

# **My Testimony to the Glory and Grace of God through Christ**

*by Jeffrey Lacine*

*I was dead in the trespasses and sins in which I once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience-- living in the passions of my flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and I was by nature a child of wrath... But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved me, even when I was dead in my trespasses, made me alive together with Christ--by grace I have been saved-- and raised me up with him and seated me with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward me in Christ Jesus. For by grace I have been saved through faith. And this is not my own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that I may not boast. (Ephesians 2:1-10, personalized from the ESV)*

God has taken a faithless, God-hating wretch of a man and regenerated him, loved him, and called him, through the precious shed blood of Christ. He is a faithful God who makes beauty from ashes. It is my prayer that as you read this testimony of how God has rescued an ordinary sinner and called him to the ministry, that the Holy Spirit would lead your affections into a deeper admiration of our awesome King of Glory.

## ***Conversion***

I have never been able to avoid my desire to be full, happy, and whole. This desire has been a driving force as long as I can remember. Though I was raised in a Christian home and have known from a young age that I was designed for the purpose of knowing Christ, deep down I didn't really believe that He would make me whole. Though I acknowledged that Christ died for the sins of sinners, I did not personally entrust my soul to Him for salvation.

Many different aspects of the world captured my curiosities, and at my first opportunity to suffer for the name of Christ at the age of ten, I escaped to the world to find refuge. My depravity began to manifest itself in more and more obvious ways. I became a daily marijuana smoker in high school, and by my freshman year of college I regularly used psychedelic drugs of

all sorts, as well as cocaine. I often directed my thoughts towards God and truly never doubted the deity of Jesus Christ, but I also knew that I was in bondage to sin and that I was not a disciple of Jesus. My loneliness, sense of being lost, and emotional anguish quickly became sharp and deep. I lived my life with a constant sinking feeling in my stomach and had many superficial associations, but I did not feel like I could connect with anyone in a deeper way.

There were a few times that I tried to reform my life, and I failed miserably on all accounts. In my darkest moments I would cry out to God with every bit of sincerity I could muster and ask Him to deliver me from my bondage. I cried out to Him from the emergency room after an overdose when I thought I had lost my sanity. I cried out to Him after a close friend was badly beaten because of a drug deal had gone bad. I cried out to Him when I was convinced I was going to die. It was after hitting these miserable bottoms that I made attempts to “get right with God”. However, every one of these times I could not find willingness to fully entrust my soul to Christ.

On April 20<sup>th</sup> 2000, a friend and I were selling drugs at a psychedelic rock concert, and I had taken more L.S.D. than usual. Fear gripped my body as I grew nervous that a vision of demons would come to haunt me once again. It was common for me to see demons when I took psychedelic drugs. Whether they were simply hallucinations or something more, I cannot presume to know. That night I certainly did see the demons once more. However, I saw these demons in a different way than usual. The demons were not able to torment me, rather I saw them manipulating everyone else in the auditorium, playing them like puppets, as the concert goers bowed their knees to darkness. I felt like God was saying to me, “These are the people I’ve created for my glory. They have rejected me. Do you know my pain? I want you to be a worker in *my* kingdom, not the kingdom of darkness.” I began to feel a deep emotional distress, deeper than I had ever felt. I wanted nothing to do with that concert and all that was there. I wanted to leave. I desired to be made obedient to Christ and I found the ability to trust Him. The glorious grace of God appeared to me that evening like never before, and God apprehended my affections. I would give up all I had, which wasn't much, to know Christ and follow Him. I was ready to count the cost and give all of myself to God. The atoning work of Christ was beginning to come real to me as never before, and I could no longer live without trusting Him. From that moment on, I have been growing to understand and embrace that Jesus has taken the

punishment that I deserve, the very wrath of God, upon Himself... for me, so that I can be counted righteous! I praise God that I have been saved, and I am coming into a fuller understanding of what this means as I approach heaven.

