

My Testimony

by Richard Beaulieu



A testimony is defined as an open declaration or a profession of faith, and I have heard and read many testimonies of harrowing circumstances which highlight a litany of sin and the very real danger that sin can have to keep one from God. Accounts of crime, addiction, infidelity, and broken relationships are often highlighted to provide the backdrop to contrast one's life before and after salvation. Take the Apostle Paul's testimony as an example. He was a zealot whose life was dedicated to persecuting the church. What drama is read into the lines of his conversion on the road to Damascus. On the other hand, there are also testimonies where the events provide less of a backdrop of sin and for whom the drama may appear to be missing, however, the danger is no less real. My story is the latter and as you will see no less dangerous and just as remarkable.

I cannot remember a time where I did not believe in God. My grandmother and the catechism lessons of my early school days impressed on me that there was a God. However, my relationship with the invisible God was a difficult and fearful one. I was taught that my hope of eternal life was based on my works and in having received the sacraments of the Catholic faith. As a child, I have a clear recollection of measuring my life on God's scales where my good works were put up against my sin, and whichever way the scales tipped my fate would be sealed. As I became older, fear was replaced with apathy for the things of God. The liturgy of the mass was shrouded in mystery and symbolism that made little sense to me.

I wish I could tell you that my introduction to the gospel was based on a spiritual journey, but the truth of the matter is that I came under the sound of the gospel because as a teenager I was invited to a youth group meeting on a Friday evening, and I accepted because I knew that there would be girls there. Not to be disappointed, there were girls there. Youth group was a happy distraction from spending Friday evenings at home. It would not be long however that I would long for what the others had. The Christians struck me as genuine and I was jealous of their relationship with God. I marvelled at how their prayers were conversations with God, not of the repetitious nature of prayer I had been accustomed to. Youth meetings were soon complemented with attendance at Sunday school. Although my parents were not thrilled at this, the compromise was that I was to attend the Catholic church on Saturday evening if I was to attend Sunday school the next day.

I began to pray as Christians prayed. I memorized verses and sang chorus. A friend and I learned how to play guitar one summer in a tent so that we could lead the singing at youth meetings. The Christian youth had become my friends and we spent a lot of time together in and outside of chapel sponsored activities.

One Sunday, our Sunday school teacher announced that he was to have some surgery and asked for prayer. He simply asked for a show of hands of those of us who are Christians who would endeavour to pray for him. As I saw hands going up all around me, not to be left out I raised my hand, and for the first time counted myself as one of the Christians and promised to pray, and I kept my promise.

My competitive nature is what motivated me to study scripture and to memorize verses. The youth group travelled to monthly youth rallies where the various assembly youth competed for bragging rights and a plaque that would be brought back to the home assembly at the end of the year. We memorized entire chapters of scripture and could recite where every comma and semicolon was found in the passage.

I was involved in a 2 day seminar to learn how to witness to others in preparation for a city-wide outreach in the showing of the film 'A Thief in the Night'. Herein lay the danger for me. I had convinced myself that I was saved, by the simple association of being counted among the Christians and engaged in the things that Christians did. I prayed, read scripture, and was participating in the Great Commission of sharing my faith with others. I was blind.

The movie was shown on three separate evenings and for the first two evenings I joined the Christians gathered in a classroom to pray for those who were in the auditorium watching the movie. At the end of the movie an invitation was made to the audience to stay behind and speak to someone about what they had seen. I would put to use the two day seminar on leading others to Christ. On the third and last evening, I was headed to the classroom to pray however, I felt compelled to see the movie that so many were touched by and to whom we had witnessed. I excused myself from prayer and watched the film.

As the gospel was presented in this end time's movie, for the first time I realized that if the Lord was to rapture His church, I would be left behind. I was confused and so on the ride home; I spoke to our Sunday school teacher and asked if it were possible to think we are saved without actually being saved. He answered yes and encouraged me to not put off a decision for Christ.

So it would be that on February 3rd, 1974, I would kneel at my bed and profess my need of a Saviour and that my hope for eternal salvation would rest squarely on the Lord Jesus Christ and the finished work of Calvary. The movie was to be my road to Damascus. For an entire year I lived dangerously in the idea that I had been saved. It took the Holy Spirit to open my eyes to the lie I had been living.

I am thankful for the people the Lord put in my life that played a role in my spiritual journey. Some of those young people are still friends today, and the Sunday school teacher, he is no other than the editor of this website for whom the Lord gave a vision for youth ministry, for which many go on for the Lord.