

AGAPE NEVER FAILS



My Journey from the
Powers of Darkness into
the Kingdom of God's
Beloved Son

OBADIAH WRIGHT



Obadiah Zealous Wright, 2025

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AGAPE

Never Fails

**My Journey from the Powers of Darkness into the
Kingdom of God's Beloved Son**



DEDICATION

To my dear parents, Wayne and Laura Wright

I am blessed beyond measure and eternally grateful that God granted me life through both of you. You have always been there for me, prayed hundreds of hours for me, and I couldn't ask for better parents! I have seen God's agape love through you and how the divine pattern of blessing from husband to wife to child was designed to operate. You believed and followed the Biblical counsel to "Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it." (Proverbs 22:6)

I would not be where I am today, doing what I am doing, living for God, with good health, with the character and Bible knowledge that I have, were it not for you and how you raised me. I would not have this testimony to write were it not for you! I am so grateful that you gave me a Christian education growing up. I am so blessed that you have loved me so much, telling me "I love you" so many countless times with countless hugs and kisses over my life. I am so grateful that you have always given me an open door to come home and stay or live with you whenever I needed or desired. I am grateful to have been able to live with you, even in recent years, as you have been supporting me as a missionary and evangelist. I am so blessed to have a family that has daily family worship and prayer. I am grateful to have had your faithful example of personal devotions in seeking God in His Word first thing every morning. I know I will only make it to heaven one day because of God's Spirit working in and through your influence upon me. I am so blessed to have like-minded parents I can do ministry with. **I LOVE YOU!**

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FORWARD BY WAYNE WRIGHT

It is a privilege to write a forward for my only begotten son's first book. As I read through these pages, I am reminded of the commandment where God says He will visit "the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands (of generations) who love Me and keep My commandments." (Ex. 20:5,6) There were many times that I wept and confessed my own shortcomings and poor example to Obadiah as he was sowing his wild oats. I saw in his life a reflection of my own struggles with drugs, alcohol, lust, worldly music, and entertainment.

Although I had a conversion experience when I was 20 years old, my spiritual life after that was very inconsistent. There were months and years when my life was fully surrendered to God, and other times when I would slip into a Laodicean stupor where I was just going through the motions. These low periods also lasted for months or years. All too often, my experience as a Christian was that which Paul describes in Romans 7 rather than the victorious life he describes in Romans 8. I knew that it was possible to live a life of victory over sin, but I didn't know how to do this consistently.

Like Obadiah, I too am so grateful to God for Laura. God's Word is true; "He who finds a (godly) wife finds a good thing, and obtains favor from the Lord." (Prov. 18:22). God has been so good to bless me with a wife who lives a consistently Christian life and brings stability to our home. By God's grace, when the time comes for Jesus to place crowns on the heads of His people, I believe my wife will have two jewels for Obadiah and myself. Her prayers have meant so much to our family.

When Obadiah was living for the Lord, I had great comfort that God was able to save him despite my bad example and the many mistakes I made in raising him. However, when he was living in sin, I experienced much guilt and sadness knowing that I was in many ways responsible for his condition. During his times living in the world, discouragement would occasionally lead my own faith to falter. However, as I have learned important sanctifying truths through the ministry of Adrian Ebens, Maranatha Media, Talking Rock Sabbath Fellowship, and Father of Love Fellowship, I have found a lasting peace and victory in Jesus. By beholding the character of the Father and Son, my life is being transformed into their image.

I have become convinced that the message that Obadiah grew to understand, which brought victory and stability to his life, is the beginning of the loud cry and the latter rain. This is the sealing message that lays the glory of man in the dust and will prepare a people to stand with the 144,000 when our Savior returns. All the core elements of this message were in the message of righteousness by faith that were presented in 1888 and the years following by Jones, Waggoner, and White.

As you read this story, you may find parts that resonate with your own experience. It is my prayer that you will study this message that has brought such joy, peace, and victory in Jesus to my son, myself, and many others. The truths that are being presented in this book reveal the true character of our heavenly Father and are His last message of mercy to the world. "And this is eternal life, that they might know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent." (John 17:3)

PROLOGUE

I have worked closely with Obadiah in the advancement of this last message of mercy over the last number of years, and I have been blessed by the wonderful attributes that God has equipped him with. His zeal and determination to tell the world this Gospel, coupled with his sincerity in His relationship with his heavenly Father and Jesus, is an encouragement to me. I see the fulfilment of the following verse in Obadiah's willingness to speak with anyone at any time about the Truth and to encourage them to respond to the Spirit of God speaking to them:

For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind. 2 Tim 1:7

His recognition of the importance of prayer, his optimistic demeanor, and his love for singing praises to our Father and Jesus is an elevating influence from Jesus through him to us all.

I did not know Obadiah amidst the tumult of his earlier life vacillating between darkness and light, and so to learn of the draw that various aspects of Satan's kingdom had upon his heart and mind and how the hope of eternal life was on the line repeatedly in his journey, has proven to me with even greater certainty that all things are possible through Christ. No one is unreachable, unless they believe they are beyond hope. I rejoice with our Father and Jesus in what They have done to bring Obadiah into the marvellous light of this glorious gospel. He is a new creature in Christ, and he knows who he is as a son of God. I am blessed to have him as my friend and

brother and to work side by side as we proclaim the love of God in the face of His Only Begotten Son.

Ben Kramlich, September 2, 2025.

Father of Love Fellowship (www.fatheroflove.info)

INTRODUCTION

It was February 5th, 2025, and I was on a plane leaving the Philippines after 6 months of mission work there in 2024 and 2025. My heart was full and overflowing with love, gratitude, and praise to God. With tears in my eyes, I reflected on my wonderful experience living and sharing the gospel in the Philippines as a medical missionary and evangelist among the many precious, loving, and receptive souls in the Philippines. What an amazing adventure and satisfying ministry experience to see such a relational people responding to such a relational message of love. What a joy it was for me and our missionary team to be shown such love, hospitality, and self-sacrifice in return. It was a character and faith-building experience, yet worth all the perceived sacrifices and challenges, which were truly inestimable blessings. I was privileged to have been invited to travel and share this most precious message and to minister to precious souls over the many different Islands of the Philippines. In every place, I felt welcomed as a member of the family!

How did I get to this place at 31 years of age; to be able to serve our awesome God in such an awesome way!? How did I gain the assurance that I am joyfully living within in God's will and purpose, not only in the Philippines, but also in America and in life in general? How has my first love with Jesus been revived and has been growing over the past six years after completely fading out for some years while I was living a very worldly, prodigal son, party life, disconnected from God, and not at all interested in living for Him? How is it that I was willing to walk away from a promising future as a successful rockstar/beatboxer/musician and to instead whole-heartedly give my life over to Christ and enter full-time ministry? Why did I struggle so much going in and out, back and forth, between darkness and light, the bondage of sin

and the victory of Christ? How did Intercessory prayer save my life? How did I gain a greater consistency in my walk with God? How have I seen God's loving character manifested in my life and those around me? Follow me now through this turbulent experience as I sought for truth and identity and discover the freedom I have found in this most precious message.

My prayer is that my personal testimony of God's compassionate hand and goodness interwoven into my life and experience will encourage and inspire you and light a fire in your soul with love and gratitude to God. I pray that my story will bring revival, reformation, and freshness to your Christian experience. May it deepen your consecration, dedication, and relationship with our heavenly Father and his only begotten Son. I pray that you would know and desire to accept the calling that God has for your life to advance His kingdom. I pray that you can learn from my mistakes and have an even closer and more intimate relationship with Jesus, with nothing between. I pray all your relationships in life would improve and that you can be healthy, holy, and happy. I pray that the Holy Spirit of Jesus would lead you into all truth, as it is in Jesus, and give to you the humility and openness of a child of God and to be a diligent truth-seeker as I have been—like the Bereans of Paul's day, who studied for themselves to see if these things were true. I pray that you would taste and see that the Lord is good, that the truth (Jesus) might sanctify you and cause the sweet fruits of the spirit to be manifest in your life, as it has in mine.

"Jesus answered them and said, "My doctrine is not Mine, but His who sent Me. If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority. He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but He who seeks the glory of

the One who sent Him is true, and no unrighteousness is in Him.” (John 7:16-18).

SECTION 1: EARLY YEARS

PARENTAL CONTEXT: Eternally Grateful

Rewind... Thinking about the circumstances and providences surrounding someone's birth into this world is fascinating; To think of all the intricacies that needed to come together for me even to be born is amazing: For my parents to be raised the way they were, make the choices they did, meet each other when they did, reject all other suitors and get married, all leading toward my birth as a unique personality— O, what incredible gratitude! Oh, what a miracle to be alive!

My parents were both raised in conservative Adventist Christian homes by godly parents with good morals, standards, and values. My dad had more of a world-loving life at times, with a more dramatic rollercoaster relationship/experience with God over the years, including periods being very close to God, but also periods very far from God. On the other hand, my mother had a relatively more innocent life, having a more consistent and stable relationship with God.

My dear mother never drank alcohol, or went to wild parties, did not use drugs, or listened to worldly rock music, or slept around, or felt like she needed to experience what life was like in the world without God. Her testimony may not be as exciting and dramatic, but there is a power in it that is attractive and is a testament to the blessing of having godly parents who raised their child the best they knew how, according to the principles found in the Bible. She learned to respond to the love shown her and to trust the instruction given to her. Laura found, by experience, the blessing of living in

the way of life, as outlined in the Bible. “Train up a child in the way he (she) should go, and when he (or she) is old he will not depart from it.” (Proverbs 22:6). It is beautiful to see how God has blessed my mother by reason of her positive upbringing, with faith, love, and consistently in the straight and narrow path. She has always been there to support her family, especially when my dad and/or I were struggling spiritually. Of course, she has not lived a sinless life and has had her struggles, like appetite, worry, doubt, fear, and anxiety at times. Yet, God has been perfecting her character through allowing her to see the self-destructive effect of sin on the lives of those in her life whom she has ministered to, prayed for, cried for, and interceded for; my mother’s upbringing has saved her the pain of having to learn things “the hard way”. She is a faithful prayer warrior, and through long hours on her knees, she shared in the sufferings of Christ. She is the most consistent, and purest demonstration of God’s loving character I have known in my life. I am eternally grateful and blessed beyond measure.

My dear daddy also grew up in a good Adventist home as a pastor’s kid, to parents who were married almost 61 years before their time of death. After some rebellious years in his youth, my dad decided he wanted to enter the ministry. He became a pastor after graduating from Hartland College and marrying my mother, Laura. My parents have had a miraculous and lasting marriage of 36 years and counting! My dad was a Seventh-day Adventist minister (or pastor) until I was six. He then became a math and Bible teacher at Adventist high schools, before getting into information technology and computer work. I have seen my daddy’s deep love for Jesus at times, being the priest of the home and having daily family worship. His desire was always to raise my sister and I the best he could, despite his sins and shortcomings, knowing he was not always where he should be spiritually. God has blessed

him with a powerful intellect with the ability to memorize and understand a lot of Scripture, as well as being skilled in many practical areas of life. I really thank both my Heavenly Father and earthly father for all the knowledge they have imparted to me. My dad has been a good provider and currently works from home on his computer doing advanced IT, database administration, and financial report work, yet still ministering as a lay pastor doing Bible studies, sermons, and visitations when he can. My parents have shown much hospitality in inviting people into our home over the years, not just for socials and Bible studies, but occasionally for people who needed a place to stay for a period of time.

I guess my dad and I needed to learn the hard way. Still, I don't believe it was God's ideal will for us to have to experience sin, serving other gods and wasting time with the things of this world and selfish living. And for this we received the consequential penalty of sin: pain and misery. However, it did lead us to the point where we could clearly see that it wasn't worth kicking against the pricks anymore; all this time Christ was patiently revealing to us that His way of living, the Christian Way, was far more attractive than ours. What is amazing is how we can share a closer relationship with God, having been redeemed from sin, than if we had never sinned. He who is forgiven much, loves much! (Luke 7:47)

My parents named me Obadiah Zealous Wright, which is meaningful and prophetic. Obadiah means "servant of Yah or servant of God," and I can also be quite zealous! I am also always "Wright", even when I am wrong—haha. I was born in West Virginia in November of 1993. I have one sister named Abigail Grace Wright, who is about 3 years younger than me. She is a nurse and is married to an Adventist Doctor of Physical Therapy. They live in

Tennessee with their first child, a baby girl and another baby on the way. I am so blessed to have godly parents who by the grace of God, and despite their shortcomings, did their best to raise me well. I have so much to be grateful for due to my upbringing.

EARLY CHILDHOOD: Blessings and Cursings

I was raised a pastor's kid. My parents had daily family worships with us, took us to church weekly, raised us with good values, put us through Christian private schools, and taught us practical skills by giving us chores such as helping mom cook or clean and helping dad with different projects or needs around the house or yard (for which they did entrust a small allowance of funds). They fed us a vegetarian diet, and would have us listen to classical music, hymns, and generally more uplifting and peaceful Christian music than what many other families would listen to, such as “Rock ‘n’ Roll” and “Pop” music.

My parents are both very musical. They both sing, my dad plays guitar, and my mom has played violin using music and by ear for many years. I get my love for music and ability to sing and harmonize from them. I also learned how to play the trumpet and baritone euphonium in my school's concert band. I also inherited my love for nature from my parents, who enjoyed taking us hiking every Sabbath afternoon, camping, and doing other recreation. This included other outdoor activities such as biking and swimming. I have many good memories growing up and shared some precious moments together on family vacations. We had lots of fun on camping trips with my family and Pathfinders (which is like Boy Scouts for Adventists), which I was involved in for some years leading up to high school.

Although it wasn't perfect, my childhood was pretty good, especially compared to some of the traumatic stories which I have heard from others.

Sadly, there came into our home some bad influences that my dad later in life apologized to me for things like introducing worldly television shows, movies and computer video games from an early age. He later wished he would not have, after he saw the corrupting influence it had on me and my sister. Over the years it significantly diminished our love and interest in spiritual things, quality relationships and the simple pleasures and satisfactions of life. To give them credit, my parents tried to encourage us only to watch more "family-friendly" and non-violent shows and movies and play non-violent video games—but they were far from harmless. I can see the hold worldly entertainment and influences have had on my sister over the years, even though she did not go through a wildly rebellious life like I did (at least to the extent that I did). Even with our vegetarian diet, we still ate some junk foods and unhealthy vegetarian meats, and we were not always on the ideal whole food plant-based diet given to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. My dad lost his temper a few times over the years, but generally he was a kind and gentle father who loved to play with me and my sister and spend time with his family. Overall, we were a happy, healthy, and spiritual family that stuck together. God was still with us all along; He never left us!

