

Playgroup Testimony

My Life by Mark Roberts

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I am more fortunate than most, in that I was brought up in a loving Christian home, I went to a Christian Primary School, attended church and youth group weekly and went on Christian school holiday camps. When I reached my teens, I didn't have any real desire to follow Christ or to behave like a follower of Christ. Yet when I was with Christian people I acted like a Christian, and when I was with my classmates and friends, I was far from a godly person. Which was quite hypocritical, as I was a youth group and camp leader for a number of years.

I never made a full commitment to Christ because I knew I would have to change my ways, so at about 16-17 years of age I chose not to change. I wanted to be one of the boys, so I stopped attending all church related activities.

For the next 12-13 years I lived my life my own way. Making sport the utmost important thing in my life, closely followed by socializing and drinking with my mates. It was also very important for me to be liked by everyone and to be popular. I always had to have the biggest and best parties, I always had to have the best story to tell, and I liked to win everything I participated in.

I never considered myself to be a bad person; I was quite considerate towards others, a polite, caring and giving person. Deep down I knew that as long I got what I wanted, then I was OK.

Even after getting married, I still put my wants and desires before my family's needs on many occasions. There's no doubt I have been very selfish and unfair, especially to my wife and family.

I now know that God has a purpose for my life.

Firstly he allowed me to meet my beautiful wife, who comes from a similar background to myself. When we met, neither of us were going to church, but the fact that we had both come from church upbringings was an important part of the reason why we got together.

I also know He has been protecting me, as from an early age I have had a few near mishaps, that could have ended a lot worse than they did:

- When I was 4 years old, I was run over by a car. I was lucky to only have a couple of weeks in hospital with a broken leg and fractured skull.
- At 17, I had a motorbike accident when a car knocked me down to the bitumen; I was fortunate to require only about 30 stitches to my elbow

and knee.

- When I was 18, I fell off a Ute doing about 60 km/hour whilst out spotlighting, with a loaded shotgun in my hands. I walked away with a broken nose, a swollen knee and no skin on my face. The gun never discharged and I was fine.
- I've crashed 3 cars whilst drink driving. Once I caused about \$5500 worth of damage to a mate's brand new Ute. In all the accidents I went off the road where there were no trees. And not in any of these accidents did I end up with a scratch on me.

So He planned all along that I would end up here today.

Even up to probably mid last year, I don't think I was any closer to the Lord than any part of my life thus far, yet one Sunday in August last year, I decided to go to church with my wife Karen.

I think I only came because I had been going to Playgroup at Moolap Baptist for a while and had got to know a few ladies who attended church there. So between my wife and the ladies I had met, and the fact that my children needed some positive influences in their lives, I decided to come along.

The women in playgroup helped me to strengthen my existing faith. I always believed in God, I prayed on occasion, but did not normally attend church. However, now I attend weekly bible study and church and pray frequently. The women have also listened and encouraged me, and my son has made wonderful friends. These missing pieces in my life jigsaw puzzle have now been filled.

It was definitely the day God had planned for me to go to church for the first time of my own accord for almost 13 years, because John van Gronigan spoke about his time as chaplain with the Australian Boomers Basketball Team and the Western Bulldogs (AFL). Being a sports nut, I really enjoyed it, so the next week I decided that church wasn't that bad after all and went again.

Since that time, I've attended church almost every week.

I had a strong feeling of presence that God wanted me to make a commitment, but I felt that I wasn't ready to make the step, as I knew many things in my life weren't "Christian" like. So before I would make a commitment, I tried to correct a few things – swearing, lying, being selfish, immoral thoughts, and getting drunk. But I found that by myself, I wasn't able to correct my ways.

After a couple of moving testimonies here at church, the first by Allan Parker-Benton, the second by Ron Ellis, I had a strong overwhelming feeling that I had to put my faith in the Lord and let Him be the guide of my life.

That day was November 9th, 2003.

To say I was emotional was an understatement, for anyone who had heard Ron's testimony would have found it as moving as I did, and I prayed a silent prayer and took the Lord into my life. I was overjoyed.

And since that day, with the help of the Lord, I certainly have been able to change many things in my life. I have almost stopped swearing, I'm not as selfish, I'm a lot more considerate towards other and many other aspects in my life have changed, and it is all has to do with the fact that I'm learning to have the Lord at the centre of my life.

It has been hard at times to keep on the straight and narrow, and I've found that to have a daily quiet time, to pray and read my Bible, is the best way for me to keep the Lord in my thoughts and to have Him guide me. I find the days that I haven't prayed with Him are the days when I'm a lot more likely to slip up and go back to my old ways.

I know that with the Lord's guidance, the continued help of my family, my friends, and my church family I will someday achieve what God had planned for me. And that by living my life for Christ, I might be able to show others that to have God at the centre of your life is the only way to go.

If you're considering it is hard to live life by your own accord, I would ask you to consider taking the Lord into your life, as since I have, it has given my life a lot more guidance and satisfaction and certainly made it easier to even get through the daily grind. Remember Willpower. You provide the Will, God provides the Power.

To finish up, I would like to say thank you to a few people. Firstly my wife, Karen, for all her love and support. My family who never gave up on my over the last 13 odd years. My Mum and Dad have told me on many occasions that they prayed for me daily over this period. I also have a couple of great friends who have stuck with me through many things over a long time.

And lastly, but certainly not least, there a 3 special ladies who are involved in the fabulous Playgroup program at Moolap Baptist Church, that through them being themselves and having God shine through their lives, I was able to find my way back to the Lord. So to Nikki Welsh, Jenny Polley and Georgie Allen, thank you.