

A Trip Down Memory Lane

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Preacher: Marvin Wiseman

[0 : 0 0] Come and read for us the conversion testimony of the Apostle Paul. It's found in Acts chapter 9, and if you would open your Bible to that portion, you will be able to follow along with him as he reads. It is, without a doubt, one of the most dramatic incidents that takes place in all of Scripture, and it is commonly referred to as the actual testimony of Saul of Tarsus coming to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. And although we recently terminated that ministry at the assisted living facility, Marie and I and PA and Helen Rummel and some others over the years have gone there every Sunday afternoon for the last 10, almost 11 years, and conducted a service. And I shall never forget the looks on the faces of some of the people there, many of whom did not have a church background, some do, but many of them did not, when I told them that we were going to talk about the second most important life ever lived. And that, of course, kind of perked up their ears, and they were wondering, the second most important life ever lived, who could that be? And I think most of them had already guessed who the first most important life was that ever lived, that, of course, our Lord Jesus Christ. And even though he is a distant second, because no one in any way, shape, or form compares with our Lord, it is accurate, I am convinced, to assign the conversion account of Saul of Tarsus as that involving the second most important life ever lived. And what made his so important was because he so proudly and profoundly proclaimed the first most important life that ever lived. And he made no bones about it. In fact, he even said,

It's almost like the Apostle Paul had a fiddle, but it only had one string on it. And he just played that one string. And it was all about Jesus Christ.

And who knows how many countless millions and millions of people have since come to faith in Christ because of that conversion account of that one Jew from Tarsus named Saul and the impact that he had in his day that has since gone around the world and continues to this day. Because this is a generational thing that moves from one to another, you know?

And just as it was in the Old Testament, the children of Israel were instructed by Moses to educate their youngsters and teach them the meaning of those things.

And each generation is supposed to benefit from the information and education of the preceding generation. And when they do, then the truth that is passed down just continues on.

[3 : 4 6] And the truth that began with the conversion of Saul of Tarsus some 2,000 years ago, and it is still making its way around the world from generation to generation.

And it is the most marvelous, dynamic thing that has ever happened to a sin-sick, weary old world. And that is the gospel of Jesus Christ being shut abroad.

So I would urge you to give particular attention to this account in Acts chapter 9. It relates to the power of a testimony, but I also want to insert this. No one ought to believe and put their faith and trust in Jesus Christ simply because someone else has.

That's not adequate. Now sometimes we take very famous people who come to faith and we're grateful to God for every one of them who do, whether it's some rock singer or whether it's a baseball player or a football star or some politician or something.

They come to faith in Christ and they let it be known. And it does have an influence and an impact, particularly if they follow it up with what the scriptures infer, and that is a life that is godly that is lived in accordance with that.

[5 : 11] And it can be a very powerful influence in the lives of those who read it and hear about it. And it is intended to be that. But that is not to be the rationale. We are not to believe because so-and-so believed.

We are to believe because it is true. And it is the right thing to do. That's the real motivation for coming to faith in Christ is because God has spoken to you and has revealed to you your need which you cannot meet and has pointed you to his son Jesus Christ and invited you to put your faith and trust in him.

And when you do, then you have a testimony. You have a story. You have an account. And there is a tendency among some Christians to think, well, you know, my testimony is very ordinary.

There's nothing special about it. You know, I came to faith when I was four years old at my grandmother's knee and that's all I have. Listen, every account of anyone coming to Christ under any circumstances is an absolute miracle.

The grace of God doesn't make any difference how routine or how ordinary you may consider it to be. Yours is one more for which our Lord Jesus Christ died.

[6 : 41] And that makes your conversion account really very special. Absolutely. So, Gary, come read the account and then we'll have a few more things to share.

And I also, I've asked Marie if she would do likewise and share this with me. So you'll be hearing from her as well. Gary. Good morning.

Good morning. We'll be looking at Acts chapter 9 verses 1 through 16. Now Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked for letters from him to the synagogues at Damascus so that if he found any belonging to the way, both men and women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.

As he was traveling, it happened that he was approaching Damascus and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him and he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?

And he said, who are you, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. But get up and enter the city and it will be told you what you must do.

[8 : 27] The men who traveled with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one. Saul got up from the ground and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing and leading him by the hand, they brought him into Damascus.

And he was there three days without sight and neither ate nor drank. Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias.