I have never really shared this publicly before, but there was one traumatic event in my life that my brain completely blocked out of its memories until my parents shared it with me as an adult. Before I was 7 years of age, a twelve-year old boy sexually abused me, which led to me struggling with lust, masturbation, and pornography for many years of my life, even though I was never sexually attracted to men. Father, forgive him! I have no

idea who this man is, but I pray he is saved and comes to a knowledge of the truth, and that I can give him a hug in heaven. It just shows how wicked and powerful a hold sexual sin can have on people and how it zaps or pulls the spiritual life out of you. That, combined with my overpowering interest in always being involved in something more exciting and stimulating, like sports, movies, and games, made spiritual things very boring for me and somewhat clouded my childhood experience.

TEENAGE YEARS: Identity Crisis

Even though I was baptized into the Seventh-day Adventist church at age 13 or so, it was more of a social peer pressure thing. I was not truly converted then and was "buried alive in the water tank," as the saying goes. Occasionally there would be some spiritual revivals, or perhaps a week of prayer where my heart and mind would start to respond to God, but nothing was lasting.

As a teenager, I struggled with my Identity and finding personal value. I was often trying to do things to get the attention of, or prove my value to, my peers or teachers. I would try to fit in with the popular kids, even though I was usually unsuccessful. I struggled with feelings of worthlessness and rejection. I did reasonably well in school, although this was often difficult for me, but my parents and teachers were helpful. I rarely studied for tests or did my homework with friend groups, but alone, because I felt like I did not belong; that I was worthless to others. I did not realize that my Identity and value were not in my performance, achievements, looks, relationship status, or anything like that, but simply in being a beloved son of God and finding value in God's unchanging and unconditional agape love for me as His child in Christ—like how children should find value in their parents' love for them and

the positive words they speak over them. I should have valued more of the weird and socially outcasted friends that I had or could have had. It was only upon reading the book Identity Wars by Adrian Ebens in 2020, that I fully understood why I was struggling to feel accepted and good enough. You can find a free pdf or order a physical copy at fatheroflove.info.

SECTION 2: CONVERSION EXPERIENCE

CONVERSION EXPERIENCE: Born Again & On Fire

It was not until I was 17 years old that I had a miraculous and transformative conversion experience— I will never forget it. I was sponsored to attend a Seventh Day Adventist prayer conference at “The Cove” (Billy Graham retreat center) in Western North Carolina near where my family lived. I was not excited to attend multiple spiritual meetings and messages each day, but the nice resort and hotel surrounded by beautiful mountains, nature trails, and gourmet vegan meals sounded appealing to me. And, since it was free for me—how could I say no? I know God was doing everything He possibly could to bring me to a point of understanding His incredible love, His matchless charms and bring me to a point where I would be willing to make a complete surrender of my heart and life to Him. I believe joining two summer canvassing programs, which my parents encouraged me to do when I was 15 and 16, really contributed a lot to bringing me closer to the place of full surrender at this prayer conference.

One evening the Spirit of God was really moving upon my heart. The speaker made an appeal that if anyone wanted to invite Jesus fully into their heart and totally dedicate their lives to God, that they should come to the altar. I genuinely responded and went to the front with tears streaming down my face. Everyone who came down had an elder or pastor who would privately pray for them. One man I don’t know, even to this day, anointed my head with oil, symbolizing the Holy Spirit of God, laid hands on me, and

prayed for me. My life would never be the same again, as I was now a new man! I was truly born again, like Jesus described in John chapter 3!

Wow! My experience was like going from the darkness of night to the light of day. It was not some wild, ecstatic Pentecostal experience like in some churches, but it was a genuine heart change, and I was filled with the Spirit like the believers in the book of Acts who had been baptized but had not yet received the Holy Spirit. I cried a lot over the next few days because I was so in love with Jesus and could hardly believe what was happening. I was humbled and subdued by the love of God for me, despite my sinfulness. I could not take enough notes during the meetings; I was so interested and engaged. Prayer came alive and I felt as though I could pour my heart out to God as a friend! The Bible also came alive as I heard it speak to me as the voice of God to my hungering and thirsting soul! Witnessing and sharing my faith now came naturally, and I wanted to pray with my classmates at school and invite them to help me do humanitarian work in the community. I gave my first sermon at a school worship, appealing for all the young people to be born again and find an abiding relationship with Jesus, using the illustration of the vine and the branches.

God was giving me victory over the lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. My desires naturally changed from my union with my Lord. This vital connection and union naturally lead to holiness. I wanted to eat better, listen to heavenly music, dress appropriately, watch only uplifting, edifying, or informative videos, and I lost interest in playing video games. I wanted to live my life for God and to be a blessing to others. This was also when I first became interested in medical missionary work. I was even going around church to church to sign up prayer warriors for a digital

evangelistic series that was coming up and was even invited on 3ABN Live by North American Division Prayer Director at the time, Ruthy Jacobson. I was on fire for God! I wanted everyone to experience the incredible revival and reformation I had! My parents were very pleased and supportive, and it was beautiful for them and others to watch. I had drunk of the living water, and it was in me as a well of water springing up into everlasting life! (John 4:14). Many took notice that I had been with Jesus, and it was encouraging to see how contagious my experience was to inspire and bless others, and the good influence I was able to have on them.

If everyone in the church was truly born again and made their return to primitive godliness, having rekindled their first love for Jesus, earnestly seeking the truth, and abiding in Christ consistently, the fires of persecution would arise, and the gospel message would spread throughout the entire world very quickly. The character of God, as revealed in the life of Jesus, would be vindicated and displayed in His disciples. I think of Mary Magdalene, who knowing the deep depths of all of what Christ had forgiven her of and saved her from, after she poured out that expensive bottle of spikenard upon the feet of Jesus in tears of gratitude and love for Him, a Satanic indignation arose in the disciples and especially Judas, and it led to the final events of Christ's persecution and sufferings before his death and resurrection. What if all of us as Christ's disciples today boldly displayed our deep, heartfelt love for Jesus publicly like Mary did? Final events would wrap up very quickly! The character and kingdom of God would be revealed and vindicated! Jesus would then soon be able to come and take us home!

Everyone could tell that a dramatic change had occurred in me, including the devil. There is no limit to the usefulness of one who, by putting

self aside, makes room for the working of the Holy Spirit in his life and lives a life wholly consecrated to God! I felt like I was on a cloud; a spiritual high. The enemy of souls now perceived me as a threat to overthrow his earthly dominion and his bewitching power over souls. Satan is pleased with lukewarm, selfish, half-hearted Christians; with those who are Christian in name only and who are not vitally connected with Christ. These have a greater love for the world than for Christ and are animated more by the spirit of Satan than of Christ. They will not accurately represent the true character of the living God, our creator—something I was guilty of before my conversion. But once I had surrendered myself to God, I began to be used mightily by Him, whilst also simultaneously becoming a target for the arrows of hell. (Ephesians 6:16). The enemy will attempt to do anything to try and stop a believer who is so on fire for God, to prevent them from being such a powerful witness for Christ in their love and zeal for Him.

SECTION 3: SERVANT OF DARKNESS

THE FALL: Lost My First Love

At this time in my life, I was still not fully mature or stable yet in my Christian experience and what it meant to walk by faith and not by sight. I had not learned all the keys to lasting victory and maintaining that vital connection and first love with Jesus. I did not know how to maturely recover from falling into sin; how to get back on the battlefield after being hit by the enemy's arrows. After a few months, I was tempted and seduced into spiritual adultery and fell back into some of my old sinful habits: pornography, appetite, and computer games or movies and I had some bad falls. I had not yet learned to distrust myself and I was relying too heavily upon my feelings. I was starting to lose my first love for Jesus! I also did not yet fully understand the non-violent and non-condemning character of God (which later became the key to me not needing to seek comfort in pleasures and pride, but that I could find perfect comfort in Christ). I did get back up a few times, but after getting knocked around and slammed to the ground several times through yielding to temptation and failing to resist, I got very discouraged, my spirit was crushed, and eventually, I completely gave up. I had fallen, like the woman caught in adultery, but it was only until I was brought near unto Christ and understood that He does not condemn me for my sin, that I found consistent victory in my war against sin.

The enemy was tempting me with thoughts that it was too hard to live the Christian life and that I had willfully sinned after knowing better. I had lost the precious robe of light and the sweet sense of the presence of Jesus, and there was now, once again, a darkness over me; a satanic hatred

for God revived in my heart, deep down, unknown, within my subconscious mind. My eyes lost sight of my beloved Jesus, and I felt forsaken by God and left alone to the agonies of guilt, shame, condemnation, and worthlessness. I forgot about the goodness of God and was tempted to stop fighting the good fight of faith and to give myself over to the pleasures of sin for a season. I was pierced by the arrows of condemnation from the accuser of the brethren, and I unknowingly condemned myself to death and judged myself unworthy of eternal life. (Acts 13:46). I died spiritually, and I began to self-destruct and do things worthy of death. (Romans 1:32). Sin is a manifestation of a man or woman who believes they are going to die. Sin is also lawlessness, and as Christ and His character is the fulfillment of the law, to be in sin is to be without Jesus' life and righteousness. This was now my condition, and at this point, I turned my face and walked away from God completely.

My heart went hard, dark, and cold. I had no barrier or resistance to sin. It was truly a dark night in my soul. I just completely let the current of sin sweep me away downstream, the devil became my master. Lawlessness was the name of the game. I had no interest in spiritual things, so I stopped praying and reading my Bible. I had cut myself off and asked God to sign the divorce papers. I would only go through the motions when I felt I needed to; only to achieve selfish ends. I lost my identity as a son of God and began looking for a new identity. My stubborn will was decided and firm against any appeals from my parents or spiritual mentors in my life and I hardened my heart against the convictions of my conscience, telling me that I was going down the wrong path.

God, in his loving wrath, in grief, had to let me go and experience the consequences of separation from Him and the vanities of this world. (Just as it is impossible for God to lie (Hebrews 6:18), it is also impossible for God to force someone to love and follow Him. God is love and love never does this). I was soon to turn 18. I had my own car, and my parents were now very limited as to how much they could try to shelter me, so, like God, they too would also give me that freedom to make bad choices and suffer the consequences, even though it pierced their grieving hearts through. I didn't care, or even notice, how much I was hurting my parents, neither did I realize how much I was crucifying Christ afresh and piecing his heart with sorrow in seeing His beloved son becoming a prodigal son. I did not realize that God, through Christ, was still imparting life to me and that I was using HIS life to hurt myself and others. All the damage I was insisting to inflict would have also been witnessed by my guardian angel, who longed to deliver me from my impending self-destruction that I might still have opportunity in the future to repent and be converted. I thought that in my forsaking God, that I had pushed God too far away for me to ever be reconciled. Little did I know that God was still there, bearing His cross for me, and would always be there with me and for me to save me from greater dangers. His goodness and steadfast love would do anything and everything He could to win and woo me back to Himself! What incredible condescension; Marvelous, perplexing, agape love; our Father never gives up on us!

THE WILD PARTY YEARS: Finding a New Identity

What follows next is not a pretty picture or family-friendly story, but it is the reality of my story, and I know that many can relate. To forget about the Bible, the future coming of Jesus, and the judgment of the wicked, I

proceeded to live a hedonistic lifestyle; not delaying gratification, only living for the moment, for self. Nothing was off limits for me, including unrestrained appetite, bad movies, video games, and any music of my liking. You get the idea. I first tried smoking marijuana over at our neighbor's house one day, and for me, that was a gateway drug. I was no longer content to consume sinful and sensual content on the internet only, but now I wanted to experience the wild west of the world for myself. A perverted sense of freedom to "do as thou wilt" took its grip. I wanted to experience nightlife and to visit nightclubs. I began to go to hear DJs and watch bands play music—I was mostly attracted to electronic music. I was also a beatboxer who would make drum noises and music with my mouth and voice. Because of my talent in beatboxing, I attracted rappers and hip-hop musicians into my life. I also enjoyed dancing a lot, and I got complimented on my dancing skills and beatboxing. During these years, I worked for Blockbuster Video, Old Navy, and Papa John's Pizza while living with my parents in Hendersonville, North Carolina. Asheville was just north of us, and that is where I got into trouble.

I remember my dad telling me in a voice of accommodation that if I were to drink, I should never drink and drive. I was underage, and I was also usually the dedicated driver, so I would really try not to drink alcohol and drive, but occasionally I would drink some while not driving. I never really became a big drinker. I did not like getting drunk. I also would occasionally smoke a friend's cigarette, but I thankfully never got addicted to them. I would visit large music festival events and lots of house parties where I ended up trying many different types of drugs in addition to marijuana, including: MDMA, ecstasy, cocaine, meth, LSD, psychedelic mushrooms, DMT, and many others, but thankfully never heroin. I also regret the different women I slept with during my prodigal son life, and all I can do is pray for

their salvation. What is a miracle is that I never got any sexually transmitted diseases or had any children! Praise God, He is so merciful!

I had some crazy experiences on psychedelic drugs that I don't want to share too many details about, just a simple overview. "I want you to be wise in what is good, and simple concerning evil." (Romans 16:19). If you know anything about these drugs, I believe they don't just make you hallucinate, but that they are like the tree of knowledge of good and evil. They open doors that should never be opened, that allow evil spirits to influence you in different and sometimes very powerful and traumatic ways. I know why some are addicted to these substances because they can offer a counterfeit sense of connection, comfort, and spirituality. Deep down, I still wanted a spiritual experience, but through the wrong mediums. I had some seemingly amazing dopamine highs, and ecstatic experiences. I certainly would see and experience some wild things. Sometimes I thought I was gaining some profound insights while high, but usually when I sobered up and thought about it again, the high ideas seemed silly. I believe it is possible for God to still speak to someone in these states of mind, as I believe He did to me several times, to reach someone where they are at in their own personal search for God and spirituality, but it is not worth the risk if someone knows better—like I did...It's the devil's playground.

I would also have some horrible and dark trips that felt like hell and extreme torment. I would not wish one of these experiences on anyone! I really felt like I might die several times, have a heart attack, or that I might forever lose my mind and go insane. I cannot fully describe the strength and severity of the satanic emotions I would feel while under the influence. Sometimes these substances made me feel like I was my own god and it

really caused my pride to increase, but sometimes it plummeted me into feelings of complete horror and fear –just a taste of the separation from God that lost souls will feel in the end before being eternally lost in the lake of fire. I remember always being so grateful to regain my sanity when I sobered up. I remember praying or asking for prayer a few times when I was either in a bad psychedelic trip or having a panic attack, and I believe these began to open the door to allow God to work more in my life again. As my sin was abounding during these experiences, God’s grace began super abounding to deliver me from them. (Romans 5:20). I personally knew of people who either died from an overdose or lost their minds. I know God, in his mercy, spared my life from many dangers and harms in answer to my family’s, church family’s, and friends’ prayers. And little did I know that Jesus was still there, pierced and suffering with me, upholding my life and preserving me from coming completely under the control of Satan. “In all their [my] affliction He was afflicted, and the Angel of His Presence saved them [me]; In His love and in His pity He redeemed them [me]; And He bore them [me] and carried them [me] all the days of old.” (Isaiah 63:9).

