

The Upward Call

The story of God in my life

Philippians 3:7-14

But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which [is] from the law, but that which [is] through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing [I do], forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

In Christianity, we use the term “testimony” to describe the telling of how we came to Christ. When first trying to tell my “testimony” early on I found it difficult to match this term because it seemed like it had to be textbook like.

Not that I didn't have a valid testimony, but I didn't necessarily know the best way to convey it in those terms, as if somehow, my story had to be shoehorned into a template of telling. I'm not quite sure how to describe it other than perhaps I felt like it had to fit some storytelling mold for it to be approved and acceptable to those I looked up to in the faith. I guess I didn't feel freedom in it, even though whatever I've shared back then is the same as I'd share today, in at least as much as what had happened up until those previous times in life.

Perhaps I just felt too much need to convince those who heard it that it was true instead of just resting on the fact that it was and is true.

But do you have a testimony?

a formal written or spoken statement, especially one given in a court of law.

synonyms: evidence, sworn statement, attestation, affidavit; More

evidence or proof provided by the existence or appearance of something.

"his blackened finger was testimony to the fact that he had played in pain"

synonyms: testament, proof, evidence, attestation, witness; More

a public recounting of a religious conversion or experience.

Last night, Mia, our almost six year old daughter, was reading John 9

The man born blind

And it should be as simple as that, "One thing I know: that though I was blind, now I see."

Another thing that tends to happen, especially early on when we share our faith, is that we **end up getting bogged down in the worst**, sinful aspects of our old life and end up glorifying them or our prowess in sin than lifting up the one who saved us. It's an honest and common thing. And I hope that today that doesn't happen. That as you hear this, you'll see and hear God at work and your eyes will be opened even more to what he is doing in your life.

Some Christians also think their story isn't as good as someone else's. And I hear what they're saying, maybe it wasn't as dramatic in the sin, but the fact that they were raised from death to life is just as important, just as dramatic, just as amazing as anyone else's. Don't be afraid to share your story, especially if you think it inconsequential. Most often, it probably means yours is actually the opposite, perhaps more powerful in the telling, especially for someone like you, who needs to hear it, where perhaps other stories might fall flat on their ears.

We want our testimonies to hold up in court, and they will, if we but simply share the truth of what happened.

[pray]

Early life, family, growing up in church, FL, NJ

Christian school

Friends from some churches

Lego, nighttime, sunday school, etc.

Story of bike hitting me

Parents divorce, age 8 or 9

Dad leaving, me turning from God

God gave me this verse shortly after getting saved

Gen 50:20 NKJV - "But as for you, you meant evil against me; [but] God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as [it is] this day, to save many people alive.

Middle school, bible class

high school, mocking freshman christian
 Icthus tattoo on friend
 Evolution arguments

College
 Sinful lifestyle

9/11

The abortion

Pro 31:8 NKJV - Open your mouth for the speechless, In the cause of all [who are] appointed to die.

Going crazy
 Dropping out

Left behind books
Revelation

Left in NY by GF and friends

Ecclesiastes...emptiness of the life

Ireland rebuked by the world

That **Thursday, November 13, 2013**
 Bedroom at my mom's house in chester

aunt Mj and uncle john

Church next wednesday...too afraid to go Sunday

Previous experience at church during my seeking time
First time at church there story

Smoking cigarettes, cologne

Getting plugged in
 The guys, youth group, wednesday nights, the website

Friends not liking me anymore, sharing my faith, slowly losing each of them
 No more desire to drink, language going away

Quitting smoking

Moving out and moving in

April 2004

Summer outreach, college again?

Apologizing to my ex

Pressing forward

Still burdened over my lost child (the abortion)

Getting into a short-lived relationship

Becoming a deacon

Friend telling me my fuse was so much longer than it used to be in my temper

Christian parents fearing I'm in a cult

Having to separate from a parent for a while

Teaching at youth group a few times

Teaching on wednesday nights a few times

Just wanted to serve so bad

Quitting my job, perhaps too early...story of job

Working at the church as youth pastor's assistant

Missions trips

Really felt led to quit a few months later...God wanted me back in the world working and it turns out that everyone who worked at the church wouldn't be soon anyway, probably due to finances

Living with friends, serving faithfully

Old friend goes, new friend comes

College-age ministry, being shoehorned in perhaps by leadership

It seems that everyone has an idea and a plan for your life, all with the best intentions

Baptizing

“Feed my sheep”

Meeting Ashlee’s mom

Meeting Ashlee

Jas 1:17 NKJV - Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.

The struggle

Losing deaconhood and not serving

Hardest season of my new life

Never leave you nor forsake you

Finding out who your real friends are

Getting on track, being restored

Getting married April 2012

Ash gets pregnant that summer

Ordained Jan 2013

First daughter Mia born Feb 23, 2013

Serving in youth after youth pastor leaves

Assisting new youth pastor for a season (someone I’ve been friends with since getting saved)

Called out of Youth ministry

Teaching at church

Called to Bethesda

Story there

Church falls apart in NY

Travel back to help, on board

Quit the board (forced out?)

Heart broken for NY
Pray about MD

“Flee to the valley of the mountains”

Leave MD
Good friends help

In NY for 18 months, we knew it was a season
Build up friendships
Have bible study (story there)

“New wine” before leaving Ny the first time
Leaving calvary behind

Visiting Montana summer 2017
Romans 10
Things God spoke to me

Moving to Montana
Starting here

RLC

Direction, goals in life