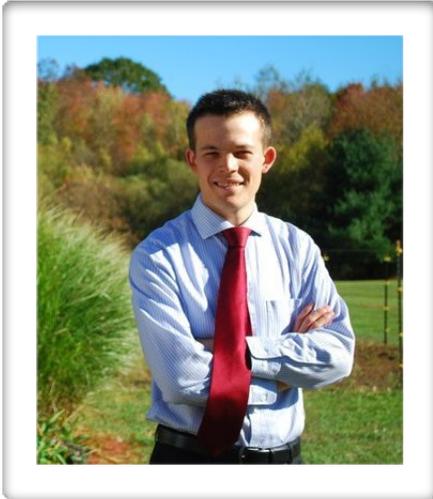


Young Yukon Man Experiences God

by Charles Brunner



I grew up in the Yukon wilderness on a trapline and outside the small community of Dawson City, home of the "Klondike Goldrush". A trapline is an area of land in which the Government leases the rights to trap animals for their fur (called pelts). Dawson City is 3000 kilometres north of Vancouver, B.C. The Yukon is very sparsely populated with a population of 34,000 people within 474,000 km².

My father was a trapper in the winter and a carpenter in the summer. Our trapline is the drainage of the south fork of the Klondike River. It is 1000km². It is very remote and rustic: the running water is in the river. Growing up, we used wood heat and had no electric lights, TV or computer. We used to spend about half the year on the trapline.

As a child, I was taught to do my best to live ethically; however, God was out of the picture. My parents had been raised in religious systems, but had left them in their teenage years. I remember my mother saying her

minister once told her that he didn't believe Jesus was really the Son of God. My family taught me that Jesus was a good man who had set an example of how to live a good life.

When I was young, I can recall flirting with the idea of a God. For instance, I would sometimes test God while fishing-- "If there is a God, let me catch a fish on my next cast." If I did catch one, it could always conveniently be explained away as 'chance.' Looking back, I realize I was a pagan of sorts, not a self-proclaimed pagan, but a pagan in practice. My family always celebrated the solstices with bonfires and festivities, and I learned to love nature and to celebrate her bounty. I had no experience with churches except for a trip there once a year at Christmas Eve for the carols.

Growing up, I remember reading a book of Bible stories. I enjoyed the Old Testament, since it was exciting and colourful, but lost interest when reading the New Testament stories. It was all meaningless words to me. I grew up believing the world came into being by chance and that somehow humans came about from primordial organisms. In my early teens, I was very determined that no God existed and was quite adamant about the fact. This view was supported by what I had been told about the world's origins. I didn't like it when other people talked about God around me and considered it offensive.

Later as I entered high school, I began to consider that a god might have created the world, but took no further interest in human affairs. I was aware of the fact that existence makes much more sense with a Creator than without one. This was mostly due to having friends who were involved in a Christian youth group, who sometimes succeeded in persuading me to join them. Unfortunately, although I learned a great deal of songs and 'life lessons,' I never heard the Good News about Jesus Christ in a way that I could understand and to which I could respond.

Do-it-yourself Religion

When I was around 15, I started to think about becoming a Christian. I had no idea of how to do this or what it entailed. However I did know that it would give you a "relationship with God" who would show you "His plan for your life." I determined to accomplish this on my own, without input from the Christians in my life.

I started to read books by so-called 'Liberal Christians', which were the only books on Christianity my parents owned. These books told me that one could partake of spirit (their name for God) by living ethically and by acknowledging the truths of all belief systems. At first I accepted these views, and began to live a religious life, trying not to do wrong things and saying certain rote prayers every night. I did not view going to church as a necessary part of my new self-made religion. I did **not** believe that Jesus was the Son of God, that He died for the

sins of the world, that He was raised from the dead, and that He offers salvation as a free gift apart from religious works. In short, I was not a Christian by any stretch of the imagination.

Travelling to Sri Lanka

In the spring of 2006, my family travelled to Sri Lanka where we lived for two months with a Buddhist family. My first real encounter with Truth about God happened on my first day in the country. Our Sinhalese hostess, Ganga, decided to bring us to a temple, since it was a holy day for Buddhists. After several hours of driving, we arrived at the temple at dusk. She expected us to participate in the usual rituals, with which my parents had no problem, though they didn't believe any of it.

First, they burnt incense outside the temple and then walked around it. They then went inside and offered flowers before a huge golden idol, which was lying as though sleeping. It was a rather surreal experience-- idolatry like this is so foreign to Westerners. Even with my insufficient knowledge of the Bible, I knew that idolatry is abhorrent to God. In Scripture, idolatry represents all false worship. False worship is worshipping something other than God, including things such as drugs, alcohol or sex. I felt unable to participate in this worship and handed the flowers to my parents who made the offerings in my stead.