WAKE UP CALL: Sin Leads to Bondage

My parents prayed that God would allow anything to happen to me that I might wake up and see my need for Him and to repent. There were a few times that the police arrested me, and I went to jail for a few days. One time was while I was high on Halloween and had possession of some illicit drugs, which can be charged as a felony. Thankfully, since it was my first offense in the state, I was able to go through probation for 1 year. I thankfully passed all my drug tests, and that charge was wiped off my record forever! I also had another time in a different state where they tried to charge me with

driving under the influence when my car broke down on the side of the road after I had been smoking some marijuana. I was honest with the officer that I had been smoking, so I went to jail. Both times I went to jail, I did pray, repent, give my heart back to God, and sought the Lord. I was even used to be a witness to the other people in jail. Even though I quickly went back to my stubborn ways, I believe my willingness to respond to the Spirit of God during these low moments allowed God to keep working in my life, and it encouraged my parents for a while, strengthened their faith, and added renewed fervency to their prayers.

Thankfully, after going to court several times with my public defender, the blood test came back negative for marijuana. So, the long story short is that my charge was dropped— hallelujah! I was also charged with something to do with selling synthetic marijuana to a young Adventist, a minor at the time. But after I had given my heart back to Jesus, I called the father of the young man up and apologized for what I had done stating that I was truly repentant and wanted to live for the Lord. I asked if he would drop the charges, which thankfully, he did. I believe this compassionate father was responding to the mercies of our loving Father in Heaven. He showed me TRUE justice, mercy; for God's justice is to show mercy! "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9). He could have said, "Every sin must be punished," and let me experience the full consequences of my bad choices, but he didn't.

Having a clean criminal record felt like being completely forgiven by God; that the record of sins from my wicked and wretched life were completely blotted out. I felt as though my sins were separated from me as

far as the east is from the west; thrown into the depths of the sea! I am "eternally grateful and blessed beyond measure" (one of my favorite sayings) that I don't have any criminal charges on my record and that I have the freedom to travel around the world and share the gospel! God answered the prayers of my beloved friends and family. God in His foreknowledge could see that there was something in me that was, and would still, respond to His spirit. So, in His mercy and providence, I believe He did all He could to help keep my criminal record clean and free so it would not hinder the mission and ministry work he desired and planned for me to do, Hallelujah!

STANDING IN THE GAP: My Intercessory Prayer Warriors

I am so blessed to have parents, friends and church family, who out of love for me, bore their cross and prayed and interceded for the redemption of my soul. I cried after I heard the news that a female friend, who I used to party with, was murdered by her boyfriend, who then took his own life. A flood of questions entered my mind: How was my life spared and not hers!? Did she not have anyone praying and interceding for her? Did she not have any godly role models or parents in her life? Was she just so hardened in sin that there was nothing God could do to protect her? I struggle to find answers to such questions. But what I do know is that my dear mother, more so than anyone, would pray for many painful hours—day and night—with tears, for my protection and salvation. She was a prayer warrior waging spiritual warfare for my soul on her knees, against the adversary of souls—Satan! She would insert my name into Scripture, claiming many Bible promises for me, some of which she would text to me, pleading for me to yield to Christ and to claim the promises for myself. I remember my

eyes being opened to the great controversy; I became aware of a war between angels and demons over my soul while I was in the world, and I was able to see through some of the deceptions Satan was trying to confuse and tempt me with. I believe this was an answer to the prayers of my loving parents and friends.

One Bible verse she wrote down and claimed for me was Colossians 1:13 “Who hath delivered us [Obadiah] from the power of darkness, and hath translated us [him] into the kingdom of his dear Son.” Another was “I will give you [Obadiah] a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your [Obadiah’s] flesh and give you [Obadiah] a heart of flesh.” She really believed God’s word would not return unto him void; that God would save me, and that I would respond again to the Spirit of God. Although my mother was sometimes tempted to be discouraged, she never gave up hope or stopped praying for me. What amazing and self-sacrificing love; a reflection of the agape love of our heavenly Father and our mediator and high priest Jesus Christ, who is doing everything he can possibly do, through His spirit, to restore and save us! My mother’s influence has inspired and taught me to also be a prayer warrior. I intercede for others in the same way, sometimes fasting and praying for friends or family who are sunk in the pit of sin and seem unable or undesirous to get out of the pit themselves. I have seen the profound impact it has had in their lives, and I am encouraged to soldier on! Let us never give up praying for those who seem like the most hopeless or prolonged cases! Adrian Ebens, a good friend of our family, remembers visiting my parents at their home in 2014 and specifically praying for me.

SECTION 4: ROLLERCOASTER YEARS (A Righteous Man Falls 7 Times and Rises up Again)

HALF-HEARTED CONVERSION: Compromised Christianity

After about 2 or 3 years of living life like this, my parents were beginning to see an answer to their prayers. I felt the vanity and emptiness of my life. I frantically tried to fill the God shaped hole in my heart with worldly pleasures, but nothing seemed to fit—I felt empty inside—in fact, the hole only felt bigger now. I distinctly remember God speaking to me during one of my psychedelic mushroom trips. The experience started to get dark, and anxiety started to take its crippling grip upon me. The spirit of fear began creeping towards me in my crippled state. I did not want to lose my mind. I remember saying a prayer and asking God to help me and deliver me from this demonic oppression. (Yes, I gave my heart and surrendered my mind to Christ while I was high and out of my mind just like the demoniac who came to Jesus.) I remember calling my mother and sharing that I was not in my right mind, but that I had surrendered to Jesus and that I wanted her to pray for me because deep down I knew God would answer her prayers and would deliver me back to soundness of mind! After that moment, I had a deeper peace come over me, and not long after, I was able to sleep some and awake to sobriety and return home to my parents, with whom I was still living.

Galatians 6:7-8 says, “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.”

I had sown my wild oats and was reaping a harvest that would not be easy to overcome. The lust of the flesh was still so intense. I think of how Pharaoh chased after his Hebrew slaves after they had been set free to leave the bondage of Egypt, by the hand of Moses. The enemy deceived me into thinking that I could live my life as a Christian but also compromise some of my standards so that I could enjoy things like Christian rock, hip-hop, contemporary music, and other loose dietary and lifestyle practices, while still calling myself a “Christian”. Much like how Constantine, Emperor of Rome (306 to 337 B.C.), “converted” to Christianity but still wanted to hold onto his pagan practices—thus blending paganism with a profession and form of Christianity and totally obscuring the truth and power of the gospel. I still wanted to spend devotional time with God and share my renewed faith with my old friends (especially with my best friend David, with whom I used to hang out and party a lot with), but I wanted to do it in a way that would ultimately place me upon Satan’s territory—only further obscuring the lines between truth and error. I started visiting Sunday churches and enjoying their coffee and upbeat praise music, which gave me a spiritual high experience that made me feel more holy than the partying. This phase did not last very long because I soon realized that I was indulging the flesh too much. I did not know myself; I was overconfident and self-righteous, not heeding the verse in Corinthians 10:12 that says, “Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.” When I went out with my old friends, the temptation was still too strong, and I was too weak to resist attending the same parties,

music concerts, and dance parties. I ended up fully going back into my old lifestyle and practices, and I lost my connection with God.

SPIRITUAL BREAKTHROUGH: Surrendering My Heart Back to Jesus

God's spirit was still striving with me. Since my blood family and church family's faith was strengthened and encouraged to see me wanting to live for God in recent months, their prayers were working overtime for me, especially my mother's. I had been tempted again to go out with my friends to listen and dance to some DJs playing electronic music at a club—I went. That type of music can have a very sensual, emotional, entrancing, hypnotic, and spiritual effect. Satan is the prince of the power of the air and, before he fell, was the music director in heaven. Satan has perverted and twisted music to divert worship from God to himself, the evil angels, and even the music artists themselves. I made a lot of compromises with sin that night, including the use of drugs. When the club was closing down at 2 am, I went with my friends to someone's apartment to continue the after party, as I had done many times in the past. It was not unusual for me to see the sunrise after partying all night.

I was feeling some convictions of conscience from the spirit of God through my guardian angel at the after-party. When someone offered me a drink of wine, I decided to refuse the drink, which was strange for me. I normally would have drunk the wine since I was at the after-party and would not have had to drive for a while. I then felt the invitation and pulling on my heart strings for me to make the surrender to God again, and I accepted Jesus back into my heart and asked God to forgive and cleanse me of my sin in the

middle of that house party. I felt this amazing peace flood over my soul with the assurance of the forgiveness of sins and a sense of God's presence! I can imagine the behind-the-scenes footage of angels receiving permission to come in and cast out the demonic forces I had invited into my life and surrounding me with a heavenly atmosphere of light and peace.

My mother had also asked permission the day before if she could put a "Steps to Christ" devotional book into my backpack, which I begrudgingly accepted to make her happy. Well, I ended up picking up this book and reading it in the middle of this party at 3 am, and it was like spiritual bread, bringing life and satisfaction back to my soul! At least one or more friends approached me and asked me what I was reading, which allowed me to witness to them briefly about Christ. Typically, in the past, when my friends would ask me about my Christian upbringing, I would often say, "That is my parents' faith." I would say I felt restricted and that I was choosing my own path and having my own experiences now, which was essentially to deny Christ, like the disciple Peter did many times.

I proceeded to the back porch and attempted to call my dear mother. She eagerly woke up to answer my phone call, which to her was an answer to prayer! Like the prodigal son's father, my mother and father were waiting with longing expectation and arms open wide to receive me back home. My mother often kept her phone on just in case I tried to contact her. She really wanted to be there for me 24/7— Praise the Lord. What amazing Love! When I told her that I had surrendered my heart to Jesus again, I could tell that she was getting emotional and had tears of joy in her eyes. She praised the Lord and rejoiced to hear the good news! I asked her to pray for me, and I made it back home that morning.

ESCAPE FROM EGYPT: Seeking After God

It was about the fall of 2014, I was almost 21 years old, and I realized that I could not trust myself to stay in my old environment with my old friends. I first went on a retreat to my grandparents' home in the countryside and mountains of western North Carolina. I intended to seek God and spend extra time in prayer, nature walks, singing, reading my Bible, and other spiritual books like Pilgrim's Progress and devotionals like "Steps to Christ" and "Desire of Ages" by Ellen White. I felt very emotional, and I remember crying tears while I was really pouring my heart out to God. My grandparents were very sweet and godly people who were married for almost 60 years! It was a blessing to share quality time with them, help them with things around the house and yard, and volunteer at the local Adventist food pantry.

I was praying about what God would have me do next in life, and I felt impressed to go back to school. I had good memories of doing literature evangelism with a canvassing team from Ouachita Hills College in 2010. The students were very spiritual, sang Scripture songs, knew their Bibles, and had a contagious love for Jesus. I could tell something was different about them than most Adventist young people. I decided to apply and attend school at this small, conservative Adventist college in Amity, Arkansas, for 2 semesters starting in January 2015. Overall, I had a wonderful experience and was growing and learning a lot spiritually. This was where I first became interested in eating more of a wholefood plant-based diet, which the cafeteria served, and also where I took a greater interest in getting more physical exercise. Every student in the school would usually join the canvassing programs during the school year and the summer to raise money for their tuition. We were assigned a church to go to each Sabbath and would

engage in Sabbath afternoon outreach, visitations, and Bible studies. I also really enjoyed my classes, which were infused with a lot of Bible and SOP (Spirit of Prophecy). We also received good practical work experience in the different industries around campus. I had a genuinely renewed love for God! I remember moments of my heart burning within me and feeling really close to Jesus while enjoying the regular worships and week of prayers.

LOOSING MY HOLD ON GOD: Disconnected from Life Source

I wish I could say that this story continues happily ever after, but there was trouble in paradise. A good environment can really help to heal physically, mentally, and spiritually, but it cannot entirely prevent someone from sinning and losing that hold on God. It is easy to feel spiritual and connected to God when so many around you are also, but it is vitally important also to have a personal relationship and connection with Jesus and not to take for granted the protection and blessings we have. I lost my guard a few times in my second semester, especially with appetite and personal prayer, and fell into some old sins. The worst of all was masturbation, which completely zapped or neutralized my spiritual life, and I once again got very discouraged.

At first, I desired to get back up and get back on the right track with God and the path of life, which I did for some time, but I felt my old man rearing up his ugly head again from time to time. The pull of the flesh seemed almost overpowering at times. I remember telling one of my teachers and counselors, Mrs. Solair, something to the effect of, “I feel like I’m losing my hold on God again; the darkness is creeping in,” I was struggling spiritually

and I feared that, if left to myself, I would lose my hold on God. She encouraged me to keep looking to Jesus, but in looking to my own sinful condition and consequential sense of separation from God I lost sight of my beloved Savior once again. I had not been established and strengthened enough and for long enough in my spiritual walk and I still had lessons to learn about myself and God. What did I still lack for lasting victory? What Beliefs, conscious or unconscious, were making it more difficult for me to remain abiding in Christ and to not lose faith?

The enemy was tempting me with the “positive and exciting memories” of my past worldly life, like how Satan tempted Jesus by offering him the world and all its splendor, yet cunningly hiding the death, destruction, pain, misery, sickness, discord, deception and strife his wicked rulership had caused. My faith failed to pierce through the dark clouds enshrouding my soul and into the sunshine of God’s love and promises above the raging storm. The temptation at first was subtle: to not immediately repent of my sins and run to Jesus. But to go even one day without praying, that I might be able to resist further temptation, caused an immediate snowball effect which continued into the next day, and I would again neglect to have personal devotion time, which only further disconnected me from the true vine and life source.

This sad spiritual state continued through a mission trip to the beautiful Dominican Republic. Because the staff and students had seen how on fire I was for God before in recent months, they asked me to be the main speaker for the evangelistic series we were presenting—I reluctantly accepted. We also did a community health expo for a few days. I proceeded to preach a series of at least 10-14 meetings in the Dominican Republic with

PowerPoint presentations and even appeals where souls were responding and giving their hearts and lives to Jesus. At the same time, I sadly refused to let Jesus back into my cold heart. I tried to make the outside look pleasant, but inwardly I was like dead man's bones. Most were still unaware of how far from God I actually was because I still tried to go through the motions and play the part as much as I could, but inwardly, I was a hypocrite and spiritually dead. I hardened my heart to listen to spiritual songs and messages and even to offer them myself. They would almost entirely run off my stony heart and not affect me. I resisted the convictions of conscience from the spirit of God, and I strangely and persistently continued in my stubborn will, infected with satanic enmity against God and His only begotten Son.

