

# Testimony

## Melanie Thomassian Tells Her Story

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It's always a blessing to look back on how the Lord has worked in your life. My story begins in 1981, when I was born into a nominally Protestant home in Ballymoney, Northern Ireland. I was the first, and subsequently only, child of my parents.



At the age of four my parents separated, and my mother and I moved to the village of Mosside. It wasn't long after that the Jehovah's Witnesses visited and found my mother receptive to their message. This led to a Bible study, and soon afterwards we began attending the local Kingdom Hall in Ballymoney. My mother had many questions and was a very diligent student, and the Jehovah's Witnesses willingly spent hours with her, seeking to answer those questions in accordance with the teachings of the Watchtower Society. Their patience and diligence with her impressed her greatly, and as a result, we ended up as very active participants in the Ballymoney Kingdom Hall. We attended every meeting they held and eventually spent multiple hours each week going door-to-door as part of their outreach efforts. As a young child, this was the only religious instruction I received, so I knew of nothing else, and because of their beliefs, I was always excused from any religious instruction given at the schools I attended.

At the age of fourteen I decided I would stop attending the Kingdom Hall. I became more and more interested in what my school friends were doing, living for the weekend, going to nightclubs, and everything associated with that kind of lifestyle. But things were about to take a radical turn.

While studying at the University of Ulster to become a dietitian, I worked part-time in a local restaurant, and this is where I met my future husband, Armen. Although Armen's grandparents had a long history in the Free Presbyterian Church, he had only attended Sunday school for a brief time as a child. Up to this point, we were both oblivious to how the Lord could step into a life and completely turn a person around for good. That was until the end of 2001. The Lord saved and restored a number of people connected to Armen's family, and most significant was his mother, who was converted the morning after hearing her sister share her testimony at Ballymoney FPC.

Her conversion was a shock, and following it Armen and I would talk about what we believed. Since Armen professed to deny the existence of God, and I still held to Watchtower beliefs, our conflicting perspectives made for some interesting discussions. These were truly strange and interesting days for the girl who always thought she would go back to the Kingdom Hall one day. Thankfully, the Lord had other plans for both of us, and how much more wonderful His plans are.

Between January and May of 2002, Armen attended Ballymoney FPC on a few occasions and was graciously saved on May 13th, 2002. His first burden was for me, and he managed to get me to attend church the next week, but despite great efforts to see me converted that evening, my heart remained as stone. But God was working, and on May 26th I attended again. Rev. David Park preached that evening on Hebrews 2:3, "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" The reality of divine judgment was put before me, and under a weight of conviction, that night I took Jesus Christ at His word and He saved me. When I think back to my life at the time of my conversion, I realize how merciful the Lord was to me. I was not even looking for Him, and yet He was pleased to confront me with His truth. A year and a half later, my mother was saved, and a couple of years after that my grandmother also came to know the Lord.

It has been eighteen years since the Lord stepped into my life, and I am amazed at how He has led me. I am reminded of one of the hymns we sang on our wedding day:

I have a Shepherd, One I love so well;  
How He has blessed me tongue can never tell;  
On the cross He suffered, shed His blood and died,  
That I might ever in His love confide.  
Following Jesus, ever day by day,  
Nothing can harm me when He leads the way;

Darkness or sunshine, whate'er befall,  
Jesus, the Shepherd, is my All in All.

This hymn seems very apt, because the Lord has led us to places I never imagined, and yet in all the moves (Australia, Canada, and now America), I have never had cause to doubt or fear, and this is something only the Lord can do. The moves have been big, yes. But what matters most is whether the Lord is directing. If we are in the shadow of the Shepherd, we are always safe.

When I look at my children, I see so much of the Lord's mercy. What a contrast to my early days under a false gospel, and the ignorance that made me seek pleasure in the world! I pray much for the upcoming generation of Free Presbyterians, and I hope we will see what the psalmist spoke of: "One generation shall praise thy works to another, and shall declare thy mighty acts" (Psalms 145:4).

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