And the Lord said to him in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Here I am, Lord. And the Lord said to him, Get up and go to the street called Straight and inquire at the house of Judas.

For a man from Tarsus called Saul for he is praying. And he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him so that he might regain his sight.

But Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard from many about this man how much harm he did to your saints at Jerusalem.

[9 : 54] and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on your name. But the Lord said to him, Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to bear my name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel.

for I will show him how much he must suffer for my name's sake. It just absolutely has to be one of the most electrifying passages in all of scripture.

I don't know how many times I have been over it in different translations and I've come to a couple of conclusions that perhaps are a little unorthodox but I'd like to share them with you before I begin relating to you what the burden is on my heart with this being my 63rd anniversary of my spiritual birthday.

And that is exactly when was it that Paul came to faith and I don't think it was on the Damascus road at all. That's where of course he was introduced and that's where Christ revealed himself.

But you'll recall as the text goes on and unfolds in the story he is led then because he has been spitting with this blindness from this dazzling light that accompanied the revelation he is blind temporarily blind and he is led by the hand they probably at the time were just near the outskirts of Damascus although we're not told exactly how far away it was but they had to lead him by the hand because he was blind in and he went to the household and the house called straight and there he is received he is remember if you will the man is in shock he has been absolutely traumatized by this vision the voice and the message it is absolutely stunned him he is trying to process what has occurred it is going through his mind how many times do you suppose he asked himself was that real was I imagining that did that really happen and there were those with him and he no doubt turned to them and said look did you hear what

[12 : 38] I heard and all they could say was we heard a voice we heard noise we heard a sound coming from heaven we heard a voice but we couldn't make out what it was saying Saul could and he did and Jesus talked to him and all the others who were with him knew all they knew was something was going on somebody was delivering some kind of words from up there somewhere but Saul of Tarsus was the only one able to actually understand them Jesus introduced himself and told him that obviously that he had risen from the dead and Saul had always considered that just absolute nonsense these Christians who are running around saying that Jesus came back from the dead they're crazy well now he knows better because the risen Christ is actually communicating with him so while they are leading him by the hand I can just see him walking down that road shaking his head saying

I can't believe it I can't what's going on and he was trying to talk and make sense of it and get information from those there wasn't much that they could tell him they saw this enormous light as well and they heard the noise but they couldn't make it out and they get to this house that is located on the street called the street Saul of Tarsus goes in he's invited in he sits there at a table and he's like this with his head in his hands going over and over and over again what he heard and what he saw and what the message was and he's saying I can't believe it I can't how can this be and we are told that for three days and three nights he had nothing to eat or drink and the reason being that was the least of his interests he had zero appetite zero need for food or anything else he is beside himself trying to process what he has experienced how many times do you think during those three days he replayed that scene asking himself again and again was that real did that really happen and finally the truth settles in on him it was

Jesus he's the real deal and when he came to that I think that is when Saul's conversion account took place because in the realization of that and dealing with that the reality that it really was him that is when right there he made his commitment and under those circumstances what else could he do the evidence was overwhelming and he could not deny it that's when I think he really came on board and another thing that really fascinates me about this it is just remarkable stuff when you stop and think about it when the Lord told Ananias to go and find this street called straight and find find this man called Saul of Tarsus he says I will show him what great things he must suffer for my namesake now what do you think what do you think of a

Lord of a Messiah who calls people to his side calls people to embrace him calls people to come on board and sign up with him for the purpose of suffering are you serious is that what the life of an apostle is going to involve suffering when you've got the one who called you being the God of creation and the Lord of all miracles who can do anything by the power of his will and he's going to use this new choice servant for suffering that does not compute with logical common sense from a human standpoint at all and the obstacles that this man's going to have and when you read the litany of oppositions that he had from everything that you can imagine from the Jews from imprisoned from being jailed from being stoned from being beaten with rods and all of this and you're telling me that he's a good guy and he is in the service of the omnipotent

God who allows his choice servant to go through that kind of life that does not make any sense to me at all I don't know about you but it does make perfect sense when you consider what God said when he addressed the prophet Isaiah that my thoughts are not your thoughts neither are my ways your ways saith the Lord as the heavens are God has God has an agenda that is so foreign to anything that we think would be reasonable and likely this being is one without limitations and he pulls into his activities the most unlikely things that we human beings could ever imagine and calling somebody like this to a life of suffering while he's supposed to be serving him and by the way when