I decided not to enroll in another year of Bible College and returned home to live with my parents. After a few weeks of going back into the world with some wild living, I came to my senses again and I realized that I did not want to be doing this again. I had another conversion experience where I yielded my heart back to God and again placed myself under the influence of His Spirit.

I was a fickle sapling: The seed of Christ had been planted in my heart, and it had sprouted, but the tender plant was constantly being choked out by the weeds of worldliness. Jesus would come and pull out the weeds upon my request, but since the weeds had already dropped their seeds, new ones kept taking their place and once again choking me out. As the saying goes, "one year's seeding, seven years weeding." I could have simply asked Jesus to take away the new weed sprouts, but I had grown accustomed to their presence and I would only do so when I started to feel the oppressive nature of the weeds. I was very foolish, yet at least I still knew

to call out to God and trusted that He would save me. My heavenly Father knew of my ignorance, that I did not truly understand what I was doing, and He shielded me from much of the draining effects of the weeds around me and was always ready to grasp the thorny weeds with his own bare hands and tear them away for me.

NEW OPPORTUNITIES: Time for a Change-up

I decided to go to Australia for a change in 2016 and work at my Uncle Hal Mayer's *Highwood Health Retreat* in Victoria, Australia—which he has since sold to new ownership. It was a good environment; the conditions were right to nurture my spiritual growth. I got to engage myself in good practical work around the campus: working with the health guests, cooking gourmet vegan meals, juicing in the kitchen, working in the garden and other odd jobs. There were also staff worship, church services every Sabbath and we were active in community outreach and evangelism.

I was in love with God again, zealous for him, and people could tell. For several months, I was having quality personal devotional time with the Lord and listening to sermons, audiobooks, the Bible, and praying while working. I got to go out with two of the Bible workers to do some visitations and Bible studies; I saw God using us to be a blessing to some dear souls. I was getting excited as I began learning more about righteousness by faith through books such as, “*Christ our Righteousness*” by E.J. Waggoner and “*Christ our Righteousness*” J.W. Lehman. I was even asked to share a sermon about praying. I presented how God revealed to us a process by which we may approach Him through prayer in the sanctuary of the Old Testament.

The dragon's wrath was enraged, seeking to wage war with the remnant of her seed once again (revelation 12:17); the seeds of the old weeds began to sprout up all around me once again. Why could I not maintain this Christian experience and relationship with God? Was I still missing something? Was I spiritually slack, failing to put on my spiritual armor to resist the enemy who is like a roaring lion seeking to devour me?

Chronos, the Greek “god” of time, still had power over me and I was getting a little too obsessed with watching end-of-the-world and end-of-times prophecy videos. This was predominately cultivating a mindset motivated by deadlines and achievement. I began to fear that if I did not achieve perfect holiness before Jesus came, I would die (hence the term “DEAD-line”). This put too much pressure on me and as the weeds of sin began to choke out the light of “the sun of righteousness”, all I could see was the blackness of my own soul...I began to sink into despair and hopelessness AGAIN! I do not say that there was not value in these sorts of prophetic videos, for they did help me to understand the nearness of Christ return and to desire a place in His heavenly kingdom, but I now understand that deadlines should not be a motivation for doing good; Jesus is not counting down like an angry parent, “3...2...1...½...0...THAT’S IT! I’ve had enough of you!” But rather, our motivation to respond to Jesus' call to holiness should be PURELY out of love and gratitude for His redeeming love for us. It was not until I truly came to understand that Jesus NEVER gets impatient with us, that I found freedom from fear driven “Christianity”.

QUESTIONING MY SONSHIP: Battle Between Two Identities

I had sown the many seeds of the flesh in the past, and without constant watch care and asking Jesus to perform regular weeding on my behalf, I could feel myself being taken over again by my old ways; I needed to be comforted, but I could not find lasting comfort in a Jesus that was checking His watch and tapping His feet with impatience with my progress, so I resorted to counterfeit comforters. It takes time to re-establish our brains neural pathways and habits to be in harmony with the path of life and righteousness. If I had held on in faith that Jesus would continue to perform His good work in me, regardless of whatever time constraint I felt I was under, ironically enough, I might have given my brain enough time to re-establish better neural pathways...But I let my fleshly nature take over and became a servant to sin again. I even snuck away a few times to go party in Melbourne. I was struggling spiritually again. Satan was doing his best to bring in thorns to choke out and prevent the seed of the word of God from bearing fruit in my life. The enemy was tempting me to uproot and abort Christ from my affections so that He would not be fully formed in me. I was tempted to crucify him afresh and put him to an open shame.

I was at war with myself; a conflict between two identities. The one, being a beloved son of God, brought me joy in my Father's presence as I lived for Him and served Him in good deeds; while the other, being a devil child, brought me temporary euphoria in pleasure seeking. As a devil child I was always hungering more and more but never feeling filled and I would ultimately be capitulated back into the overwhelming sense of worthlessness and guilt. Whereas, as a child of God I was beginning to taste from the sweet,

unfermented wine of sonship that made my soul glad, but over-time there seemed to be something in the wine that was fermenting it and making me drunk again and I would forget who I was. (In the Bible wine represents doctrine. Christ seemed sweet at first but there were erroneous doctrines that had seeped their way into the pure religion of Christ. These false, man-made, doctrines were corrupting the blessing of the pure wine and causing me to lash out violently against Him in my drunken stupor.)

I was constantly trying to prove to God that I was His servant and not Satan's. I would do as many good things as I could do, but when my attempts to prove to God my value failed, and I felt I had fallen short His glory and righteousness, I unknowingly doubted God's steadfast love for me, and I would be plummeted back into despair again. It was this satanic performance system, driven by fear of "not being good enough" under the threat of Chronos' deadline, that was fermenting the sweet doctrine of Christ. I had still yet to learn that nothing that I could ever do (or not do), no grand display of power on my behalf, could change the inestimable value God had already placed upon me.

This was the same temptation Satan pressed against Christ in the wilderness. Satan tempted the Son of God to prove his identity as a son of God by turning stones into bread (by a display of power). Jesus responded with "It is written, man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God." Christ brought to His remembrance the words of His heavenly Father which had just been spoken over Him at His baptism, saying "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased". I doubted these words could still be true for me when I was sunk in the mire of

sin. Was I still a son of God when I had given in to sin? Was God's love for me still the same? Would He ever give up on me?

I did not yet fully understand the character of God. I did not realize that He had never forsaken me in those moments but that I had forsaken him. I did not realize that God never condemned me for not perfectly living up to the standard, either in my own righteousness, which is as filthy rags, or in my desire for it to be God's righteousness. I did not realize that I did not need to try to find pleasure in other sins or counterfeit comforters to try to cover up the guilt, shame, and condemnation I felt after giving in to sin. Just as Adam and Eve ran away from God after they sinned and ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (which represents Satan's lies about God, His kingdom, character, and law) I had repeatedly done the same. I had not yet realized that I had still inherited some of these lies and enmity from Satan, and how that was subconsciously influencing me to run away from the loving arms of Christ and the Father and to instead seek comfort in vain things. I did not yet fully realize that Jesus never brings conviction without also offering comfort; that I did not need to fear my sense of guilt in the presence of Christ, but I could lean into His loving arms and receive the comfort of forgiveness as soon as the conviction strikes; and that I could only find access to this victory through faith in the life of Christ, as the perfect expression of the loving character of the Father's heart towards me. Jesus has showed me that even when He felt totally forsaken of God on the cross, exclaiming, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" He still died in complete trusting faith in His Father's unending love for Him, saying, "Father, into Your hands I commit My Spirit." Jesus showed me how complete faith in the love of the Father, both experientially and intellectually, is the essential ingredient to victory over sin.

I still did not yet understand that my salvation was not dependent upon achievements or displays of power, under the threat of a deadline (like a servant); but through an intimate, trusting relationship with God, through the faith of Jesus (like a son). I still needed to learn that if I continued to commit my spirit to God, even in times of despair, God would send forth the spirit of His Son into my heart to cry out, “Daddy, Father, save me!” And I would be saved. This perfect love that Jesus has for His Father casts out the fear of the old framework (covenant), for “perfect love casts out fear” (an unholy fear that fears being struck down or condemned by God for not being perfect enough).

I had not yet fully realized the hidden enmity to God in me. I was still going too much by my feelings and was not mature enough in faith. Even though I mentally acknowledged that I needed Christ, His life, and His righteousness working in me to live up to that standard, I was struggling to maintain this in reality. I was still sometimes falling back into an old covenant mindset of a servant with my promises powered by my own filthy “righteousness”, doing things my way, in my own time, in the flesh of the old man, which will always fail.

By this point in my Christian walk, at the age of 22, I had gained a large amount of knowledge. I understood more about the personality of God as a real father and of Jesus as a real son, the only begotten and yet fully divine, son of God (an important and commonly misunderstood doctrine because of the erroneous teachings of the Catholic church). I will explain more on this important point further on in my story. I also was very knowledgeable about the health laws given in the Bible and the SOP, however, I was too legalistic and strict at times with diet and lifestyle; I saw

them more as rules restricting my freedom and enjoyment, rather than principles that would benefit my overall health and happiness. I would also judge others too harshly for what they were eating. Because I had a high standard of knowledge, I felt convicted to live up to a very high standard. Since I had an all-or-nothing mindset, I would quickly feel as though I was not able to achieve such a lofty standard and that I might as well just give up—if I couldn't beat the devil, I'd join him; but this just showed that I was still trying to earn my salvation by my own righteousness and not through Christ righteousness working in me by faith. This is why, in my mind, I was either fully living for God and living up to the light and knowledge I had, or not at all. I did not want to be on the path of creeping compromise and a lukewarm faith. I believed the words of Revelation 3:16 when Jesus says to Laodicea, "I wish that you were either hot or cold." Which is why when I would fall into sin, I would also usually go all-in until I felt so bad I would repent and come back to Christ. God was so merciful to look beyond my rebellious nature and to persistently continue to call me higher and higher. This experience has shown me that God truly never condemned me and that if He doesn't, neither should I condemn myself; for I am no greater judge than He!

COMPLETELY DEFEATED: The Pendulum Swings back

I eventually gave up trying to fight the good fight of faith. I lost my identity as a son of God again and after 7 months of being in Australia I returned home to America where I was tempted to move out of my parents' home and for the first time to attempt to live life on my own in the world. I got a job in the restaurant service industry and found a room in someone's house to rent in Asheville, North Carolina. If anyone knows anything about Asheville, it is a

very iniquitous Sodom-like city. It is the beer capital of the southeast with dozens of breweries. Drugs are rampant. New age spirituality is alive among the many irreligious “spiritualists” living there. It is known as the Los Angeles of the East Coast because of its prevalent LGBTQ community (perhaps a cause of why this town was almost entirely washed off the map when a massive hurricane struck the town and surrounding regions in September of 2024 and brought apocalyptic flooding, much like how Sodom was wiped off the map for their wickedness). [Disclaimer- I don't believe God was the one directly responsible for causing this natural disaster or any other natural disaster for that matter but rather disasters occur because of natural consequences to sin and a withdrawal of God's protection]. Music, nightlife, and art are also a big part of the culture there, which is a big reason why I was attracted to living there, in addition to all the friends I had already made there. I was also trying to pursue the music industry with my beatboxing and musical talents.

Because of my charismatic, sanguine, extroverted, friendly, and talkative personality, I made many friends in Asheville. Since I was still losing the Identity war, it felt good to have so many friends who did not seem to judge me for the sinful life I was living. I felt popular and accepted among my musical and party friends. I did not prefer to be called by my birth name, “Obadiah,” since it means “Servant of God”, so I preferred to go by my nickname, “Obie”. I got a lot of attention and compliments for my beatboxing and dancing skills, which only fed my ego (pride of self). I became known as “The Beatboxer,” and I found value and identity in this. I would spend hours and hours beatboxing and became very good at it. So, I had a niche musical talent that made me stand out. Since my style of beatboxing was more musically flowing and less technical, rappers and singers were attracted to

putting lyrics and melodies over my beats, so I started to perform at parties, clubs, concerts, and music festivals. My work ethic was not as strong at this time because my heart and mind were more interested in social gatherings and going out, listening to, and performing music.

Beatboxing was a big snare for me because I felt a very powerful and bewitching energy when I was doing it, almost like I was a wizard of sound that could enchant my listeners by casting very syncopated musical spells over them. I felt like what many famous musicians feel when they describe being a channel for a spirit to take over and inspire them and their music. I seemed to become even better at it while I was high and under the influence of caffeine, drugs, or alcohol. But even while completely sober, beatboxing would give me an unnaturally stimulating high. I felt like I was receiving worship when performing for people...worship that was only designed to be directed to the only true and living God.

I can only imagine how much I pierced and grieved the heart of God and His Son, my parents, and my godly friends, brothers, and sisters by the life they could see I was living compared to the meek, on fire and in love with Jesus, Obadiah. I did not realize until later that Jesus had still not forsaken me but was still being crucified in me, continually giving me life and breath in mercy, despite my rebellion, and helping me to avoid making the worst possible decisions.

A female friend, student, and sister in Christ from Ouachita Hills College who had seen me so on fire for God and witnessed my fall from grace through social media which grieved her heart to the point of writing a beautiful song about me and my experience, which I did not hear until years later. It was basically her prayer for me put into music, "Welcome Home,"

with the chorus resounding with the heart and cry of God and His begotten Son to me, their prodigal son. Here are some of the lyrics:

VERSE 1

It seems like I'm found in the same spot again
There is no light but I'm trying to find
All the good things that were promised
The whole world under my feet
This is my choice despite the Voice that says,

CHORUS

"Come home My child come
These wounds on My hands
Are able to break the bands
That hold you to the ground
Your broken heart can't even make a sound
Just turn around"

FALL FROM GRACE: Refining My False Identity

By the grace of God, I still had some level of kindness, charity, and compassion for others. I was still known for looking on "the bright side". The positive traits of character and virtue in me from my time walking with God were not completely eroded away yet, which is why some people tried to compliment me for being a good person and a pure and free-spirited soul. This was a lie and deception straight from hell to make me feel like I had my own source of life or righteousness, separate from Christ, and that maybe my heart wasn't so wicked after all. I did not realize that God's spirit was still striving with me to make better decisions, save me from excess harm, and inspire me with genuine impulses to help and bless others. I still wanted to

improve and advance in other positive areas in life. For instance, I had been reading and listening to some self-help books such as *"How to Win Friends and Influence People"*, *"7 Habits of Highly Effective People"*, and *"The Obstacle is The Way"*. I was also still trying to work out and exercise, eat a little better than before, and try not to party as much. I knew that I did not want to live only to party, although I always looked forward to these events.

