

If you will bear with me for a few minutes, I would like to share my testimony with you. Being fairly new to Almonte Baptist Church, some of you may have caught on that I am originally from the United States. I was raised in the State of Virginia, way out in the country, in a loving Christian family. I have to stop right there and give glory to God for that last part. I was a pretty quiet, trouble free child for the most part. I did have my moments of stupidity though. I attended Sunday school and went to church with my parents all the way up to the age of 18. During most of my childhood, I had a strong desire to want to go in the military like my father and grandfather before me, I wanted to be a hero. I wanted to help people and feel like I was part of a noble cause. I read everything I could about the military, watched all the movies I could of Hollywood's version of what it would be like. You could say I was a little obsessed with it. At the age of 17, my parents and I met with a recruiter for the United States Marine Corps, and they signed the papers that would let me enlist before I was even 18. I would still have to wait until I was 18 to go to boot camp, but hot dog, I was in. I was going to be somebody. I literally told the recruiter I wanted to be the guy in the poster. I was a recruiter's dream. I had spent my teenage years reading about the Marine Corps, how they were "the few, the Proud, the Marines". Their boot camp was the longest and toughest of the various US military branches. My father had served in the Navy, and His father had served in the Army, so I was going to prove myself. The Marine Corps values were Honor courage and commitment and coming from a Christian background and with my infinite wisdom as a teenager, this had "good idea" written all over it. There were some who said I wouldn't be able to make it, and that made me want it even more. I went to boot camp, and it was tough. One of the recruiting posters I had seen said we don't promise you a rose garden. They weren't kidding. In the span of August 11th to November 4, I went through some of the toughest time of my life, graduated and became a Marine. Many of the things they pushed in my head are still there today. Both Good and bad.

To summarize the next four years, I did two deployments overseas, sent clear on the other side of the planet, I experienced all that I had set out to do. It was quite a bit of pressure on so young a person in good ways, and in some not so good ways, and that experience shaped my life pretty heavily. But I ran into a problem. By the time I was ready to either get out and return to civilian life or reenlist, it started to dawn on me that by the age of 22, I had accomplished my life's dream. I was already feeling the effects of the wear and tear on my body from life in the infantry, and God had kept me safe for those four years. I had attempted to stay right with God during those four years, and although I had my good moments, I had my bad ones too.

After getting out, I ended up working in the Heating and Air Conditioning field as my father did, and I did some industrial piping which led to me coming up to Canada for a yearlong job. I met my wife, we Got married and I settled here in Canada. That was about 13 years ago.

But the thing I want to share with you today is this. All that time as a child and teenager, I followed MY dream. Once I reached that goal, I tried to develop some new goals, new dreams. The problem with that, was that they were MY goals. Not God's. With the birth of my children, immigrating to Canada, getting licensed up here for my HVAC job, although I was going to church most of the time, something was not right. There was something missing in my life. There were times I turned down the wrong road so to speak. Trying to fill that void with things that were not pleasing to God. I was full of self-pride, easy to anger. I turned to the bottle, looking to suppress my inner demons and pains, only to realize that I was just allowing more of them in. I had started to lean away from church, not from my faith in God, but

from my responsibility of being a Christian. To summarize that time period, I was a sinner. I am ashamed of that behavior, but by the grace and the forgiveness of God, and the shed blood of Jesus, that isn't the man you see before you today. At one point, I went to a church service at the Met here in Ottawa. It was easy to go in and out of there occasionally without having to be accountable to anybody. Now, I knew from my upbringing that I needed to get right with God. I sat through a sermon, where I don't know if any of you have ever had this feeling, but God spoke to me that day. Not literally in my ear, but He spoke. The preacher's sermon could be summarized like this: You may have the Holy Spirit in you, but are you filled with it?

Well, that hit me like a ton of bricks. I knew the road I was starting to head down. I wasn't raised like that, and more importantly, I knew what God expects from us, and how He loves us and doesn't want us to hurt ourselves or others. Over the next few months, I began to turn my life around. I prayed to God to take those sins away from me, and He did. Both in a sense of forgiveness, and in a sense to not turn back to it. I began to pour into my Bible, seeking to soak up everything I could. I began praying with and reading Bible stories to my children. I found a church and poured myself into it. I came to a realization that most of my adult life thus far, I had really been living for myself.

So that's what I want to share with you all today. I surrendered my life to Jesus Christ. I want to encourage you to change the mentality from what this world would have you say, of follow your dreams, to change it to "ask God what He wants you to do". Surrender your life to His will. I can guarantee you, that although at times it won't be easy, its worth it. I still face stress and problems, make no mistake about it, being a Christian isn't a rose garden either. I had my house destroyed by the Tornado in Dunrobin. But rather than get mad about it, or try to handle it in different ways, I lean on the everlasting arms for support. I have come to the determination that this life I am living, is His, not mine. I ask God what He wants me to do. What is His will. I have resolved to bring Him into every conversation I can, to utilize every blessing He has given me to show His love to someone else. I had always wondered as a teenager how to witness, how to share the gospel. I am ashamed to say it took me so long to figure out how. But I found the answer in an interesting way. A country Music Artist by the name of Kris Kristofferson, who had been down his own troubled road, wrote a song once called Why me Lord.

I'd like to share with you the Lyrics.

Why me Lord, what have I ever done
To deserve even one
Of the pleasures I've known
Tell me Lord, what did I ever do
That was worth loving you
Or the kindness you've shown.

Lord help me Jesus, I've wasted it so
Help me Jesus I know what I am
Now that I know that I've needed you so
Help me Jesus, my soul's in your hand.

Tell me Lord, if you think there's a way
I can try to repay
All I've taken from you
Maybe Lord, I can show someone else
What I've been through myself
On my way back to you.

Lord help me Jesus, I've wasted it so
Help me Jesus I know what I am
Now that I know that I've need you so
Help me Jesus, my soul's in your hands.

I'd heard that song many times before. But after turning my life around, that song has taken on a whole new meaning to me. It is my prayer, as the song just said, that sharing my story with anyone God puts me in front of, will open their eyes to my Loving God, and His son that saved me. If anyone is hearing this, and is not right with God, if there is something holding you back, I would love to pray with you. God sent His son to save sinners. Not perfect people. Remember that. You don't need to get right in order to talk to Him. You need to talk to Him in order to get right.

It is a privilege to stand up here in front of you today, and profess that Jesus Christ is my Lord and Savior. That I live for Him. I want Him to know that I am not ashamed. The same way I had to follow orders in the Military, I want to show God that I am willing to follow him no matter the cost. That I am prouder of what He has done for me than I could be of any Military title or Honor. He is my Commander in Chief. He is who I serve. He is who I live for.

Friends, I will close with this. Who are you living for?