[18 : 47] Paul was really up against it hard times why didn't God intervene he has all this power and all of this ability and think if he would free him from all of these problems that he had he would be able to go and expand and preach the gospel even more but no he's going through all of this aggravation through the imprisonments through the beatings through the scourgings through the stonings through the shipwrecks and all of this stuff is that any way to reach people suffering all of those things but part of the reason that he suffered them is for you for the example that was laid all of the heartaches that come into our life whether they were the apostle Paul or whatever in our lives today 2000 years later all of the heartaches and difficulties and adversity and pain and disappointment and everything else it is all designed of God to fashion you and to make you into what he wants you to be and just like

Saul of Tarsus we kick against the pricks the goads we don't want to go that way we fight it we oppose it we tell God we cry out to God is this any way to treat somebody that's on your side is this how you look out for your friends allowing me to go through this what did I do to deserve this and on really does work all things together for your good even though it hurts like all get out even though it disappoints like you wouldn't believe he is orchestrating and working it for your good our problem is we expect the results of it no more no later than the day after tomorrow but it is our ultimate good that God is interested in and sometimes that ultimate good won't show up until we get the glory but when we do then you'll see then you'll understand it was for your ultimate good now sometimes it's a hard sell

I understand that that's part of our humanness but someone has said that saints grow much better in the shade than they do in the sunshine and most of us would prefer the sunshine all the power of a testimony and when Paul came to faith in Christ everything changed and many of you here can attest to the same thing and so can I 80 84 years of age it was 63 years ago to this very day that I put my faith and trust in Jesus Christ as my savior and nothing has been the same since everything changed because let me tell you something when Jesus Christ comes in and invades the human life he never leaves anything like he finds it he rearranges everything everything has changed and

Paul says we become a new creation in Christ because he is in us and this is a dynamic that I experienced 63 years ago and I would be the first one to tell you I have no idea how he did that I still don't know how is it that the God of heaven the creator of the universe how is it that he in his spirit being is able to come into a human being's life actually appear in your human spirit and in your mind and regenerate you and make you a brand new person on the inside changing your eternal destiny and changing your temporary situation so that you will never again be the same person how does that work I have no idea

I only know God does it you can call it being born again you can call it a conversion account or whatever but nobody has ever been able to sufficiently explain it so that we can understand it all we know is everything is different I had been in the army for almost three years and spent the last two years in Alaska Fort Richardson and that summer of 1956 I came back to the states and I was assigned to Fort Lewis Washington where I would spend the rest of my term and in March of the next year I would be discharged well having been in Alaska for two years we were just really longing for some good old American everything normal civilian stuff so we sprang for a few civilian duds at the

[24:14] PX and on a weekend pass my best buddy and I Dave Sanderson Dave is with the Lord now that too is a story in itself but Dave was Jewish his father was an undertaker in upstate New York well I didn't even know what a Jew was and I certainly didn't know what a Christian was but Dave and I decided that we were going to go into town and live it up on a weekend pass and do civilian like things we started out we were going to wear civilian clothes we went to a civilian restaurant we got a room in the downtown hotel in Olympia Washington for the night and we were going to sleep in a real honest to goodness bed instead of an army bunk or cot and we had a leisurely Saturday night and got up slept in on Sunday morning and we weren't used to doing that because in the barracks you were usually allowed to sleep in on Sunday but who could sleep in on Sunday when the drunks came in two or three in the morning and would be carrying on half the night and it was difficult to sleep but here we were in a hotel and we actually sleeping in we got up and had a leisurely breakfast downtown and decided to go to a movie and that weekend that weekend is when

Dave Sanderson who was with me and I met my wife Barbara and to make long story short we had a whirlwind courtship for about four months and we decided that we were going to get married we just couldn't stand this idea of living apart and by the way this was 1956 and people for the most part weren't even thinking about shacking up didn't exist you know and we were committed to the idea of marriage and she certainly was and I was so we called her mother who lived in central Washington about a hundred miles from where we were and she said and I had I had met her I had met her mother from being there a couple of times earlier and she says mom we're coming home this weekend and we're going to get married and her and her said no you are not

