

The Testimony of Christ's Work in My Life

The following paper is the testimony of Christ's work in the life of Wayne Sullivan.

In His Grace, God gave me what I needed as a young child. He gave me an honest, hard-working father and a sweet, loving mother. He gave me two grandmothers' who loved the Lord. My parents were God-fearing people, but they rarely attended church because they had been hurt by a legalistic pastor before I was born. They did make sure that my brother and I attended church during Vacation Bible School (VBS) weeks and at other times with family members. Most of my early church experience came when I spent the night at my grandmother's homes. They made sure that I always went to church when I stayed with them.

During one of my VBS weeks at a Southern Baptist Church in Rocky Mount, NC, the pastor scared me so much with the thought of going to Hell that I went forward to collect my fire insurance. At the age of 12, I was publically dunked in a warm pool of water. It all seemed so formal, magical even, but as I wiped the snot away from my nose the only thing I remember thinking was, "Okay, I'm good now! I don't have to worry about Hell anymore!" For the next 10 years of my life, not much changed. I tried to be a good person, but Christ was not much of a factor in my teenage years. The church that dunked me did not actively try to follow up with any discipleship, so naturally I was in the process of conforming to the world and growing up a pagan who was dunked at a church to collect fire insurance.

As a teenager, I was a pretty good kid. I didn't party. I didn't drink alcohol, do drugs, or smoke. No matter how good I was, I never felt good enough. I always felt something was missing. When I started college at North Carolina State University in the Spring of 1998, I tried really hard to be a good student. I studied hard and tried to hang out with new friends. Unfortunately, my new friends who lived next door in the dorm were heavy drinkers and partiers. Despite their influence, I never acquired a taste for their lifestyle or their alcohol, though admittedly I tried for a season to be like them. I hung out with them regularly, cussed like a sailor when I was with them, even tried to drink a little, but couldn't bear the taste of alcohol (thankfully)! So I made a good designated driver for a semester.

When Summer break came, I went home promising myself that I needed to make a change for the better. During the Fall semester, those old friends had quit school, so I had a clean slate. I attended a meeting called "Prime Time" hosted by Campus Crusade for Christ. I asked about their weekly men's bible studies. Soon two guys knocked on my dorm room door. Cary Osborne and Alan Huffman came in and began to tell me about the bible study they lead in my dorm. They shared a little yellow booklet with me titled "The Four Spiritual Laws," but I told them I was already a Christian. I attended their bible study for a few weeks and really bonded with the other guys in the group. While I enjoyed their companionship, their relationship with this Jesus guy was unlike anything I had ever witnessed. It made me feel inadequate, fake, like I didn't belong to their group, but I wanted to be as happy and joyful as these guys were.

September came around and they asked me if I was going to go to their annual Fall Retreat. It sounded like fun so I agreed to go with them (not knowing that it would forever change my life). They had lined up a retreat pastor named Dan Hayes. He spoke to the nearly 100 NCSU Crusaders gathered at the retreat on the topic of "Fireseeds of Spiritual Revival" During the talk, I had the most uneasy feeling in my soul. As he talked, I realized the he was talking about a relationship with Jesus Christ that I knew I did not have. He talked about how to have a relationship with Christ, not about how to avoid Hell! He gave an unusual invitation. He didn't ask for me to go to the front and pray with anyone. He said, "If you want a relationship with Christ, go out and find you a quiet place and talk to God about it tonight before you go to bed." So I got in a canoe and made my way out into the middle of the lake in the dark and there talked to God for probably a couple of hours! When I came back onshore, I quickly found Cary and Alan to share with them the good news of the transformation I was undergoing. The next day, I realized that there were about 20 other students who gave their life to Christ the night before. It was an amazing time of worship that followed as we celebrated the Grace and Mercy of the Father through His Son Jesus Christ. For the first time, I wasn't just singing songs; I was worshipping my Savior!

Over the next year, I read and absorbed as much as I could about Christ. When the next summer break came, I went back to the church that had dunked me and got involved. I was soon asked to help lead their youth group. It was during this time that I felt a call to ministry. A year later I had switched churches to a

larger church with the hope that I could be better prepared for ministry. While there, God dealt with me on the issue of Believer's Baptism. I realized that I was not baptized biblically yet! So in this fine SBC church, I was finally baptized as a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. This time there was nothing magical, I was just honored to follow my Lord in baptism in obedience to His command.

A few years later I began attending Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. I met my wife volunteering in a Rocky Mount youth ministry. I have since graduated with a M. Div. in Christian Ministry, served in youth ministry for almost 12 years, was a senior pastor in a small church in western NC for 1.5 years, and recently interned at another church for one year learning about church planting. Currently, Crystal and I are raising our five year old Abigail and two year old Elizabeth! Today, I am serving as a Transitional Pastor, which is akin to an Intentional Interim, in a small SBC church in Spring Hope, NC.

We are seeking the Lord's will as we wait on Him to direct us into our next field of service whether permanent or transitional. If you have made it this far in your reading, it is my prayer that God has spoken to you about the joy of the salvation He has given me through His Son. I would like to ask you a favor, one child of God to another, would you lift up a pray right now for my family? Would you ask God to grant us wisdom and direction that is unmistakable? Crystal and I strongly desire to serve the Lord. We do not want to put Him in a box and ask Him to work within a set of our predetermined limiting factors. We want to be truly open to go wherever He leads, and do whatever He asks. Will you pray for my family to be faithful stewards of the Gospel in the years ahead? I hope you will.

In Christ Alone,

Marshall Wayne Sullivan M.Div.