Even though I was still smoking a lot of weed, doing drugs recreationally, and drinking occasionally, and mostly "living for the moment", I knew I needed structure and balance to feed that part of human nature that requires and desires to see growth and development. I also knew that I needed to improve the quality of my friends and choose those who were more of a good influence. There developed in me a desire to pursue spirituality more outside of psychedelics, but from non-Christian perspectives. This would lead me to meet and develop a friendship with a young man named Daniel, whom I am grateful for, who would become one of my best friends for a few years.

Daniel was a friendly individual who was very intellectual, enjoyed reading and listening to books, was musical, and interested in health and fitness: These were things that I was also passionate about, but had been neglecting. Daniel became my "accounta-billy-buddy" (a buddy that holds you to your accountabilities), and our relationship kept us both motivated to get together and work on these positive areas of development. He was going to school online for epigenetics, which is the study of how your behaviors and environment can cause changes that affect how your genes work. Epigenetics turns genes "on" and "off." He was also learning how to do health coaching with people. He would get a lab test done of their genetics, and

work with their genetics to help them reach their full potential. He shared his audible account with me, so I listened to many of the self-help and other books he had downloaded. When we would get together, we would take healthy supplements, talk about self-development, exercise or workout, practice eastern meditation, practice *Wim Hof* breath work exercises, practice traditional yoga and acrobatic yoga in pairs, and then usually relax with a worldly movie, like one about superheroes. Even though Daniel grew up Christian, he was looking at the world now from a more humanistic and self-righteous point of view. Satan was tempting me that I did not need Jesus to evolve and improve in life.

FALLING IN LOVE: Counterfeit Comforter

The next biggest temptation and snare laid for me was at a plant-based potluck and sober social gathering that Daniel invited me to. God is not the only matchmaker, but Satan is well adapted to do this also. At this social gathering, I met a young woman named Christina who would soon become my first serious girlfriend and only long-term girlfriend while I lived in the world. We were both very musical and shared other similar interests, such as eating a primarily plant-based diet with some grass-fed organic meats, nature, and exercise. Still, the most enjoyment we had was making music together. Usually, I would beatbox, and she would sing. We would get several musical gigs or shows over the 9 months or so that we dated, where we performed some of our original music for some large groups of people. She was very much into the new age spiritualism with her practice in yoga, meditation, tarot cards, and other “divinatory” mediums used by spiritualists, as well as books about eastern spirituality.

Christiana desired, in her spiritual darkness and misapprehensions, to live a purer life as she journeyed on her way to, what she believed was, “spiritual enlightenment”. She believed Jesus was a real person, one of many spiritual teachers who reached god-like enlightenment, and that all could achieve this same level of enlightenment as He did, but that Jesus was not the only path to the top of the mountain. She, and others, tried to convince me I just needed more balance in my life and to find my own spiritual path. I thought I could join her on this spiritual journey for a while, but even in this counterfeit righteousness by faith path, I was not as committed as she was. I still wanted to party more than she did, and get high more than she did, and live more in the moment, while she wanted to make more long-term goals.

I think the reader can understand why I wanted to keep myself distracted, asleep, and high in the moment to avoid thinking too far into the future...for the final events before the coming of Jesus seemed to be fulfilling themselves before my very eyes! Unlike Christina, deep down, I believed what the Bible said about the future, and for me, at that time, it looked more like a “lake of fire” than some mountaintop experience of “enlightenment”. Because of my understanding of what the Bible teaches, including the great controversy between Christ and Satan, I could not be totally convinced or deceived by any of the new age garbage such as: “you are your own god”, “God is in nature” or “reincarnation” and all the other spiritual “bru-haha”. I wanted to entertain and believe Satan’s lies in my rebellion that I could have life after death, even living the way I was, but deep down, I did not have the same level of confidence with fanciful ideas as I did with the promises of the Bible. When I practiced emptying my mind with eastern meditation and yoga, I would feel a temporary sense of peace and wellbeing, but it did not last and only acted as a spiritual band-aid. I was inviting and yoking myself with

spiritual entities, which would end up destabilizing and tormenting me more in the future.

Since Christina was a little older and had a lot of friends and connections, she invited me out to events and parties and introduced me to many of her friends and acquaintances who were on this counterfeit spiritual path, several of whom were quite successful, wealthy, and influential. Many of these new friends wanted to do something better in life, make a difference, be aware of many real conspiracies, promote peace and non-violence, and be light workers who help others ascend spiritually towards whatever their idea of "God" or "the universe" was. Many of them were vegetarians or vegans, and some of the potlucks we were invited to had witches, or "spiritual people", who wanted to eat this way, not just for health reasons, but so they could be a clearer channel for the "divine spirit" or their "angel spirit guides" to communicate with and work through. They even held counterfeit full moon parties. (The Biblical New Moon was a festive holiday, set apart by God in the Old Testament. This symbolized the beginning of a new month; a time when God would pour out His Spirit upon His people in greater measure. I explain more about God's New Moons in Section 5: The Second Blessing.)

I know many of these dear souls are very genuine and sincere, who only want to follow the highest spiritual path their conscience convicts them of, but they are deceived and, ultimately, they live in darkness while serving Satan. I did see the goodness of God and genuine compassion, love and kindness working in and through some of these individuals at times, so I know God's spirit was still accommodating and working with them where they were at, wanting to call them higher, to the true Christ, the Son of the

one and only true God, Yehovah. I believe many of them were simply rebelling against hypocritical and counterfeit Christianity, which is primarily motivated by fear, force, and violence, with its false doctrines like *eternal burning hell* and a *wrong understanding of God's character*. Honestly, the path they were on sounds better than following a wrathful God who would burn someone for an infinite amount of time for a finite amount of sins! If only they could receive the true and everlasting gospel with a revelation of God's non-violent and non-condemning character, which I would still have to learn much more about in the years to come, as I still had misunderstandings about God's character.

Christina had become my comforter instead of Christ. After the initial in love feelings started to wear off a little in our relationship, I began to go into a bit of depression because, of course, she could not fill that void. I had a couple of traumatic bad trips on psychedelics where I felt like I was going through hell and barely made it out with my sanity intact. I was also occasionally seeking comfort and affirmation of my lifestyle by using the drug ecstasy, which makes you feel really happy and social for the night, but can really fry your brain cells and deplete your brain of happy chemicals like *serotonin*, which ultimately makes you more depressed than when you first tried it. What goes up *artificially*, must come down. All this, along with having a roommate who had invited a lot of darkness into her life, did destabilize me and put me into a darker and humbler place. I thank God that he allowed me to make these bad choices to get me to a place where I was really thinking about my life and where it was headed, and to see my need for God again. I could not be the man that Christiana needed me to be for her at the time, even in a worldly sense.

DIVINE INTERVENTION: Returning to my First Love

I remember my mother asking permission when I moved into this apartment at the end of 2016 or the beginning of 2017, if she could hang a red strip of cloth or material over the doorpost of the door to my room, which I granted her permission if it would make her happy and feel more at peace. Praise God for my mother's continued prayers and Intercessions, and that I was saved from the destroyer, just like the children of Israel who put the blood of the lamb over their doorposts, which symbolized the spirit and life of Jesus. Even though I disliked talking to my parents on the phone or visiting them at their home while I was in this state, I still remember them showing me as much love as they could. They would take me out for lunch or dinner, giving me food or other gifts, buying me clothes, playing tennis or some activity with me, and inviting me on their family vacation so that they could still spend time with me and keep the communication channel open. The goodness of God through them was softening my heart and keeping the relationship going, so I knew I was still loved. They did not approve of my lifestyle and choices, but they did not condemn me, wanting to show they still loved me and would always welcome me back home if I ever changed my mind.

I had been working in the restaurant and food industry and was fired from a few jobs for various reasons. Sometime around April 2017, I was working as a dishwasher at a restaurant as well as occasionally working for a painter, whom I met some years ago when he was an Adventist but had since backslidden. I remember feeling humbled and emotional one evening while washing dishes at my job, so I went to the bathroom to cry. In that moment,

another spiritual breakthrough happened for me; I felt the presence of God and a conviction to stop running away from Him, so I surrendered my heart back to God! I asked for forgiveness and cleansing, repented of my sins, and I cried and cried. I even pulled up that devotional classic “Steps to Christ” on YouTube to listen to while finishing washing dishes. I felt an incredible peace wash over my soul once again. I called my parents as soon as I could to let them know the good news and to keep praying for me, as I knew the spiritual battle had only just begun.

I had a rental commitment for a year with my apartment, a close relational bond with my girlfriend, and all the other ties I had to this world. As much as I look back and ask myself if I could have found a way to stand firm in my newly restored convictions of faith, and kept our relationship going under new terms of agreement so that I could share my faith with her, I did not trust myself with her. I did not trust myself, and I knew that she would continue to be a snare and temptation for me, and that it would be almost impossible for me to stay true to my faith and stay in a relationship with her because we were not equally yoked as the Bible says. Our lifestyle, music choices, beliefs, and so many things would conflict. It would also be hard to remain friends if we chose not to sleep together anymore, since we had already crossed that line.

After strengthening myself in the Lord for a couple of days, I had the courage to message my girlfriend and let her know of my recent conversion experience with Jesus and my Christian faith. I told her I felt convicted that I needed to end our relationship so that I could seek my God with all my heart, soul, mind, and strength. I needed to renew my faith and relationship with Jesus, my first love, go through some personal healing, and get my own life in

order before being in another relationship. I knew this would break our hearts, but it is better to break a heart than to break a home. I could only press close to Jesus during this very emotional time. The spiritual warfare began to get very intense. I had to keep myself immersed in the Bible, the spirit of prophecy, spiritual songs, and prayer to keep myself on the right path forward and to stay true to my convictions. The pull to go back to my old life and my girlfriend was still so strong, but for several days, I kept submitting to God, resisting the devil, and he had to flee from me (James 4:7) for a time before he would return with his next deception and attack.

I wanted to show maturity and have some closure for my relationship with Christiana, so I arranged to meet with her in a park in Asheville where we could walk and talk. At the same time, my mother prayed and interceded in the car. The conversation went well as I explained to her my convictions of conscience, some of my beliefs, and how I believed I was doing what God wanted me to do. She seemed to be understanding, even though she was still sad to part ways with me, and we both cried and hugged each other. I offered to have a prayer with her and asked if she would be open to studying some books of my faith, like “Steps to Christ” and maybe “Desire of Ages” or “Great Controversy”? I don’t remember exactly what I shared, but she seemed open and accepted the literature. I think she may have been open to read these materials to understand what kind of God and Christian faith could so radically change my heart and mind and give me the courage to walk away from the world completely, along with all the “benefits” of our relationship and completely change my lifestyle and goals to solely pursue a reconnection with the God that I loved, the God that first loved me (1 John 4:19)..

Even though I still had a rental agreement, I decided it would be better to move out of my apartment as soon as possible. I was praying to find someone willing to take over my lease and rent my room for the rest of the year. My roommate was a bit of a witch and was into tarot cards, crystals, energy healing, smoking weed, drinking and other dark spiritual practices. The great controversy was palpable when my mother came to our apartment to help me move out of my room. We were praying, singing, and claiming Bible promises and God's peace, power, presence, and angels to be with us. My roommate told me later that she felt a dark atmosphere about us, and especially my mother, that made her feel very uncomfortable. This was a projection of the darkness and condemnation she felt in our presence. She was confused calling evil good and good evil. Our hearts are deceitful and desperately wicked. The condemnation she felt was coming from herself and Satan, not from God.

INTERCEPTION DECEPTION: Change of Mind

It was getting close to summer, and my parents and I were impressed that it would be a good idea for me to join a canvassing program for the summer. Being involved in literature evangelism would be a good environment for me to grow spiritually, while also earning some money from donations. It had already been arranged, and my application had been accepted for me to join this program several states away in Wisconsin, if I remember correctly. My parents had already purchased a plane ticket for me to fly there in a couple of weeks. My mother and I made it home with my things from the apartment, but I did not unload everything that evening since it was getting late, and I went to sleep. The Bible says in 1 Peter 5:8, "Be

sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour."

That following morning, I must have let my guard down somewhat and not spent sufficient time in prayer and the Word. I had gone out to a natural health foods store to purchase some things that my mother said she would pay for me to take to the canvassing program. I was still very emotional and could still feel a strong pull like all of hell was trying to drag my soul back, but up to this point, I had been sticking close to Jesus and resisting the devil. While shopping, I saw a call from a guy named David.

This young man named David was an entrepreneur, a networker, and a talented musician with whom I used to perform music. I would beatbox, and he would rap what is called "conscious hip-hop," which does not use any swear words or profanity and is supposed to be more positive, uplifting, and spiritual. He was very influential, knowledgeable, and connected within the new age and "conscious" spiritual communities. He had invited me out to many top-tier parties within that type of community. He had connected me with many wealthy, influential, and spiritually strong people in their faiths outside of Christianity. He promoted Jesus and what is called "Christ consciousness" but in a perverted and twisted way. He was a bit of a spiritual guru for me, and he promoted me as a talented beatboxer. He was a big snare, used by the enemy, against me, even though he thought himself to be a "light-worker" seeking to "liberate humanity from the physical and spiritual enslavement from the oppressive control of fear-based religions and governments" (like many other spiritualists thought themselves to be). He wanted to help people develop connections, skills, and systems outside of the matrix of our consumeristic, materialistic, and corrupted government-run

world. Again, many of these people are very awake to many real issues and problems within religion and the world, and think they are on the right path to enlightenment. However, they still have deadly poison in their theology, being steeped in paganism and spiritualism, cloaked in a garment of sacredness, and having no understanding of the true and living God and His Son.

I heard my phone ring as I stood there in the store. I looked to my phone and saw the call coming in from David. My heart started beating faster as I knew that I should not answer the phone. To do so would be dangerous, like Eve talking with the serpent at the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. But for some reason, I impulsively picked up the phone and said "Hello." I was weak and vulnerable. I knew later that I was having a dialogue with the devil, which we should never do. I am not calling David the devil, but I know an evil spirit possessed him and spoke through David to let me hear things in my flesh that were so convincing, deceiving, and tempting in my human nature. It was like a spell was cast over me. I don't remember everything, but He worded things in a way to awaken a counterfeit spirituality within me as he tried to appeal for me to reconsider what I was doing, change my plans, and return to my old life. He also probably genuinely did not want to lose a friendship with me. He was telling me that I should develop and not suppress the "spiritual side" of my nature, and that I could find a way to practice my Christian faith that was not so "closed-minded", and that true spiritual success could be found in harnessing my spiritual talents of beatboxing and dancing and finding expression at musical events and parties. He flattered and tickled my ears and excited my pride, saying how happy and enjoyable he saw me when I was beatboxing and dancing to music, and talking about self-development. I even asked him about my recent breakup with Christiana and

if he thought that I should try to get back with her, if she would even take me back. He encouraged me to give her another try since he felt we could be a powerful, spiritual, and potentially famous musical couple. David was repeating and reframing the serpent's lies to Eve at the tree, and I bit the poisonous fruit. I was caught in the snare, and I no longer had the strength or heart to follow my plans to join the canvassing program.