A week after the momentous evening, I moved out of town, leaving drugs and friends behind to seek the Lord and be restored to my parents. I wanted so badly to break free from my addiction to drugs that I had been in bondage to for so long. Months later God answered my cry for help and miraculously delivered me from drug addiction. By His grace alone I have not returned to drugs since that glorious day when he removed that hideous burden from me on October 15, 2000. Even more than this, I have been growing in the knowledge and grace of our glorious King!

### ***Call To The Ministry***

Since then, I have had an insatiable desire to know God in His Word, and an ever increasing burden to preach and care for God's people. In this way, my call to the ministry began with my conversion. As soon as I began to understand God's Word, I had an appetite to preach it.

Every time I read First Timothy, chapter three verse one, my heart leaps for joy. I think to myself, "Is it really permissible for me to aspire to this awesome task?" I couldn't dream of anything else that I would rather make my life's work. The thing I enjoy doing above all else, is preaching! Oh how I love to worship God by proclaiming His Word! It is among the most satisfying of activities.

I want to see the church of tomorrow stronger, more Christ centered, and more Bible saturated than today. I want God's people to be equipped for every good work so that the bride of Christ might shine brightly in this dark world. I want to give my life to the building up of the Church through serving in pastoral ministry.

### ***Ministry Involvement***

This call to the pastorate has brought me to serve the Church in many different capacities, despite struggling through many besetting sins along the way. By God's grace, over the past

eight years I have had the privilege to participate in the ministries of evangelism, teaching/preaching, and residential oversight.

### *Evangelism*

Ever since coming to know Christ I have had a desire to share the good news with others. During the first year of my walk, I spent much time with other believers, traveling around the country, ministering the gospel to people involved in the new age travel movement. Later, I became involved in street evangelism, and began open air preaching in city streets and university campuses. After attending a year at the *Berean School of the Bible* (a small discipleship school in McMinnville, OR), I was asked to stay to be a part of the ministry team and start an evangelistic component to the school. The following year I led the school in an evangelistic mission to San Francisco. Shortly after moving to Portland, OR in 2006, my wife and I began hosting an evangelistic gathering in our home, equipping and encouraging believers to share their faith. This eventually turned into *Matthew1027*, which was a ministry that became financially sponsored by Household of Faith Community Church in Gresham, OR.

### *Teaching and Preaching*

Over the years I have also had the weighty responsibility and pleasure of teaching and preaching God's Word. It was not long after I came to know Christ that I began to teach and preach in both a school and local church setting. In retrospect, I believe I thrust myself into the ministry of teaching and preaching far too prematurely, and I often lament this fact. James tells us that not many should desire to be teachers, and in Matthew, chapter twelve verse thirty-six, Jesus tells us that people will give an account for every careless word that is spoken. I pray to God that he will have mercy on me and my former ignorance on this matter. In 2002, I had my first opportunity to teach at the *Berean School of the Bible* in McMinnville, OR. I was given 6 hours to teach the whole book of Joshua. I also taught Micah, Nahum, some of the gospels and Galatians that same school year. While teaching at the school I also began to preach at the youth group of a local *Calvary Chapel* church. The following year I increased my teaching load at the *Berean School of the Bible* and the youth group. In 2004, I became the Academic Director of the *Berean School of the Bible* and taught over 100 hours of Bible. I also began to regularly preach (about once every six weeks) on Sunday Mornings at *Family Bible Fellowship* in McMinnville, OR (under the direction of their eldership). In 2005-2008 I was an adjunct teacher at *Mandate*

*Discipleship School* in Sheridan, OR, teaching the Sermon on the Mount, Inductive Bible Study and Jonah. In the summer of 2006 I taught at the *Great Commission School Israel*. In March of 2008 I became a part of the *Household of Faith Community Church* preaching team and remained active until I moved in July of 2009 to Minneapolis for Seminary training.

