

Pat and Colleen Testimony

God pierces the darkness to save souls

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Pat

Second Corinthians 3:3-4, "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them."

God created Adam and Eve on the same day as husband and wife. They did not have an option. Isaac and Rachel married by arrangement having never known each other. Both couples had one thing in common, though their circumstances were vastly different. God put them together.

Colleen and I met in junior high. We were twelve years old. I was smitten and knew she was the one I would marry. Ten years later, we married. We have essentially grown up together. Our testimony about salvation, calling into ministry, and serving in ministry is intertwined.

I was born on a grand and glorious day March 17,1956 for which I am named, St. Patrick.

Colleen

I was born one week later, on March 24, in a Pomona, CA hospital. I was born and raised in a family of immigrants from Japan. I was part of a family of 5 siblings (2 of which were born during the WWII Japanese internment camp era). We all later grew up and worked on my grandparents' farm in southern California. I learned about the Christmas and Easter story every year in public school music programs and attended church when invited by school friends. But I also was heavily influenced by the Buddhist practices of grandparents and parents who attended the temple for funerals, memorial services, and weddings. But fortunately, my limited knowledge of the Japanese language was a barrier to understanding and embracing the Buddhist religion. The language barrier along with the priest's chanting, drum beats and burning incense was a stark contrast to the hope I found in Christianity, and this presented spiritual questions throughout my childhood years.

I graduated valedictorian of the high school Pat and I attended. I was experiencing early success and a bright future, and at age 18, I left home to attend UCLA located in Los Angeles, 35 miles from home.

Pat

I grew up in a skeptic's home. Mom was raised Catholic. Dad was nothing. Mom sent me to a little Anglican community church in junior high. Dad would prepare me for Sunday School by telling me to ask the teacher questions like who made God and whether the Bible was reliable.

I wondered about God and about how to know He existed. If He existed, I wanted to know what He required of me. God was not a part of our conversations. But I had friends who talked to me and tried to answer my questions. I was serious about finding God. I explored different religions, eastern religions, and mysticisms of the Aquarius Age to find answers. It appeared people just chose to believe whatever they wanted just like choosing food items

from a menu at McDonalds. I was increasingly frustrated by the lack of substantial reasons to believe in God. In my senior year, I tried self-hypnotism to convince myself there was a God, and then to convince myself there was no God.

The summer between high school and college, I was determined to resolve the question of God's existence before classes began. One week before school, it struck me that I could not find answers because you can't find answers for something that does not exist. I was very happy and relieved to have settled the question of God. I was not a mad atheist. But I did enjoy toying with believers to explain why they believed.

Colleen

When I went to college and was not able to get a dorm room in the campus, I ended up renting a room in a Buddhist dorm located in West Los Angeles. I was all alone in my first quarter term at UCLA and was intent on making new friends. Within the first week of school, I met two women on two separate occasions on campus who were staff members of Campus Crusade for Christ. They both shared with me the 4 spiritual laws - a gospel tract on the good news and how to be saved. The tract begins with the news that God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life but quickly moves to the problem of our sin separating us from God. I was confronted with how our selfishness and pride puts us on the throne of our life instead of God and describes the eternal consequences and punishment for sin. The 3rd law explained how Jesus came to pay the penalty of eternal punishment and death by being the substitute for sin and bridging the great gulf that exists between us and God. The last law in the Bible describes how God promises forgiveness and eternal life if we simply repent, trust and accept Jesus' work on the cross and resurrection and simply ask the Lord for this amazing gift of grace and love through prayer. It was a lot to take in, and I wasn't convinced that what I was learning was altogether true or real, so instead of accepting the invitation to pray the prayer of salvation, I opted to respond to an invitation to join a Bible study with a small group of college girls to learn more about God and the Bible. I attended this Bible study group for 10 weeks and when all my questions were answered and it was evident that the Bible was true and Jesus was real and I needed Him, I prayed to receive Christ as my Savior. That was December 5, 1974, in the Ackerman Student Union at the UCLA campus. I remember walking away from that meeting a new and excited Christian and wondering what the Lord had in store for my life. Then I called Pat and told him I had become a Christian.

Pat

UC Irvine was a bastion for neo-belligerent atheism. Evolution was taught in biology with attacks on religion. In our literature, history, and philosophy classes, we read a book a week, listened to the teachers, and wrote about atheism and civil disobedience. It was thorough indoctrination.

Colleen called in December. I was surprised to hear about her decision. I asked her my questions, and she directed me to Chuck Schwartz with CCC at UC Irvine. I called him. We met. In one meeting, he convinced me there was a God. He opened the Bible and read answers that were relevant to my questions. I never saw that before. Typically, people would just give personal answers off the top of their heads.

He asked me if I wanted to pray to be saved. I said sure, thinking that if I said no, he would think I didn't believe in God. It was a false profession of faith, but it put me on a journey to finding God.

I was introduced to four guys for a Bible study. We studied the Ten Basic Steps, Arthur Pink, and Francis Shaeffer. Then I joined the Christian Research Institute directed by Walter Martin. I was trained in Christian apologetics to give answers with explanations. It was a perfect fit for me. I needed it. I was trained to debate legalists, such as Jehovah's Witnesses. When Dr. Schonfield, author of the Passover Plot, came to the west coast, our group followed him from campus to campus to ask questions after his lectures. At USC, our team leader, Cal Beisner, who was a philosophy student there, told us Dr Schonfield's host from Long Beach College told Cal's professor not to call on us and pointed us out in the audience. Each one of us was called on. It was a fun time, and I learned a lot. But I was deeply troubled.

I prayed and asked God for a year to take me anywhere and to do whatever He wanted with me. To make a long story short, I came to Arkansas with a Romans commentary by Barnes', Torrey's answers to Bible questions,

Berkoff's systematic theology, and a vision to evangelize the UA. I was also a zoology major with plans to go to med school. I have many stories to tell about being introduced to southern culture, the Bible belt, and folksy people. But the most important thing that impressed me was the simplicity of being a genuine Christian. The first people I met included Rick, Judy, Tom, and Peter Wells. At church, I met Al Carter, Larry Wolfe, Paul Kilpatrick, and Br. Brian. I met with Br Brian for a Concepts study every Monday, which helped me put into place chunks of theology that were floating around in my mind. Those lessons also helped me resolve some difficult theology questions. I averaged about 20 questions a week from my Bible studies to discuss with Br. Brian. During a sermon, Br. Brian used a chair to illustrate what it means to trust the Lord. The lack of trust explained my nagging doubt. I spent three hours that night in my dorm room asking God to help me trust Him. I was stressed and exhausted when I finally gave up and told the Lord I quit. It was at that moment He said to me, that is what I was waiting for. I call that my testimony of the subtlety of works.

The nagging doubt that plagues doubters like me is due the efforts made to feel the right way, to be sincere enough, and to think the right things in order to be saved. These are subtle works. As long as you have to ask if it was good enough, sincere enough, or right enough to be saved, the answer will always be no. You must quit trying to be good enough, and let God save you as you are, a sinner who does not deserve to be saved, is not worthy, and is not good enough in any way to please God.

Six months later, the Lord called me to preach, which I happily accepted. I quit school and threw myself into ministry. Colleen came to see what happened and ended up staying. The rest is history.

God's message reached us because some were faithful to share and give answers we needed to hear. His message reached Colleen with friendship. His message reached me with reasons to believe. We were delivered from a world of religious and spiritual ignorance and confusion. When we showed up at a church in our hometown, one girl told us we were the last people she expected to see in church. Thankfully, God is in the business of miracles.

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