

Testimony

Joe Labbe Tells His Story

Church! Church! Church! – But No Peace. The Day My Life Was Changed

Off to Church We Go

I was born in northern Maine and raised in a very strict religious family. As far back as I can remember we were taken to church every Sunday and the only time we would miss is when we were really sick. Snow would never close the church doors. If we woke up to three feet of snow on a Sunday morning that wouldn't stop us. We went to church no matter what.

House Rules – No Church, No Play

When I became a teenager, my older brother and I would go out Saturday night and party. But even then, we knew that if we woke up with a headache we had better go to church because the house rules required that if we were too sick to go to church, we were too sick to go out later in the day. So we made sure we went to church.

Leaving My Girlfriend Behind

When I was eighteen years old I left Maine to find work in Connecticut. I was dating Lil at the time but things happened so quickly I didn't get a chance to tell her I was heading out. I had a last minute opportunity for a ride to Connecticut so I took it. Once I arrived in the new state I called Lil to let her know what happened and where I was.

Finding a New Church

One of the first items of business once I got settled into my new location was to find a church. Because of my family upbringing I wanted to continue going to church on Sunday. I went out looking for a church and when I saw one that looked okay I decided to attend a service. When the sermon started I was startled because I couldn't understand a word the priest was saying. I decided to get up and leave. Someone asked me at the door if I was all right and I said I didn't feel good. Later I found out that it was a Polish church and the priest was of course, speaking Polish.

Married and Children

By the middle of the following year Lil and I were married. As our children started to come along, our church attendance declined. We went to church very seldom. It seemed that we were looking for excuses not to go to church. We both felt we weren't getting anything out of it so why go? It was easier to stay home.

Sporadic Church Attendance

During the years of raising our children, we found ourselves going back to church many times only to stop going again. Maybe the solution was to try other churches of the same religion. We did that and we enjoyed them for awhile but then we'd stop going.

Guilt Feelings about Missing Church

After a long period of time when we didn't go to church at all, I found myself feeling guilty – especially when I'd walk past our church. So I decided that I would secretly start going to church by myself. After I did this for several weeks, Lil asked me where I was going every Sunday morning. I told her I had been going to church. It

was then we decided to go together again as a family and give it one more try. Once again this failed to satisfy us and we left.

No More Religion for me, thanks!

It was during this time that I had enough of religion and decided I didn't want any more. I started to fill up my time enjoying the things of the world and kept very busy with work and pleasures.

Lil Wasn't Happy Either

Also during this time, Lil was determined to search for something that was missing in her life. She just wasn't happy. She started going to many different kinds of churches. When she would come home she would tell me how she enjoyed it and asked me to come with her the next time. I told her: "*No!*", but then she would go to another service and ask me yet again to come along. Finally I told her: "*You can go anywhere you please, but don't ask me to go.*" Many times she came home very excited thinking she found what she was looking for but in time she still wasn't satisfied.

Curious About the Tent in Town

It was during these months of searching that she heard about a Gospel tent being pitched in Terryville. On the way to visit our friends, we drove past this Gospel Tent on its opening night. I noticed Lil looking at the tent and I didn't want to look at it fearing that she would want to try that 'religion' too. Monday night she wanted to go, but it was my night out and I needed the car. She called her best friend and asked a favour for a ride to the gospel meeting. Her friend was happy to take her.



Lil Finally Finds What She's Been Looking For

Lil told me that night she knew she had found what she's been looking for. "*These men are telling the truth.*" She didn't need more religion, she needed salvation and Jesus was the Saviour. By Friday evening, Lil was born again when she realized the truth of a verse in the Bible in John Chapter 3. Jesus was talking to Nicodemus – a very religious man and He said to him: "**Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.**"

Lil Wouldn't Give Up

Lil was saved and I couldn't deny seeing a change in her. Now she was after me. She invited me to the meetings. I said "*No!*" Night after night she would ask me until I reminded her of what I told her before: "*It's okay for you to go, but don't expect me to go.*" I started feeling sorry for Lil so one night after she left for the meeting I decided to go and surprise her. I thought if I just went once then she would leave me alone. But no, she asked me to go again. Once was not enough. I went again. But when I realized she would keep asking me to go I became angry.

My Anger was Growing

It was a Friday morning and I was at work. All I could think about was her continuing to ask me to go to the tent. I determined in my mind that if she asks me to go one more time, I'm going to tell her no and to never ask me again! This anger was bothering me all day to the point I could hardly work.

Lil all Dressed Up – Can I Come Along?

On the way home from work that Friday evening, a change came over me and I forgot all about the anger that had consumed me all day. I pulled into the driveway, went into the house and supper was ready as usual. After supper I sat down to read the paper. Just as I was getting up from the chair, Lil walked into the kitchen all dressed up. Not even thinking about the fact that she had been attending Gospel meetings every night, I asked her: “*Where are you going all dressed up?*” She said “to the gospel meeting.” Looking her straight in the eyes, I said “*Would you like me to go with you?*” Immediately I wondered whatever made me say that. There was no way out now. I had to go and I went. It was at that meeting I understood for the first time that if I wasn’t born again I would be in hell forever. Now I was concerned.

Sunday Morning at the Backyard Shed

Sunday morning I went out to our back yard by my shed. I just stood there overlooking the brook and looking up to heaven trying to figure out how I could talk to God. I began to be troubled. I decided that in the afternoon I would climb the nearby mountain where I used to cut wood. I thought I might be able to talk to God there.

Climbing a Mountain to Talk to God

Once I was up the mountain I looked in every direction to be sure no one was around. Then I sat down on a stump and wanted to talk to God. I was upset because I just couldn’t talk to God. I remember my sadness as I walked back down that mountain. I went up there to talk to God and I couldn’t do it. Tears were running down my face. After this I was in a hurry to go back to the gospel meetings. After the Gospel meeting on Wednesday night, September 10, 1981, the preachers noticed I was concerned and asked if I’d like to talk to them. I said “No” and left for home.

How Could I Sleep on the Way to Hell?

I couldn’t get to sleep that night. I laid in bed staring at the ceiling very troubled, trying to figure out ‘how’ to be saved. Lil did her best to tell me how to trust Christ for salvation. As she was talking, it dawned on me that the One hanging on the middle cross, the Lord Jesus Christ, was dying there for me – for my sins. Could it be just that simple, I asked her. She said: “Yes, that’s all you need is Christ.”

The Big Hug

We embraced each other and wept. Three weeks after the tent meetings had started, God had saved both our precious souls. Now the Bible verse, John 3:16 became personal to me, “**For God so loved (Joe) that He gave His only begotten Son, that (if Joe) believed in Him, (Joe) will not perish, but will have everlasting life.**” That was good news.

What About our Children?

Lil wasn’t about to give up now. We still had three children who needed to be saved. With the desire of the preachers, the prayers of the local Christians, and the faithfulness of Lil the Lord blessed our family and all three of our children were saved within the next nine months.

My prayer is that you too will know for sure where you will spend eternity. John 3:16
Joe Labbe.

Gleaned from Heaven4sure