I will not permit it mama dug her heels in and she said if you wish you can come home this weekend and we will talk but you are not getting married well we didn't know what we had on our hands for sure because Barbara was 19 and I was 21 and we really didn't need her permission I'm not sure whether she knew that or she was just bluffing but at any rate we drove over the Cascade mountains over the Snoqualmie Pass and arrived in this little town where she lived and when we sat down and started the talk Barbara said well you know we really want to get married and I love Marvin and Marvin loves me and we don't see any reason why we shouldn't get married and her mother says

Barbara you know very well why you cannot marry Marvin and I looked at her and I said you do and she kind of hung her head and and I said well what's what's what's what's this what's this all about and her mother bless her heart I tell you I shall forever be indebted to Jenny her mother and she looked at me and she said well Marvin it isn't that you aren't a nice boy and I said what what what what truth be known I wasn't a nice boy but she didn't know that because I only put on that front for her you know she didn't know that and I said well I'll take good care of her I will not mistreat her and I'll provide for her and blah blah blah and she says no it it it and I said what what's the problem she said well it's spiritual and when she said it's spiritual what clicked in my mind just like that was oh

I know what she's talking about and I said well no problem I'd be glad to join your church and I didn't even know what church it would be but whatever it was I'd be glad to join the church if that's the hold up yeah sign me up I'll join your church and she said no no no no she says it doesn't have anything to do with church well now that really threw me a curve that puzzle what what else is church spiritual they go together they mean the same thing if it isn't sure what could it possibly be she said would you would you be willing to talk to our minister and I said well of course he's the guy that's going to marry us if I turned to Barbara and I said you still want to marry me she said yeah and I said if he's the guy that's going to do it of course we want to talk to him and she called Reverend Harold Sweetland who was a missionary church planter home mission church planter for the

[30 : 06] Baptist denomination and his home was in Michigan and he was planning a church there in Ellensburg Washington had a little congregation maybe 30 or 40 people in it only been there maybe a year or two something like that and he said yes I'd be glad to talk with him and have him come to my office so we drove 25 miles from where we were to Ellensburg Washington and went in this little church it was Main Street Baptist Church in Ellensburg Washington and we sat down in his study and his desk and after the formalities why he looked to Barbara and he said Barbara are you a Christian and she said yes I am and I didn't realize this at the time but Barbara had attended church there a number of times and he knew that she was a believer he just said that for my benefit then he turned to me and he said what about you

Marvin are you a Christian and all I could think of was my army dog tags because on my dog tags they put a little P for Protestant and I thought P for Protestant yeah Protestants are Christian I said yeah yeah put me down yeah I'm a Christian and do you know what he said he shook his head and said no I don't think so can you imagine the gall of this guy saying no I don't think so I mean how could he possibly know that I wasn't a Christian well he knew but I didn't know how he knew and he said and I'm sorry to tell you and I said really why why I said I've got the license right here you know we've got the license on Olympia and it's all signed there he says no no that's got nothing to do with he said if

I were to marry you that would that would be creating an unequal yoke and I would not be able to do that and I said what an unequal yoke he marrying a believer with an unbeliever and I thought well I'm not a non believer I believe in God but that wasn't that wasn't what he was after lots of people believe in God and they take great comfort in the fact that they believe that somebody is up there so put me down I'm a believer I believe in God and at the time it never occurred to me and I but even the devil believes in God and he was telling me that in so many words as kindly as he could that

I wasn't a believer at all and he said if you two are really intent on getting married even though I can't do it there's a justice of the peace down the street and he will marry you no questions asked and I was just about to tell Barbara well okay well are you willing to go down and before I could say that he looked at me and he said Marvin would would would you be interested in knowing what a Christian really is and I said well yeah sure and I thought to myself well who wouldn't want to know that but I wasn't sure that anybody really knew that and this guy is saying that he knows that and I said well yeah sure and he said all right let me tell you what the

Bible says he opened his Bible he read three or four different passages I wish I could remember what they were I do not recall where he read at all all I know is as he was reading and explaining those verses the thought came to me this is it this is something I've always wondered about here it is right here this is it and after he read and explained some of the verses he says would you like to receive Jesus Christ as your Savior right now and I said yes sure I had no idea how you did that but it certainly sounded too good to pass up and I said yes yes of course and he said well he said let's kneel down right here right here and

[35 : 20] I want you to pray now that kind of put me on the spot because I could probably swear for ten minutes without repeating myself I mean I spent three years in an army barracks you know you learn a few things but to pray and and he says you just pray and you just tell the Lord whatever you want him to know and then I'll pray too and I said okay I thought what am I going I've told folks this before but it's it's a honest truth I didn't know any prayer at all I mean I didn't even know the Lord's prayer at all was commonly all I knew was now I lay me down to sleep and that did not seem like the right kind of prayer to be praying at that time and and I prayed and I don't know it must have been something but you know what let me say something that