Afterwards, on the steps of the temple, I told my parents, to their great surprise, that I was a Christian which was why I couldn't make the offerings. In the temple, I had a real sense of God's holiness and His wrath against false worship--Romans 1:18 says "*For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress* the truth in unrighteousness.*" Religion, which can be defined as "man's efforts to please God", only leads souls to Hell. God requires one work from humanity, "*that you believe on Him whom He has sent*" (Jn. 6:29). This is not a 'work' in the sense of a religious observance, but the exercising of faith in what the Lord Jesus has done on our behalf-- I was very uncomfortable telling my parents that I was a Christian and didn't feel at all right about things, because I suspected that I didn't really get what it means to be a Christian.

God's Spirit at work

In the fall of 2006, I moved with my mother to Whitehorse, the capital of the Yukon to attend a different school for my last year of high school. This was 600km away from my hometown. I made plans to visit every building called a 'church' in Whitehorse, after which I would decide on the one that most suited my fancy. However, I only attended one, before staying there for the year. On my first visit, my mother asked Mr. Williams, the minister, about me getting baptized. She did so without my support--I thought she was getting ahead of herself!

Mr. Williams gave me two books which gave a reasoned explanation of the truth claims of the Christian faith and a film version of the Gospel of Matthew. My greatest obstacle to faith at that time was the historical trustworthiness and accuracy of the Bible, specifically the NT account of the Lord Jesus. I also needed to come to terms with the Lord's claims about Himself. After years of searching, I was fully persuaded by what I read. I recognized that Jesus Christ was who He claimed to be, the promised Saviour, sent by His Father so that "*whosoever believeth in Him might not perish but have everlasting life*" (Jn. 3:16).

Saved, Labour Day weekend, 2006

On Labour Day weekend 2006, after watching the film version of the Gospel of Matthew, I trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ as my personal Saviour and was born again. I recognized that my sins were enough to drag me down to Hell and that the Lord Jesus had endured God's wrath in my stead and paid the penalty my sins deserved. When I believed in Him, an exchange took place: He took my sin, for which He died, and gave me His righteousness, the fruit of a life of constant obedience to His Father's will. 2 Cor. 5:21 says, "*He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*" The Lord Jesus took our sin in order to save us from the penalty of sin. By trusting in His shed blood, we can know for certain that we will spend eternity with Him in heaven.

In 2007, I moved to Sackville, New Brunswick to attend Mount Allison University. I graduated this May (2011) with a B.A. with Honours in Classics and Minors in Latin, Greek and Religious Studies. During my first two years at Mount Allison I attended the local Anglican Church, the same denomination I associated with in Whitehorse. At this church I became a Lay Reader, a layman licensed to preach and lead services. However, I

soon realized that this church was very different. It was as bound by tradition and ritual as a 'church' in the Catholic system. Instead of clearly preaching the Gospel, the minister taught that the baptism of infants was the second birth.

I became disillusioned with Anglicanism because of the heresies taught by the national organization, such as denying the uniqueness of Christ and promoting and endorsing practises that were clearly in conflict with the teachings of God's Word. The local church in Sackville did not teach some of these things, but as I read the Bible, I realized more and more that its fundamental practices were contrary to New Testament Christianity. Also, personal conversation with other members of the church revealed that I was perhaps the only one who had trusted in Christ alone for salvation and had been born again.

In the spring of 2009, my friend Kristen Good (now Mrs. J. E. Smith) invited me to observe the breaking of bread at the Moncton, NB assembly of Christians gathered to the Lord Jesus Christ. I was struck by how the manner of meeting seemed to be like the simple practice of the earliest churches. I also was intrigued by the observance of the headcovering (1 Corinthians 11), which, while I knew was taught in the New Testament, is almost never observed in denominational churches today. Coming from Anglicanism, the absence of a hierarchy of clergy and laity was obvious at once. After the meeting, one of the Christians gave me a little booklet explaining how it is possible to meet as a New Testament church today. I have kept this tract, have read it many times and have looked up the Scripture verses.

When I returned to the Yukon to work for the summer, I resolved to go back to the Moncton assembly when I returned to Mount Allison in the fall. After attending one final service at the Anglican Church, I became a regular observer at the Breaking of Bread meeting – also known as the Lord's Supper. I was baptized on January 23, 2010 according to the New Testament pattern. It took me some time to ask the elders about baptism, because I had been 'baptized' by pouring while in the Anglican Church. I proudly thought that my 'baptism' should be good enough! I changed my mind once I saw that the Scriptures quite clearly teach that baptism is by immersion. Since then, I have enjoyed fellowship in local churches known as assemblies of believers.

Are you saved?

My prayer for you, reader, if you have not trusted in the Lord Jesus as your Saviour, is that you would settle the matter between you and God while there is still time.