

# A Prodigal Son

I grew up in Lincoln, Nebraska in a Catholic family, and went to Catholic schools most of my life. I believed in God and Jesus, but never received the Lord as my Savior. I didn't really know about salvation, and never read the Bible as a child. I served as an altar boy for our church services and remembered how mean the priests were to us. So I didn't really care about religion when I was young.

Then I moved to Texas to go to college, and at the beginning of my sophomore year in school, my father was killed in an explosion. It was at this time that mother told me to pray to the Lord and trust in Him; and I did and I was saved. But I didn't know I was saved, just that I had a marvelous / incredible experience of the Lord and His forgiveness. But then I went back to college in Texas, and without knowing how to go on, I just went back to the world. Then five years later my mom died of cancer, and it was like I was saved all over again. Both of these times I had complete peace. The Lord really supplied me (but I still didn't know that I was saved. I didn't know what it meant to be saved).

At this time, I graduated from college and was moving to California – the Bay Area to start my career. So I decided that I needed to somehow follow the Lord and not go back to the world. As soon as I arrived in California, I went back to the Catholic Church – just their Sunday services. But everything there was the same as before; and I got discouraged and left after about six months and went back to the world. I just didn't know what to do, and I gave up.

(I was really tired of Carob pods)

Eight years later, my career was doing well. I had received several promotions in a short period of time, and was making plenty of money. I also got engaged to my wife Jill, and we were getting married the following year. But I wasn't really happy. Then during a Christmas vacation, while I was on flight back home to California – sitting on the plane, all of a sudden it came to me. I had the full realization that I was not happy, because I was not serving God. My brother was next to me and I told him that I (we) needed to follow the Lord. But I didn't want to go back to the Catholic Church or any denomination, so he told me about a friend who was going to a place called Central Christian Church. We started meeting there on Sunday and I even got baptized there (I was 34 years old). I liked it, but I still wasn't really satisfied. But at least now I finally knew that I was saved. The only problem was that I thought my ticket was punched and no matter what, I was going to heaven. (It seems like I went from one extreme to another).

Then my brother Bruce in Texas called me and told me about a brother from the Church in San Jose, California, and asked me if I would meet with him. This was really sovereign of the Lord, because this brother and I worked for the same company when I first moved to California. So I said sure, I would meet with him - I already knew him! We met each Wednesday for lunch at a nearby park; and we went through the *Truth Lessons*. Being a Catholic I had no knowledge of the truth. I was like a sheet of blank paper. During this time, we would pray, fellowship and read the ministry. We didn't go into anything too deep; I was just being shepherded in a very gentle way. In the five or six months that we met, we never talked about where he went to church or about the local church; and he never tried to convince me that I needed to leave Central Christian Church and meet with the local church. Instead, we just enjoyed the truth in the ministry.

Finally on my wedding day, my brother Bruce, who was here for our wedding, brought me to a meeting with the Church in San Jose. The meeting was pretty small at this time, but it was living. I thought the saints were lively, especially a couple of the sisters. My brother Bruce thought that I now saw the ground of the Church and was clear on where I should meet. But I didn't see anything. I enjoyed the meeting, but I didn't understand or see anything about the ground of the Church. So the following week, I went back to

Central Christian Church. When Bruce found out, he called me and was upset because he thought I was clear about the Church. So I said, "OK – it's no big deal to me, I will go back to meet with the Church in San Jose the following week".

After meeting with the Church in San Jose for a couple of weeks, I got a call from my other brother Mark, who was still meeting at Central Christian Church. He was sick and needed me to fill in for him the next morning to serve in their Sunday school class for the children. (We had made an agreement to cover for each other in case something like this happened). I didn't really know what to do, so while I am driving on the freeway, I started praying to the Lord, and asked Him where He wanted me to meet. I would just leave it in His hands. When I arrived at Central Christian Church, to my amazement, the parking lot was empty. This is a big church with hundreds of members. I finally found one of the secretaries who told me that the night before they had decided to have a last minute retreat to the mountains and that no one was going to be there that day. Then the light went on, and I realized that this was the Lord's sovereign arrangement and answer to my prayer.

I love the story of the prodigal son. I feel like this is my story. It's hard to read it without any tears coming into my eyes. I found the Lord in college, but still I left him for the world. Then he called me back 13 years later. Now I know all these things that happened were just the Spirit seeking, and the Father's arranging. Eventually, He brought me to the Church, my real home. And He clothed me with garments of salvation, and fed me with the riches of his life.

Now this is my story and this is my song!

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