I hope lodges in your heart and you never forget it God is not interested in formal fancy prayers well worded or God reads the heart God knows what the true desire of your heart was and the desire of my heart was to mean business with God even though I had no idea how to do that but I wanted to do that and I stumble bumbled through a prayer of some kind and then he prayed and we stood up and there wasn't anybody there except Barbara she was sitting in a pew right next to us and Pastor Sweetland and myself and we stood up and he shook my hands and I said is that it and he said Marvin did you believe did you really mean what you said you did in your prayer well yes yes and

I absolutely did and he said all right then God has saved you and I said okay that's good thank you very much and he said you come back at seven o'clock this evening and I'll marry you wonderful okay he shook his hand went out got in the car drove back to Roslyn Washington walked in the front door and Barbara told her mother Marvin received Christ as his savior and she said that's nice that's nice that's that's all I merit that's nice and she said well I I'm happy for you that's nice okay big deal so

I mean you talk about having the wind taken out of your sails a mother in law can do that and anyway she said he said to come back at seven o'clock and she said well we are prepared to be there and to be your witnesses and to stand up and so so there were about a total of about five of us there younger sister and a couple of neighbors and that was it and we said our vows and we were married and exchanged niceties and hugs all around and then we left the church and I thanked the pastor and we went out to the car and we were planning to spend our honeymoon in Canada we weren't too far from the Canadian line as it was way up north there and no sooner had we gotten on the road and it started to snow and I mean it snowed it was just a white out the windshield wipers couldn't even keep the snow off and we decided there was no way we were going to make it to

Canada we better look for the nearest motel that we could find and stay there for the night we pulled into a little town called Yakima Washington or the Yakima Indian tribe was prevalent there and I know it doesn't sound very romantic but the name of it was called the city center motel and we were there for the night and you know I didn't realize this never knew this until quite some time later when Barbara told me but she said you know from the time we were married all the while we were on the road on our way to the motel she said I was a nervous wreck what what well I could understand a bride quite nervous for her first night on the honeymoon she got a right to be nervous but that wasn't the problem at all and I said what what was going on what was what was and she said I was just in turmoil inside she says

[40 : 41] I was desperate I was praying I was crying out to God I said right after we got married and she said yes and I said I didn't know anything about what was happening and she said I was scared to death that what you did was not real that you just went along with whatever was required to get what you wanted that that's really the way it looked and I told myself if that's what he did I have just married myself to a class A manipulator who will do whatever it takes to get whatever he wants and she said I was beside myself and I was crying out and asking God for some sign for some evidence that what you did wasn't just going along with playing the game to get what you want and she said after you brought the luggage in from the car you said the first thing

I need to do is call my folks call my mom and dad back in Ohio and I told them that after we were married you know they knew we were getting married but it was such a short hurried up thing they didn't have any possibility of even thinking about coming out from Ohio to be there for the wedding and I put in that long distance call and my mom answered the phone here in Ohio she said mom this is Marvin she said oh we were expecting a call from you and I said well you won't and she said well I think I know you got married didn't you and I said well yes mom we did get married but today I got saved I received Christ as my savior and Barbara says when you said that

I just felt this enormous load just go right off my shoulders because I knew you well enough to know if what you did was not real you would have never even mentioned it to your mother and I said thank you God for giving me that confirmation and you know I just want to share because I'm going to ask Marie to come up she's got an entirely different story but it's just as valid and just as real as mine but the thing that I'd just like you to keep in mind is the way the gospel is propagated how it just spreads out and people tell people who tell people who tell people and that's the way the thing grows it's exponential and you know where as far back as I'm able to date my conversion and coming to faith in

Christ was in Seattle Washington probably about 1947 when I was about 12 years old and Barbara was about the same age and Barbara's aunt lived next door to a Christian lady in Seattle Washington and they frequently visited over the backyard fence just as good neighbors do and it was a particular day that it was a wash day ladies this is before clothes dryers and they were out there hanging their clothes on the line carrying on a conversation and this next door neighbor led Barbara's aunt to faith in Jesus Christ over that backyard fence and Barbara's aunt led Barbara's mother to faith in Christ because those two women were two of nine children that were born and reared into a strong