I decided I was going to drive straight back to my apartment, unpack my things into my room, and resume my old life. I called my girlfriend on the way back and told her that I had changed my mind, and asked if I could visit her later, which she agreed to. I also called a couple of friends who drove over to my apartment to help me unload my things and to support my decision. I remember the fearful moment when I needed to call my parents and let them know my decision not to join the canvassing program, not to get on the plane, and to move back into my old apartment. I was having a tough time trying to communicate with them as my conscience was convicted, I should not be doing this, and that I was piercing their hearts and bringing them deep sadness and disappointment. Still, my two friends beside me were hugging and petting me, acting as counterfeit comforters. Afterwards, they congratulated me on my bravery, independence, and what they thought was the right decision. They sadly thought I was going to be putting myself back into slavery by going back to my Christian faith. They did not understand.

My girlfriend accepted me back gladly, which made her very happy because she had still only begun to grieve over losing me, but now she thought she had me again. This return to my old life did not last long, as after only a few weeks, I was convinced that I did not want to keep going down this same path as before. The words, "Insanity is doing the same thing, but

expecting different results," came to my mind. I told my girlfriend that I thought we should take a break in our relationship and that I needed to do some soul searching, and I decided to go on an adventure with my close friend Daniel, out to California and Oregon that summer of 2017. I was running from God like Jonah.

WEST COAST CONTROVERSY: "Soul Searching" or Running from God Like Jonah?

The trip to California involved marijuana, and after some weeks of travelling around, we visited a farm where there was work offered to me to trim weed for a pretty good pay rate. I was not smoking much weed at this point because it would give me pretty serious anxiety, which I attribute to my recent conversion back to Christ. I think God allowed me to feel the negative effects of marijuana or THC, so I was drawn away from it and saw its truly dark nature. I called Christiana up and shared my plans to work on this farm, and she expressed interest in joining me in California or Oregon to do this work. So, she packed her things into her car, including her dog, and drove to California to join me. We were still establishing trust in our relationship again. We worked for some time and then decided we did not want to work for this guy, so we travelled with Daniel for some time and ended up camping out in Ashland, Oregon, a new age hippy town with hot springs.

I was journaling, and my fleshly self was trying desperately to gain pride and confidence by strengthening itself with new goals, aspirations, and changes. I thought I would experience something like a spiritual rebirth and find my own spiritual path from a new age perspective. However, my conscience was still bothering me that this path was ultimately vanity and

emptiness. I kept waking up to the reality that I actually did not want to keep living this life and that my soul was craving a relationship with Jesus and to live for the true God. I did not have peace, and Daniel and Christina could tell my soul was troubled and that I was not my usual cheerful, positive, and upbeat self. I didn't even feel like beatboxing that much. I also remember watching the total solar eclipse there in Oregon on August 21st with fear and anxiety. After all, I feared judgment, punishment, the end of the world, and the second coming of Jesus because I knew my soul was not right with God.

I ended up yielding my heart to the convictions of the spirit of God to leave my friends and go to Weimar Adventist College and Lifestyle Center in California, where I applied to go to school for their half-year medical missionary program. I stayed in the men's dorm and worked on campus for a couple of weeks before school was set to start. I attended church, midweek Bible study, and prayer. I had a renewed and growing connection with Christ for that short period as I was seeking the Lord, and some of the staff could notice my love and zeal for God, and that I was genuinely repentant for my past life, and they wanted to help me get on the right path.

It was a spiritual battle, and I was winning the battle by the grace of God for those 2 or 3 weeks until one evening I yielded to the clamors of the old man, the pull of my flesh, and demonic spirits that were trying to keep me from becoming established and rooted in Christ again. I lost sight and hold of Jesus and His comfort, and another spirit possessed me when I decided to call my ex-girlfriend, and we exchanged some words like "I miss you" and "I still love you". She was still travelling with Daniel and I arranged for them to pick me up. I went to the school office to withdraw my application the day before school started.

I remember a chaplain, or Bible teacher, there at the time who was a very spiritual and caring man and had taken a special and compassionate interest in me and my situation while I was there and had taken time to have some spiritual counselling with me. I remember very clearly the moment when he heard that I was withdrawing my application; he called me into his office and asked me what was going on. He could tell something was wrong and feared for my soul more than my withdrawal as a student. He asked me if I had peace in this decision, and he appealed for me not to give up on God and to yield to His spirit, but my heart was already hardened in its decision. Like the young man who went away sorrowful from Jesus after he was unwilling to sell all that he had to follow Jesus, I went away sorrowful with my stubborn and stiff neck, like the Israelites who kept wanting to go back to Egypt. I was like a dog returning to his vomit (Proverbs 26:11). I know I brought tears, pain, and grief to that dear man that day, to the heart of my heavenly Father, His Son, my guardian angel, as well as my parents and grandparents, who had started to get their hopes up again and were the ones willing to pay for my tuition fees. In fact, for me to even be able to attend Weimar, my grandmother helped me to pay off my remaining school debts (over \$5,000) from Ouachita Hills College so that Weimar would even accept my application.

After my last conversion in 2019 I tried to get back in touch with this individual (whose name I forgot) to thank him for his love, care, concern and prayers and to let him know the good news that I accepted Jesus fully back into my life, but I could not find him or even who he was. The school could not even seem to help me. Maybe he was an angel? I look forward to meeting this dear soul in heaven!

ATTEMPTING TO SYNTHESIZE MY TWO IDENTITIES: Have My Cake and Eat It Too

After my friends picked me up and some travel, visiting the majestic redwoods, we ended up back in Ashland, Oregon, at that hippy camp and hot springs. The atmosphere was red and apocalyptic because of many fires in Oregon at that time, which polluted the air and darkened the sun, which was very fitting for the sad state of my soul. Christina's mother drove her camper trailer out to that campground, and we stayed with her for a few weeks or so while we waited to see if we could find another job to trim marijuana somewhere, but no doors were opening. I was still so unstable, and I could not be the man my girlfriend needed me to be. I had nothing of substance at this point to offer her, as I was also broken and without hope.

I would meditate and practice yoga, but it only offered temporary peace. I did some soul searching, but I could not find answers or assurance to confirm me in this wayward way and counterfeit spirituality. Was finding "the right balance" truly the answer to harmonizing my two polar opposite lifestyles? I had a hard time embracing the eastern yin-yang teaching because of the Bible verse in 1 John which says, "God is light and in Him is no darkness at all." I remember reading through a gnostic book of the *Essenes* (a Jewish sect that flourished in Palestine from the 2nd century BC to the 1st century AD with Christina that was trying to prove reincarnation from the Bible by saying that John the Baptist was the reincarnated Elijah, but my understanding of Scripture could not allow me to believe this teaching, even though my girlfriend did. I also remember having an identity war crisis moment where I wanted to try and prove my value through my performance at an open mic and talent show that the community there was hosting. I

performed some beatboxing and even did some breakdancing to an upbeat song, which I did with such intensity that I ended up hurting my foot to the point of deep purple bruising and needing crutches for a week. "Pride comes before the fall." (Proverbs 16:18). This deeply humbled me once again, and I remember soon after hearing the voice of God again calling, "Come home, my child, come home."

ENOUGH IS ENOUGH: Determined to Follow Jesus at Any Cost

I have a vivid memory of being down by a stream in a deeply reflective state of mind when I felt the presence of God moving upon me and convicting my conscience once again. I decided to make the surrender with tears streaming down my face to let Jesus back into my heart, mind, and life. I prayed for strength to bear whatever consequences I needed to, wisdom for decisions and interactions with others, and grace to follow through with my convictions. It is a miracle that I could still hear God's voice and respond after how stubbornly I had hardened my heart before. Still, I believe it was in answer to the fervent prayers of my parents and loved ones that God had permission, in the great controversy between Christ and Satan, to be able to send out His Word, Spirit and holy angels to work overtime to reach and save me from the powers of darkness. If left to myself and with no one earnestly praying for me, I guarantee you that I would have many times remained in the course I was pursuing outside of Christ, and I probably would have died in my sins and have been lost forever. I am eternally grateful for the continued intercessory prayers made on my behalf and for God's loving-kindness that kept pursuing me. Even when we spit in Christ's face, mock and deny Him and crucify Him afresh, He still breathes the words "Father, forgive them, for

they know not what they do.” What amazing love, goodness, condescension and loving kindness God shows in that He never condemns us, never gives up on us and can win back our hearts to Him time and time again! God was so patient and long-suffering towards me.

With a determined will as strong as it was to rebel and choose my own way in the past, I now determined to follow through with my decision to follow Christ, leave my old life, and return home. I rose up to go tell Christina the news and my renewed decision. I told her that I would return to North Carolina to live with my parents and that I needed to break off our relationship for good. She was very angry and upset, and I can understand. I apologized and asked for forgiveness for my inconsistency and for putting her through the emotional rollercoaster of my spiritual (early) mid-life crisis. I told her I should have stuck with my initial convictions and decisions when I first broke off our relationship to seek to reconnect with my faith and relationship with Jesus. I told her that I had been running away from God and what I knew I needed to do, violating my conscience and beliefs, and that I could not have peace on this path. She later expressed that she had forgiven me, healed and moved on, and knew I was doing what I really believed I needed to do. Years later, I saw that she got married.

After a few days with help from a Christian, possibly Adventist, lady, I got a ride to the Greyhound station, where I took a bus for several days back to my parents’ home in Western North Carolina. My parents gladly welcomed their beloved son back home, hugging me with loving arms and tears of Joy. They were so happy and praising the Lord to see me have peace in my soul, with the assurance of forgiveness of sins and resting in the arms of Jesus. Like the song “Safe in The Arms of Jesus”:

“Safe in the arms of Jesus,
Safe on his gentle breast.
There by His love o’ershaded,
Sweetly my soul shall rest.”

After some time at home, I returned to my grandmother’s house in the country for a few weeks to be separated from my old influences and earnestly seek God again while I prayed for His will and plan for my life. The first book I would always read besides the Bible when I came out of the world was the devotional masterpiece called “Steps to Christ” by Ellen White. (Steps to Christ has been published in over 165 languages, and tens of millions of copies are in circulation, making it one of the most widely distributed religious books globally.) I lost count of how often I have read or listened to this profound book! I remember a very intense prayer time of repentance where I was really pouring my heart out to God in tears with my head bowed low, hands grasping the grass and earth, pleading for God to save me from myself and to help me to stop this vicious self-destructive cycle I had been caught in. I really wanted to live for God, serve Him, and live up to my name “Obadiah,” which means servant of Yahweh.

It can take about 3 months to stop a bad habit and establish a better one before the brain changes and rewires itself, and the flesh cravings in that area begin to decrease significantly. It was an intense battle at times, exercising faith and a sanctified willpower to re-establish the brain in healthier, heavenly, pathways while also building spiritual trust and intimacy. God’s word, prayer, and heavenly music were essential during this time, and more long-term thinking was needed to get through the momentary impulses and urges. Eventually, I knew my desires would change, and I would hate

what I once loved and love what I once hated. I held unto the promise: “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.” (Ezekiel 36:26).

LOVE FOR THE ONLY BEGOTTEN SON: Seeds of Truth to Set Me Free in Time

I remember back in 2013 or 2014, overhearing my father Wayne giving a Bible study over the phone to someone about the *only true God*, the Father, and His *only begotten Son*. As 1 Corinthians 8:6 says, “Yet for us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we for Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and through whom we live.” And that the *Spirit of God* was the omnipresent spirit of the Father and of the Son, as Romans chapter 8 talks about—not some third person, separate and distinct from the Father and Son. I was convinced and convicted that what my dad was sharing was true, and it made sense, but at the time, I did not want to live for God. I remember thinking of the verse, “You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble!” (James 2:19). At the time I thought, “They don’t care, and neither do I!” So, I forgot about it for a while.

It wasn’t until 2017, that I really studied and settled into the truth about the only begotten, fully divine, Son of God. He has always been the Son of God since He was brought forth, or begotten, in eternity past from the Father—Jesus IS the “Wisdom of God” (1 Corinthians 1:24) and in Proverbs 8:22-26 “Wisdom” (Jesus) is described as being “brought forth”, or literally “begotten” in the Geneva Bible Translation. Even as Eve came out from Adam’s side, so Christ “came out from God” (John 8:42). Jesus' inheritance,

as a literal *begotten* Son of God, is the key to receiving righteousness by faith. Because Jesus received all things from His Father (Matthew 11:27), it was made perfectly clear to me that He was completely dependent upon His Father for life, blessing and righteousness. This helped me to understand that my submission to God is of the same nature as Christ's was—absolutely necessary—and that Christ was not “playing a role” as the “Son” of God in order to seem more “relatable”. No, Jesus placed all of His faith in His Father, knowing that without Him He could do nothing. I understood that it was only through receiving this principle of submission through the literal indwelling presence of the submissive Son of God, who receives all things from His Father (including life), that I could manifest true submission to God and receive life from Him. With this new understanding that the *Holy Spirit* was in reality the omnipresence of *Jesus Christ*, I could now believe the words “Christ in you, the hope of glory!” (Colossians 1:27).

Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no one comes to the Father but by Me” (John 14:6). He is the channel *through whom* all blessings and God's spirit flow to us, his adopted children! I saw how Satan began to believe his own lie that he had his own life source independent of God and did not appreciate how his life, beauty, and talents all came to him as a gift from God. He did not want to approach God through the submissive spirit of His Son. I began to see how this Spirit of self-dependency was cunningly enthroned in the doctrine of the Trinity, which presents Jesus as “God the Son,” rather than the “Son of God.” The difference is that “God the Son” is never brought forth, never begotten, and therefore never truly receives an inheritance from His Father. Since “God the Son” never receives an inheritance from the Father, all of His “submission” is rendered, not as an absolute necessity, but in order to “play the role” that we needed to see.

Since “God the Son” has intrinsic life in Himself, rather than inheriting life from His Father, Jesus could have refused to submit to the Father and still live! I came to see that beholding a Jesus who never truly needed to submit to His Father, I came under the influence of a different spirit, “God the Spirit”, who like “God the Son” never truly needed to submit to the metaphorical “Father”, because He was as equally God as the Son and the Father—what a confusion! It is spiritualism which takes away from the literal personality of the Father and the Son.

