

## Jim's Testimony!

I'm accepting the Testimony Challenge that Pastor Heath has put forth. My name is Jim and I'm a Christian. I was raised in a household that went to church every week. I loved my church and my church family. But, in my adolescence and teenage years, I didn't learn much about Jesus from church and it was really a social endeavor. I was too young or too distracted to absorb what was being taught. What I did take away was a healthy respect for God and a desire not to sin, even though I was not yet saved.

When I was 14, my brother was saved at a church retreat. This changed the way our family worshiped God and all of a sudden, we prayed at dinner and took a more earnest walk with the Lord. I didn't get it. This confused me and actually drove me away from God somewhat because it was such a change from our easy lifestyle before, which I didn't understand. I wanted our family to go back to the way we were. It was an immature response because I had yet to understand the love and sacrifice that Jesus made on my behalf. But, in retrospect, it introduced me to the walk I needed to take once I matured more.

My first year of college was spent in Idaho at a small liberal arts university. I attended Campus Crusade for Christ and accepted Jesus as my lord and savior during one of the services held by a visiting pastor. I felt an immediate change and peace come over me. I remember it clear as day. It was a defining moment in my life. By this time, my brother was in seminary and headed for a career as a pastor. I had a strong desire to follow in his footsteps but rejected that calling because I had followed his path for most of my life (I idolized my brother, and this was the first step in walking my own path). So, I changed schools the next year and followed my initial goal of working in the sciences. I eventually rebelled altogether to explore a wilder lifestyle to try and break out of the nerdy stereotype I felt was living. This led me away from Jesus and down a dark path that I followed for the next decade and that caused me great distress. I lived a double lifestyle as a professional and as a person that I never wanted to be.

Fast forward to 2007. I had a strong career, lots of friends, a family, and I was miserable. I was in the throws of a divorce and felt empty inside. I felt a calling to return to Jesus and from the moment I stepped amongst my church family, I felt peace and joy return to me and knew I was at home. I

knew that I had turned away from Jesus but that he had never turned away from me. Since then, there have been many joys, but also hardships and difficulties. But that joy and peace have never left me because I know that Jesus is walking along beside me. He's provided in ways I never imagined possible and for which I'll be eternally grateful. Now, I love reading His word and learning. I long to be the tool he uses to bring others into His kingdom. If anyone reading this relates to my story, please reach out to me. I'd love to share the gospel with you and introduce you to our church family.