Roman Catholic family and Barbara's mother led Barbara to Christ and then she was instrumental in leading me to Christ you see how this thing grows and I don't have any idea who I've led to Christ or how many over the years and it just grows and grows and grows that's the glory and the dynamic of the gospel and there's absolutely nothing like so today today I am filled full of gratitude and thanksgiving for 63 absolutely unbelievable incredible years so when I tell you and you ask me how I'm doing and I say better than I deserve now you know why don't you a lot better than I deserve and when my beloved Barbara passed away in 2006 I was a widower for six years a lousy one at that and

[46 : 08] Marie and Dave Weinbrenner had been in our lives from the time Grace Bible Church started matter of fact Grace Bible Church had its beginning in Dave and Marie Weinbrenner's living room in 1970 and Dave was one of my best friends and one of my mentors he was like a big brother in Christ to me he and Paul Pontus and Barbara and Marie were good close friends as well and Dave bless his heart he passed away a year after Barbara did and Barbara was without a husband for five years and I was without a wife for six years and this sweet gracious lady agreed to be my wife and I tell people I was her pastor for 40 years and she still married me and

I think that you talk about grace that is incredible sweetheart would you come up here and share with them whatever you what what time is it come on come on come on this I have to be blessed with two unbelievable women back to back you see what I mean when I say better than I deserve this is a big part of it well my testimony is a whole lot different and yet in some sense they're all the same what the Lord has done some of you have heard my testimony before so bear with me if you have to tune it out but anyway just a little background my dad came to the

United States from Sweden when he was barely 16 he made his way west out to Washington State and in time he became the ferryman on the Pandora River it runs north and south on the east end of Washington State and he did that for some years and he loved to travel and a few years after we were out there Dave and Brent and I were out there I got in the mail a three part article that my dad had written and it had been published in the Newport Minor newspaper this historian had found it in the archives and sent it to me and it was dad telling his trip through the Panama Canal in 1917 and it was quite interesting those of you who know Brent know that he's a chip off the old block he's like his grandfather with his love for travel and one of my one of dad's trips back to

Sweden he'd always go through Chicago and stay with Swedish friends before going on to New York and on to Sweden and he was eating in a breakfast in a Swedish restaurant near Addison not too far from the Cubs ballpark where it's a Swedish community of people there and a waitress overheard him say that he was going on his way back to Sweden to visit and she said well I have sisters in a family my family in Varmland in central Sweden dad was from southern Sweden she said would you mind taking some packages to him and he said he'd be glad to and that's how he met mom by taking by taking the packages to her and then in subsequent trips they were married over there and my mom came to the state she was of course older than 16 at the time she was in her 30s but anyway dad bought a farm in Indiana and that's where they settled down so he went from being a ferryman to a farmer married a wife who couldn't speak any English and in time short time they had three kids

I'm the youngest of have two older brothers anyway my family parents did not go to church they were moral people and they taught us you know integrity and the importance of honesty and all those things but they didn't go to church but there was a godly couple in Chicago who were friends in my family in their concern for my brothers and me at Christmas time they would always send a box of candy and a Sugar Creek gang mystery and we loved those but it was their way of getting a gospel started you know in our lives and I am eternally grateful that that dear couple so by the time I was eight or nine really about the only introduction of Christianity and things was through the books like that and the mom

[51 : 49] I think mom was a believer I'm sure by then but she didn't drive and and just had her hands full with three little kids and she was 40 when I was born so those of you who have a number of children you know what that's like and washing diapers by hand when I was about eight or nine a new pastor came to our to the little church in Wolf Lake Indiana and I know a few of you people have been through Little Wolf Lake that's I grew up two miles from there and they had two girls and the older girl was the same age as my neighbor girl that I was real close to and Marian invited Norma Jean my friend to church where her father was a new pastor and Norma Jean in turn invited me to church and that's and Norma Jean's parents did not go to church either but they took us and they'd come and get us and so there's another link

I just thank the Lord for how he provided all this for us and when I was nine I went to Bible school there and that's where I accepted Christ as my Savior to this day I don't know the verses that he used but all I remember is that when he gave the invitation to anyone that was interested in being saved to hold up their hand and I held up my hand I can just know exactly where I was sitting in that little Baptist church when I did that and then afterward he said anyone that had held up their hands that he would talk with us more and we all went into the little kitchen and he explained over again to us and like I say to this day I knew absolutely nothing about spiritual things really except what Sugar Creek gang of the boys and something like that but I did know something and I just thanked the