I realized that even though I was Adventist and did not believe in the immortality of the soul, that every time I decided to do my own thing and go my own way, outside of loving submission to the begotten Son, I was affirming the lie of Satan that I could be my own life source; in spirit, I was worshipping the likeness of the Trinitarian, self-dependent, 3 in 1 “god(s)”. I also found out that almost all the Adventist pioneers rejected the Trinity and believed that Jesus was literally God’s Son, begotten in the days of eternity, just like Proverbs 8 describes Him as being.

I love how Proverbs 8 describes the Son of God as being “brought up” or taught by His Father”. I was beginning to see the true intimacy shared between the Father and His Son, as tenderly as I could between me and my own father (and even more so)! I understood that Jesus had learned all things from His Father, who graciously and tenderly revealed to Him all that He knew. The Father brought up His own Divine Child in the Way He should go. No being ever had this experience with the Father. There was no other being who COULD share this experience with the Father. Only a Divine being, one from God’s own bosom, a truly begotten Son, could manifest the same powers as His Father. It was because Jesus inherited the same Divine nature

as God, His Father, that He was able to have this intimate relationship with His Father. It is much like how Adam realized that he didn't have a helper comparable (of the same nature as him) to him after he named all the pairs of animals; none of them could truly relate to him, because they were of a different nature to him. That is why God gave Eve to Adam, from Adam's own flesh and bone (of the same nature), because she could relate to his human experience, for she was as equally human as her husband (although she was not as old as Adam and received everything from Adam). This is because, in God's kingdom, "equality" is not defined by age, or intrinsic power, or wisdom, but in relationship. Whereas the Trinity god(s) are defined as being "equal" because all three beings are said to be co-eternal, all-powerful, and all-knowing. This image of God led me to seek value through displays of power and strength. Just as Eve inherited her humanity from Adam, so did Jesus inherit His divinity from God. Therefore, Jesus is, by nature and in truth, "God." And it is because Christ perfectly took on our human-ness, veiling His perfect God-ness, that He can relate to both us and the Father and bring the two together in perfect union, through His indwelling presence.

I learned that Jesus didn't boast or glory in having equal power, equal knowledge, or being coequal in age to the Father, but rather He found His value in what His Father said and thought of Him; that He was daily His delight and that He was beloved of His Father. Jesus' divinity was not determined by any inherent abilities. He received everything from His Father, including His very life (John 5:26). His divinity was defined entirely by being His Father's Son; "bone of His bone and flesh of His flesh" so to speak. I came to understand a completely different way of defining value. Jesus' value, and in turn my own, was not defined by knowledge, position, power, and performance. Our value and worthiness are determined by our relationship

to God as His sons and daughters. How liberating this is to know! For a deep dive on the subject of the identity of God and the implications this has on our lives I refer you to the books, [Wisdom of God](#) and [Return of Elijah](#), by Adrian Ebens.

I loved the fact that the Son of God knew the Character of God more than any other being in the universe, as all things were created through him, and that He was the only one who could come to earth and fully reveal and vindicate His Father's character. Ellen White articulated it so beautifully in her amazing devotional *"Desire of Ages"* on page 21, "Turning from all lesser representations, we behold God in Jesus. Looking unto Jesus, we see that it is the glory of our God to give. 'I do nothing of Myself,' said Christ; 'the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father.' 'I seek not Mine own glory, but the glory of Him that sent Me.' (John 8:28; 6:57; 8:50; 7:18). In these words is set forth the great principle which is the law of life for the universe. All things Christ received from God, but He took to give. So in the heavenly courts, in His ministry for all created beings: through the beloved Son, the Father's life flows out to all; through the Son it returns, in praise and joyous service, a tide of love, to the great Source of all. And thus through Christ the circuit of beneficence is complete, representing the character of the great Giver, the law of life."

For these reasons and more, I was learning to love and appreciate the only begotten Son of God more and more! I had the example I needed for victory over sin if I could just remain in Jesus, receive His faith, and cherish Him in my heart. The Son of God is my Rock, and He means everything to me! "Jesus said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?' Simon Peter answered and said, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.' And upon this rock of

truth, Jesus, the Son of God, would Christ establish his church. It is our foundation. (Matthew 16:15-18).

I also learned that the family structure of headship and submission—husband and wife—is illustrated beautifully in the relationship of God the Father and His submissive begotten Son. It is the secret to a successful and lasting marriage. Adam and Eve were created in the image of God and so marriage is between two parties only and not three. The trinity brings in a jealous third party just like how Satan was envious of God and His son and wanted to be equal with them and present in their counsels. I was so thankful to Jesus for continually imparting to me not only the keys out of a fear-based performance kingdom and the depression that follows, but also the keys to happy relationship and the blessings therein. The only begotten Son, as my head, was pouring upon me all His life, character, blessings, protection, provisions, and righteousness, which He received from His head, the Father. I pray that one day I can pour this same blessing, wherewith I have been blessed, upon my wife, as her head.

RENEWING THE COMMITMENT: The Spirit is Willing, but The Flesh is Weak

Since I had departed so far from the faith in my rebellious and spiritually adulterous life in the world, and over so many years, I desired to publicly renew my commitment and marriage covenant relationship with my dearest Jesus by being re-baptized. I wanted a fresh death to my old man and to have that new life with Christ again. I had recently learned that the New Testament believers in the book of Acts were baptized simply in the name of Jesus. At a camp meeting happening at Lake Junaluska near Asheville, North

Carolina, I requested my father, Wayne, to baptize me in the name of Jesus. I brought tears to my parents' eyes and others who observed.

My interest in health as the “right hand of the gospel” and the “opening wedge,” led me to apply for further medical missionary training at *Wildwood Health Institute* in Wildwood, Georgia. I also wanted to be in a good spiritual environment. I was accepted into their 6-month program in January 2018. For the first half of the training I was so on fire for God, having beautiful personal devotional times with God, and enjoying being actively engaged in all my classes and hands-on training: natural remedies, massage, and hydrotherapy. I developed some nice friendships while there, and once again, everyone could see that I had a zealous passion for Christ, and it inspired many. I also worked in the maintenance department part-time, as well as being involved with a local Adventist church, where we were engaging in some community outreach evangelism for 1 day a week as one of my classes. We did a fun health expo for the local community, emphasizing the N.E.W.S.T.A.R.T. principles (Nutrition, Exercise, Water, Sunlight, Temperance, Air, Rest, and Trusting in divine power.)

THE SEVENTH FALL: Pendulum Swings Back

I cannot blame the school for what happened to me next, as it was my fault and a spiritual problem that caught up with me again. Some root issues that I was still unaware of and had not yet been addressed, kept me from having the sustained victory and consistency in my walk with God. While I maintained my relationship with God and had victory over sin, I was doing well, but as soon as I fell into something like masturbation or pornography, it felt like spiritual death. The floodgates of hell would open, I would lose my balance, and I did not know how to keep holding onto God or

to regain that connection and lasting victory. I did not yet fully understand God's character, and it was hard not to condemn myself. Again, that voice from hell was in my ear saying, "Do you want to keep fighting this battle? Is it worth it living for God? Why don't you just give up and return to your life in the world?"

Our class took a trip up to New York so we could practice sharing what we had been learning about medical missionary work. One day I gave into temptation and fell into sin. I lost my hold on God and went into complete darkness. The shock and stress of losing my vital connection with Jesus and becoming a carnal man again literally made me sick (like other times before). I failed to repent immediately; I stopped praying and I began to live my own life again.

My experience may have been more dramatic and zig-zaggy than most, but everyone has similar struggles with sin, self, Satan and the world. We all have our ways to cope and comfort ourselves, but I could not and would not be a lukewarm Christian. I was still learning how to find true and lasting stability in Christ. I also did not yet have my own family or other important responsibilities keeping me grounded, so it was easier to walk away when things got hard. My secular and new age friends in the world would blame religion as my crutch when I showed a lack of ability to keep persevering when things got tough. Then they would blame the reason I came back to my old life in the world because there was something wrong with my religion, a religion which they thought was motivated by fear and control.

They did not understand who the true God is and that God allowed these ministrations of death to humble me and to help me see my need for

Him. They did not know that their consistency in persevering in life outside of Christ was in vain and was a foundation built on the shifting sands of pride. They did not realize that when I returned to God, I was going to the only being in the universe that could help me; not just with my temporal problems, but also with the leprosy of my soul. I was receiving salvation from my wretchedness and self-destructive nature and was being put back on the path of life through Jesus Christ—the only lasting remedy to the sin problem. On the other hand, they were not completely wrong about something being wrong with Christianity and Adventism, and why so many young people leave the church, which I will address later. Most churches do not share the full, unadulterated, gospel truth or live up to the truths they profess. What my old friends also did not understand is that the true God of the Bible, the creator of the universe, does not use fear or force to motivate his creation. God's law is not arbitrary, and He does not inflict *imposed* punishments upon those who break His law, but His law is a design law with inherent blessings in obedience and inherent curses in disobedience. God's laws are exactly like the laws of nature: if we transgress them, the punishments are *causative* and self-inflicted—like a man jumping off a tall building; nobody needs to punish that man for seeking to defy the law of gravity. His transgression punished itself; sin pays its own wages. (Romans 6:23).

Oh, the mystery of iniquity, it cannot be fully explained. If there was a good reason for sin, there would be its justification. But there is no justification for rebellion against God. His laws are only there to protect us; they are an extension of God's good-will to all; a revelation of His character of love. Satan's primary deception is to cast attributes of his own character unto God, adding evil to God's character of goodness. When Adam ate from the tree of good and evil he came under Satan's influence and accepted

Satan's lie. His mind became at enmity with God at that moment; he began to hate God and His Son (Romans 8:7). It is awful how that enmity, inherited from Adam, drives us so far from God. What is even worse is that the enormity of this enmity is almost completely hidden from our conscious mind; we only see the tip of the iceberg. False doctrine and incorrect theology from corrupted religious institutions, including all Christian denominations, perpetuates this cage of lies that keeps us in sin and separated from close intimacy with God.

I was still in an all-or-nothing mindset, and sadly, I went back into a spiritual slumber; I was dead inside. The pendulum had swung. My classmates were deceived for a time as to my spiritual condition, as I just went through the motions so that I could at least finish my course and get the certificate, but I was not praying and reading my Bible. I had replaced my devotional time with going to the gym to work out in the morning. There was supposed to be an optional 1-month mission trip overseas to teach and apply what we had been learning, but because of my spiritual condition, I backed out of that. By June of 2018, I was back living in Asheville, North Carolina, but this time I was roommates with my friend Daniel. My parents were shocked and very sad to see me go down this path again, but they kept praying, especially my mother.

I will now share verse 2 and the chorus again for the song of prayer that my sister in Christ, Terrisa, from college, wrote for me. At this point, I had still not heard this song, but I would hear it by the end of 2019.

VERSE 2

The dark side of my past
It's all coming to me fast

I cannot breathe; help me to see
That I'm forgiven 'cause you promised
To always give me an escape
You calm my fear when I hear

CHORUS

Come home my child come
These wounds on my hands
Are able to break the bands
That hold you to the ground
Your broken heart can't even make a sound
Just turn around

The world is dying of starvation, for lack of truth; they desire freedom, but lies have confused and bound them under Satan. We, as God's remnant people, have the saving message, the truth, that will set them free. In order to prevent this saving message from delivering his captives, Satan employs all his power in coaxing or seducing God's remnant into a stupor, confusion and sleep. I did not understand all the truth yet, as the Scriptures say in 1 Corinthians 8:2: "And if anyone thinks that he knows anything, he knows nothing yet as he ought to know." But I knew enough, more than most Christians or Adventists, to threaten Satan's dominion. He was attacking me with worldly allurements—the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eyes and the pride of life (1 John 2:16)—like how he tempted Christ in the wilderness; Satan was offering me "pleasures forevermore" if I would but bow down and worship him. (Matthew 4:9).

EROS LOVE'S LAST STAND: The Pleasures and Pain of Satan's Performance Kingdom

I had found a couple of decent paying Jobs in construction, remodeling, and landscaping, which was good work experience. I was going out a lot to make more connections again, especially in the music scene. I was living a similar lifestyle as I had previously in Asheville, except this time I was more determined in achieving my worldly aspirations and began associating myself with more refined, high-class, and “spiritual” people. I was asked to house and pet sit for some wealthy individuals at their big fancy houses, and for excellent pay. I would invite my friends to come hang out. Hosting parties at lavish houses and being connected to such rich people gave me an ego boost. I wanted to be perceived as valuable, as one who could impart value, and thus attract friends and praise. My beatboxing skills were improving, and word began to spread. I started getting more gigs to perform. I was invited to some of the best and most alluring parties in the Asheville music scene and within the new age community. I took on the stage name of “OB-1K” and presented myself as a charismatic beatboxing rock-star. Because I was still interested in self-development through health, nutrition, fitness, and meditation , along with other “spiritual” practices, I found it easy to spark up intelligent and meaningful conversations with people; this fed further into my counterfeit sense of value as I made more connections and friendships with influential people and received their praise; my ego was feeding off the attention, only confirming me in my rebellion. I was losing the identity war again.

I was approached by a successful man in the new age community who saw potential in me and asked if I wanted to mentor and work under

him as his assistant, which I was initially drawn to want to accept. Because I was still so scattered in my attentions and going out to drug induced DJ raves, music events, and social gatherings, I did not follow through with this man like I would have needed to if I wanted to keep working with him. I was still living in the moment too much and having a hard time making long-term goals and sticking with my priorities, so things faded out with this man. I now thank God for saving me from going down that dangerous road of becoming some new age spiritual influencer and a prosperous entrepreneurial businessman that does not feel his need of God. Deep down I still believed the Bible and I knew that if I took that path, I would be deceiving people and leading them away from God and into destruction.

I received several books steeped in spiritualism and occult knowledge, including from the mentor mentioned above, and I was desirous to study them and to try out the practices. I felt like maybe it would be easier for me if I could deceive myself into believing and following another spiritual path, but, for some reason, I could scarcely get myself to sit down and read these books, and when I did, I could not focus. I think God was answering prayers and shielding me from not just that but also other things...I received an invitation to a séance. I was open to the experience, much like Saul when, feeling totally cut off from God, sought counsel from the witch of Endor. I even tried to attend this séance where some of my wealthy new age friends lived and would be summoning a spirit for whatever ritual they were doing. I was without a vehicle at the time, and I tried to get a ride, but I was not able to make it. God even used another new age friend to encourage me not to go when he said something along the lines of, "Yeah, I'm not interested in calling up a spirit of an ancient deity", even though this guy was steeped in spiritual paganism himself.

