

A Salvation Testimony

By Bob Larsen

I grew up in a mainline church. I am grateful for all that I learned there. I believed very strongly in God, and I believed the Bible was all true. I believed that if I dared to question the Bible, God might strike me dead. I am grateful for the truth that I receive in the United Methodist Church. However, after 14 years in that church and being “confirmed,” I did not know that I needed to be born again, as Jesus said in John 3:7-8. My conclusion, based on what I had learned at the UMC, was “I am a good person, and I believe in God; therefore, when I die, I will go to heaven.” I did not know that Jesus said, “*You must be born again.*” I did not know that my life could never be good enough to warrant eternal life.

After this, I joined the Navy. That is where I first began to hear the complete Gospel. Many Christians were sharing the Gospel in downtown San Diego, and there was a servicemen’s center that I went to. I heard a Gospel message there, and I raised my hand and prayed what I now know is a “sinner’s prayer.” I still didn’t get it. I still thought that my “good life” was all I needed to be right with God. There was a guy on my ship who explained more, but he also told me something wrong: “You have to join my church to be in a right standing with God.” I didn’t buy that.

When I got out of the Navy at age 22, I found a job in a print shop at the Coast to Coast Hardware headquarters in St. Louis Park, MN. My life and my conversation did not show evidence of having any belief in God. There was a Christian stock-boy there whose name was Tory. He had a deep concern for me. He gave me a “Four Spiritual Laws” tract and asked me to take it home and read it. I did, but I didn’t mention it again to him. He finally asked me what I thought of it. I told him that I didn’t buy it, primarily because of the wrong info that I had learned from my shipmate. I also had a couple of questions that needed answers, and Tory provided them to my satisfaction. I had no more arguments. I tried to get it off my mind, but I couldn’t. A day or two later, just before going to sleep, I read the booklet again, and for the first time in my life, I realized that I was not on my way to heaven but was in danger of hell. Finally, I prayed the prayer in the booklet, but most importantly, I understood it and meant it. That was the beginning of my new life in Christ. I was drastically changed from the inside, through no doing of my own. I started to read my Bible every night, and I would often wake up with the light on and the Bible in my bed. I couldn’t get enough. Then, I found that there were others who had also come to Jesus and were very excited about their new life. I found that I was thinking about Jesus always. I later realized this was the presence of the Holy Spirit. My interests changed drastically without effort on my part. For one thing, I no longer hung out at Joe Houle’s Peanut Bar. There were Christian coffee houses to replace that, and there were people there who also were excited about their life in Christ.

I could write pages about all that God has done in my life, “*for the eyes of the LORD move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His*” (2 Chronicles 16:9a), and He has! For those who are Believers, God is willing to work in every church where He is welcome, but there is a problem: many members prefer to ignore His Word. When they do that, they automatically create a false god—a god who will not bother them. The God of the Bible will not force Himself upon people who do not want the truth. He allows them to go their own way and create a false god – a god who makes no claim on their lives and allows them to write their own gospel.

The God of the Bible is working greatly in churches and in people who are willing to accept

the truth that He has provided. He is also working in factories, offices, coffee houses, and anywhere people are willing to come to Jesus and allow Him to cause them to be born again. I am very thankful that He found me and caused me to be a new creature in Christ. There is nothing better!