Lord that he knew my heart because I didn't know I had never heard about absentia and all these different steps that you would take I don't think I went through those steps I don't know the Lord knows and that's all that's important but I was just so thankful to the Lord through these years for saving me when I didn't know much of anything but it just shows that the Lord knows the heart and I am eternally grateful Dave my first husband was five years older we were neighbors he was in Korea when I was in I was at Purdue and he wrote me a letter and said he would like to correspond with me he knew who I was between five years I ran around more with his younger brother than I had known

Dave but anyway I graduated from college on a Saturday he was out of the army on Friday he asked me to marry him three days later and I argued with him and I said you can't know me you don't know me but he said I know I know and that anyway we I think we beat you it was the same year 1956 we were married in October of 56 the same year but anyway we it was a wonderfully happy married life and it just he lived to be well we were married 50 years 9 months and 10 days when he passed away in 07 but we met Marv and Barb when we first came to Springfield in 63 we both were going to the same church and so we had known each other all this time and of course Marv was Dave's favorite pastor preacher and just really always enjoyed being with them

Marv mentioned about the sufferings of Paul and I think of all that he went through and I think when we go through hard times which we all did not difficult times many of you have been through the same thing or different types of sorrow like I had three miscarriages and a stillborn little girl that was a difficult time but through it all the Lord was there and we could just feel his comfort and his presence and when Dave had a heart attack playing the piano many of you were here and the Lord sustaining grace was just amazing so I'm just so grateful to see how the Lord uses other people in our lives and he gets us through the hard times the difficult times but

[57 : 00] I just can't thank him enough for all of you people here that surrounded us with love during those times of sadness of losing a mate and all but I'm just eternally grateful and we know without a shadow of doubt that Romans 8 28 does work and I'll have to mention this miracles do happen his sister will never let me forget one day David had been gone a year and Marv asked me to go into his office he said could I see you in my office for a minute and I thought boy what have I done now and he said I was just thinking David had been gone a year and Barb had been gone too I was just thinking would you like to go out for dinner or to a concert sometime and I blurted out I'm never getting married again and

I came out and I sat out and I thought what did I say he didn't ask me to marry him he just asked me out to dinner I was so embarrassed but anyway the Lord does never say never and I am grateful I have had two blessed with two wonderful husbands and the Lord is good well when she said that I don't want to get married I thought do I want to further involve myself with this woman well thank you all for your kind attention and for your patience we do appreciate it so much and we have been talking about God actually entering people's lives regenerating saving forgiving making a difference and there is no way we can close a service like this without giving that opportunity to anyone else so would you bow your heads please and we close in prayer father we recognize that there is still so much about both of these conversion accounts

Marie's and mine that neither of us still understand at all but we know that you did something that only you could do you somehow managed to come into these lives of ours and really make a difference on the inside and forgive and cleanse and pardon and make brand new we marvel that your ability to do that but we thank you that you are willing to do so because it's for that opportunity that the Lord Jesus came and died just to make that available to us and our prayer today for anyone who may be here that's longing and searching and looking for answers and wondering where to find them we want to recommend to them this same savior that has so wonderfully saved us and been so faithful to us and dear friend if that is the desire of your heart here today you may be a child a boy a girl or man or woman makes no difference would you be willing to say to

God right now dear God I know I need you I know I've done things in my life that were displeasing to you I know the Bible says that we are all sinners and I accept that and I acknowledge that and yet the Bible also says that Jesus died to save sinners and I don't understand all of that but I'm really grateful that that's why he came and with all of my heart I want to give myself to him even right now I want Jesus to forgive me of my sin to cleanse me and make me whatever it is he wants me to be and I just want to be obedient and follow him thank you for this time this morning that has been encouraging we trust and thank you for being willing to come into any heart that and dear friend if you are here this morning and you've made that decision and you wanted to trust the

Lord Jesus I can assure you that he's heard you and he has saved you and you need to tell someone so that they can encourage you or let me know or Marie know so we can give you some literature that will be of help to you thank you again father for the miracle of the new birth we enjoy it even though we don't understand it we bless you for making it available and we know it all comes through the precious work of our Lord Jesus dismiss us now we pray in his name amen