### *Community Ministries*

In addition to evangelistic and teaching/preaching ministries, I have also had the opportunity in serving in various residential discipleship capacities. Shortly after my wife and I were wed, we began involvement in residential oversight ministries. When I became Academic Director of the *Berean School of the Bible* in 2004, my wife and I also became the residential houseparents. We were responsible for administering chores, planning the daily schedule, handling the house budget, planning meals, and counseling students. The following year we became the houseparents for the male students at *Mandate Discipleship School*. In 2008 we began living in one unit of a duplex-type house, renting out the bedrooms of the other unit to four single, Christian guys. We shared three community meals a week and participated in regular house devotions, trying to engage young Christian men in a household environment.

### *My Help Meet And Life Partner*

In 2004 I married Chelsi, a woman who has been a support and encouragement to me beyond description. Marriage has been an incredibly beautiful, real and sanctifying experience. Transparently, marriage has brought out both the best and worst in me, exposing many weaknesses in my character and encouraging me on to greater personal holiness as the leader of our home. The gift of marriage has been a tool of God's grace in bringing about the overcoming of much personal sin, a greater leaning upon the magnificent grace of God, and a deeper commitment to Christ.

Chelsi has been my biggest supporter every step of the way. I indeed would not be pursuing a Master of Divinity in preparation for the pastorate if God had not confirmed my call to the ministry through her attitudes. She encourages me to aim high, stay humble, be given to the Word, and walk in integrity. God has given us two beautiful daughters, and Chelsi joyfully takes on the task of managing the home, being committed to labor with me in raising them up in

the Lord. She supports me in every way as we pursue our collective call to serve God and His Church. Chelsi is an avid reader of theology and church history, and she often helps me to process my studies in a practical way. Chelsi is a gift from God and a confirming element in my call to the ministry. She is my companion, my confidante, my love, and my ministry partner.

A recent life event illustrates Chelsi's posture toward God and ministry to me. In March of 2008, I was at the hospital with her two minutes before she went into emergency surgery. There were severe complications after the birth of our second daughter, and she was losing more blood than they were able to transfuse into her system. We were unsure she would make it through the next few hours. Chelsi and I read the Bible, prayed and cried together, not knowing if these were the last two minutes we would be together this side of eternity. We were in tears, but not because we were riddled with fear. I will forever cherish the last words my wife said to me before she left for the operating room. "God is good," she said with tears streaming down her face. By the look in her eyes, I knew she wasn't paying lip service. She felt it in the deepest parts of her being. God is good.

I praise God that by His grace that Chelsi has fully recovered, even to the point of training for a triathlon! This severe trial has served us in bringing us nearer to Christ. Together we have experienced the goodness of God in the midst of hardship. We know as a family that the world offers pleasures that will never satisfy, but God offers a way that we can share in His joy amidst any trial life may bring. It is only by Jesus Christ, and His atonement for sin, that men and women can be restored to God and share in His pleasures for all eternity! It is our desire as a family to encourage people to steadfastly trust in the Lord in every circumstance.

### ***The Future: If God Wills***

*If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task (1 Timothy 3:1)*

By the God's grace, this struggling sinner intends to serve a local congregation as preaching pastor, upon completion of a Master of Divinity Apprenticeship program at Bethlehem Seminary and Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis, MN. I desire to carefully and passionately preach the Word of God, faithfully impart pastoral counsel, and soberly call unbelievers to repentance towards God and faith in Christ, all for the building up of the body. I

do not want to be an in-and-out pastor who is constantly looking for new and “better” opportunities, but rather, I desire to live and die for the long term benefit of the flock that God gives me to care for, whoever and wherever they may be. I want to grow with them in seeing more clearly Christ crucified for our sins.

May this brief biography be a testimony to the wonderful Glory and Grace of God. He has taken a God-hating wretch of a man and regenerated him, loved him, and called him, through the precious shed blood of Christ. He is a faithful God who makes beauty from ashes.

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