I was still a relational, friendly, and caring individual, which helped to make and keep some genuine, quality relationships that I am still grateful for. However, I was especially drawn to make friends with people of influence, talent, beauty or power more so than others. (This type of self-centered and partial love, that seeks reward and gratification through relations with others, is called “eros”. It is not the unconditional love that defines God in 1 John 4:8, “God is love”. The type of love God manifests towards us is a love which, even at risk of losing everything and receiving nothing in return, continues to give everything to redeem and preserve the relationship—this is called “agape”. God is not eros; God is agape.) Many musicians, rappers, and singers were more than happy to collaborate and make music with me, and I had people wanting to record me in their music studios for free. I think some of these friendships were genuine, but how many only wanted to work with me in hopes that if I were successful, they would also be, or that by hanging out with me they would gain influence or power. One of my friends, a wealthy business owner, wanted to see me succeed and become famous, threw a big artist debut party for me around my birthday, even taking us in his Limo to where I would be showcasing my beatboxing accompanied by my rapper and musician friends, followed by a DJ dance party. Satan was grooming me for destruction, but I felt like I was finally starting to get what I wanted and deserved for all my efforts. In my pride and pomp, I was deceived. It was like a spell was cast over me, and I thought I was moving forward with no thought of turning back to God.

TASTING WORLDLY FAME & SUCCESS: All That Glitters Is Not Gold

God, in response to my stubborn rebellion, in grief over his wayward son, had to permit me to have what I thought I wanted and to experience the consequences of my bad choices. I continued on the path of perdition. A locally famous DJ had invited me to be a paid headlining musical act for a big New Year's Eve party right before midnight that would attract hundreds of people. I gathered my musician friends, and we prepared our performance, including several female backup dancers with choreographed dance synched up with my beatboxing—I was starting to feel like a rockstar. I would even wear spiked chains around my neck or wrist, which only symbolized bondage to sin and Satan.

Soon after that show, I was contacted by a lady who was one of the people responsible for booking musicians and DJs for one of the premier music venues in town, called "Asheville Music Hall". I was asked to be one of the opening acts for a world-famous electronic music DJ duo called "Desert Dwellers". I gathered my musician friends together again, and you could feel the artificial and almost supernatural excitement this generated among us—Satan's seductive influence was thrusting our souls into vanity fueled ecstasy. We received a lot of praise for this. We thought this would help launch us into fame and a successful music career. Thankfully, because I was still so caught up living for the moment, it was hard for me to make long-term goals and plans, and so I was negligent. My pride prevented me from booking our musical group gigs at more humble parties and music events, so we never actually got another big event or concert to perform at. It was not just

handed to us without any effort, as I thought might happen, like the last time.

I don't like thinking back too much on this time, and I have since deleted all my personal photos and videos of my idolatrous past because it was, in actuality, a dark, cold, empty, and deceptive chapter of my life. I felt almost like I was receiving worship, and the attention I was now getting was not healthy and only fueled my pride. I was also still recreationally using drugs and alcohol. Satan was seeking to lift me up so that he could eventually cast me down and destroy me like he does with many famous musicians, artists and celebrities, who, despite their worldly success are still depressed and overwhelmed with feelings of worthlessness. In fact, the fear of losing their fame and falling short of expectations cause them to feel even more depressed, which further frustrates them because they thought fame would cure their depression. This often leads them to uncontrollable drug addictions, since they can often afford all the drugs they could ever ingest. All this pain and grief could be overcome by believing and embracing the love God has for us as His beloved children and surrendering our efforts to "prove" our value to others. All that glitters is not gold, and, as you will see, my life was not free from suffering, pain, misery, depression, anxiety, darkness, and many of the other side effects of living a life of sin. I never want to glorify my old life, as it was wickedly vain.

I even feared that I had a potential disease developing in my voice or throat, which I thought may have been punishment or a curse from God for abusing and perverting the musical talents he had imparted to me. I thought something was wrong, so my parents paid for a visit to a throat specialist who took a camera down my throat and could not find any problems. He said

I had a “phantom” or imaginary disease in my mind. When I came to understand God’s character more fully, I realized that God punishes sin by letting people reap the natural results of the seeds they have sown and that God does not need to supernaturally impose curses over or actively smite sinners. God never uses force, and it is not according to His character to harm anybody. I believe God in his mercy did not let me reap the full consequences of my choices and that in His foresight, He saw in me something that would respond to His Spirit again.

“WHOEVER EXALTS HIMSELF WILL BE HUMBLLED”: Sin Abounding

God allowed me to experience an extreme ministration of death to really humble me and get me back to a place where conditions would be most favorable for me to yield and surrender my life back to God. One day, being overtaken by intemperance, I overloaded my system with drugs and went to a DJ party. I took a lot of caffeine, ate marijuana edibles and psychedelic mushrooms and then did some yoga before going to the concert. My friends and I were excited. I was trying to have a good time, but I had opened up a major breach, and it was too much for my nervous system and body to handle. I went into a full-blown panic anxiety attack. I thought I was going to die; I felt like an evil spirit possessed me. I could now understand how Ananias and Saphira could have perished from fear in the book of Acts. Thankfully, my friends were there to help calm me down and get me to breathe, and my guardian angel was still with me to preserve my life and limit the damage the enemy and these substances had upon me . I immediately thought to take a large dose of charcoal along with a “trip-killer” (a strong prescription pain pill) I had been holding onto for circumstances such as this. I

was "ok", but this traumatic event gave me an ongoing anxiety disorder for several months after.

I thank God for allowing this to happen to me because it helped bring me to a point to where I genuinely wanted to sober up from drugs, alcohol, and other harmful things and start making some better choices; I could only play with fire for so long. After this episode, any negative stimulus would immediately heighten my anxiety and place me on the verge of another panic attack. I had to avoid marijuana, caffeine, sugar, and even stimulating music, which I was starting to listen to less often. I started listening to calmer instrumental and emotional music, at least while I was at home. I did not want pharmaceuticals, so I tried more natural things like CBD tincture, kava, and kratom to calm my anxiety. [I can promote non-psychoactive CBD now for most people, as it does not get you high and research shows it can be very beneficial. However, I do not promote Kava or Kratom as they are known to cause health problems and can be very addictive (especially Kratom), but considering my circumstances, I chose to use them as they were a less harmful than substances like alcohol, heroin, and pain pills.] I remember one time a panic attack was coming on again and I was alone and freaking out, just trying to breathe, when I felt impressed to call my parents to pray with me which helped to calm my anxiety that evening. I believe this moment started to give my parents hope for me, renewed the fervency of their prayers, and allowed God to begin working even more in my life, Hallelujah!

God was allowing my life to crumble around me, to humble me...again. I am reminded of Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, who after repeatedly defying God was made to "live with the wild animals, away from people. For seven years he ate grass, unprotected from the dew, as though

he was an ox, until he learnt that the Most High God is in control of all earthly kingdoms and that He is the one who chooses their rulers." (Daniel 4:32-33). It was not until the seven years were over and "his hair grown longer than eagle feathers, and his fingernails looked like the claws of a bird." That Nebuchadnezzar was finally brought to a place of deep and lasting repentance. Nebuchadnezzar recounts his experience in a letter: Finally, I prayed to God in heaven, and my mind was healed. Then I said: "I praise and honor God Most High. He lives forever, and his kingdom will never end. To him the nations are far less than nothing; God controls the stars in the sky and everyone on this earth. When God does something, we cannot change it or even ask why." At that time my mind was healed, and once again I became the ruler of my glorious kingdom. My advisors and officials returned to me, and I had greater power than ever before. That's why I say: "Praise and honor the King who rules from heaven! Everything he does is honest and fair, and he can shatter the power of those who are proud." (Daniel 4:34-37 CEV)—This was much like the experience I had gone through; my experience living under the dark influence of Satan, like a beast, had worn me so thin and it became so clear **I was the problem**, not Him, that I could not but praise Him. It was only then did I find a lasting repentance and a more consistent walk with God.

God put me on a fast-track into seeing the true nature of Satan's kingdom; the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and I began to hate it. I could but only loathe the suffering and shame I had brought on myself, my family and, most importantly my God and Savior. Some say that I just "couldn't find the balance" and that if I had been less into drugs and partying, I could have "harnessed my energies to a positive effect" and that my return to Christ was only as a crutch because I couldn't control myself, which is true. There are

many “upstanding” New-Agers that live healthy, sober lifestyles, but these people are self-deceived into thinking that because they can balance their lifestyles without living for God that they don’t need God—Satan laughs: he has made of them two times a son of hell as one who cannot “keep it together” and their “refined” influence only serves to draw more victims into the cunning deceptions of the New-Age movement. No one can live a truly healthy life without a constant and sincere trust in the God of heaven. I am glad that my Father kept me from being a one such as this, and that I was given opportunity to see how weak I am without Him.

My band broke-up after some drama between a band member and I over a girl. I was also not performing well at my job, as a supervisor and truck driver for a landscaping/lawn care company, and was fired after three strikes. I was not in a relationship with any woman at this time. When I was not performing or listening to music, getting high, or hanging out with my friends, I really had nothing to do but to sit in the silence of loneliness and ask myself, “What am I doing with my life?” Everything felt empty, or rather full of vanity. There was no “thing” that could satisfy my aching soul. I could not seem to commit to making long term goals with music and beatboxing or anything else because I would think, “What if I achieved my dreams or aspirations?...What then?...To what end?... Would it be worth it?” I could not have peace that everything would be ok if I went down this path. I would think, “What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul?” (Mark 8:36). I still deeply believed what the Bible taught, and I knew Jesus would be coming soon. If I continued to live a life of self-pleasing, as though I were my own god, I would ultimately miss out on eternal life and I would be filled with regret and anguish of spirit—I would be destroyed in the lake of fire and cease to exist forever. I could also still see the goodness and

love of God in my parents, who still showed their love for me by taking me out to dinner and buying me things. God used them to bless me and soften my heart to His appeals for me to “come home”.

SECTION 5: DELIVERED FROM THE POWERS OF DARKNESS INTO THE KINGDOM OF GOD'S DEAR SON

TURNING POINT: Grace Much More Abounding

It was March of 2019. One evening, while listening to soft, calming, and emotional instrumental music, I began to cry many tears. I did not know what was going on at first, and then I felt the presence of God with me. I had this sudden conviction that I was not expecting, to give my heart back to Jesus. Since I had rejected the voice of conscience so much in the past, I was surprised that I still heard the voice of God's Spirit, or even had the desire or openness to respond to it! I heard God speak to me "My son, I still love you and I offer my forgiveness to you. Will you give me your heart and come home, my beloved son? It will all be worth it, and you won't regret this decision." I was thinking, "how in the world is this even happening?" I thought God had forsaken me when I had forsaken Him. I basically asked Him to sign the divorce papers, and that He was to leave me to my idols; but I remembered His love and our past relationship. I heard him say to me, "I still love you, I will never leave you or forsake you," "I will always take you back," like Hosea, who married a prostitute, but refused to give up on his wife despite her infidelity to him. I knew not to overthink or delay responding, so I quickly, yet intelligently, prayed the simple words "JESUS SAVE ME, HELP ME, FORGIVE ME!"

I knew I would not regret this decision, and it would all be worth it. I knew I could always come home to God and my parents. (How thankful I am

that I could return to my parents. Most parents would have said, “That’s it. I can’t trust you anymore.” But it was not so with my parents. But even if they did, God would never do that. It was because my parents were submitted to God that He was able to work IN them, by keeping their arms open to me, even through such contradiction and disrespect.) Deep down, I knew God could help me regain and grow in that knowledge, love, spiritual intimacy, and trust which I had with Him previously! Satan’s bewitching spell over me was broken, and I felt free and in my right mind! My mother’s prayer from Scripture was beginning to be fully and lastingly answered: that I would be delivered from the powers of darkness and brought into the kingdom of God’s dear Son. I can relate to Mary Magdalene, out of whom Jesus cast seven demons, seven different times; for me, it was over a seven year period, like Nebuchadnezzar. 7 is the number of completion, and I would now FINALLY begin the recovery journey to lasting freedom, victory, and a sustained relationship with Jesus, built on God’s agape love—I was forgiven much, so I loved much!

LAYING DOWN THE BURDEN: The Prodigal Son Comes Home

I immediately felt a deep peace, like a huge burden was lifted from my back—from my soul—like in the book “Pilgrim’s Progress”. I was now in a heavenly atmosphere of light and peace, and demons had to flee. I remembered the first time I gave my heart to Jesus and was born again. I also remembered the many times I had been saved and delivered from my sinful life, like the many times the Israelites were saved from their enemies and then went back to their Idols. I had fallen on the rock and was broken. I felt like Mary Magdalene pouring out the alabaster box of perfume on Jesus and

washing his feet with her tears. I cried many more tears, tears of repentance and tears of Joy for the assurance of the forgiveness of sins and restoration back into the family of God as a son of God! After my crying slowed, I poured my heart out to God through verbal prayers, still sealed with tears. I soon called my parents to tell them the good news and to pray with me. They were overjoyed and also in tears. I re-immersed myself again into the Bible, sermons, Christian hymns and songs, audiobooks, and prayer. It was like my spirituality was coming alive again as the words of life were being spoken over my hungry, thirsty soul. I was genuinely a new man; a new creation renewed with the divine nature after having eaten his flesh and drank His life blood (Spirit) of Jesus (John 6:53), which was now coursing through heart and soul. Christ was reigning on the throne of my heart. Old things had passed away; behold, all things had become new! I was truly a brand plucked from the burning.

I immediately knew I needed to make some changes, by the grace of God and the righteousness of Christ, and get out of the life I was living and move back in with my parents. Thankfully, I found someone else to take over renting my room again. I left my old life, friends, and beatboxing behind. I gave up beatboxing because it was an idol and a sin to me. I did not believe I could use beatboxing for Christ or with Christian music, as I felt like I was channeling and summoning spirits to give me the ability to do what I did with such intensity, complexity, and power when I really got into it (like many rock stars and actors confess). I also threw away any other idols (physical or spiritual) that needed to be thrown away, as I was aware might give evil spirits access to my life. I even eventually changed my phone number.

I knew to have complete distrust of self and complete dependence on Christ. I really wanted to stick with God and live with Him for the rest of this life; I did not want to go back again! My pride was humbled, I knew my desperate need, and I was not afraid to ask for prayer again from all my spiritual friends, family, and church family (asking for help is not giving up, but it is refusing to give up). I had been delivered and wanted to share God's wonderful saving power, but I also knew I could not make it out and stay out without divine help and support from others. The spiritual battle was again re-engaged as I desired to submit to God and resist the devil by putting on the heavenly armor and fighting forward on my knees. I prayed for God to help me to hate what I once loved and to love what I once hated. I believed that if I could gain some traction with God in His word, remain in a good environment with good people, and establish good habits to replace my bad ones, that eventually, over time, my mind would be renewed and my soul transformed and purified. I knew my brain would be rewired, the old pathways would close, and new and positive neural pathways would open and strengthen, which would help keep the communication channel between my soul and God flowing freely.

I felt like the children of Israel when they were being set free from the bondage of Egypt, when Pharaoh and his army did not want to lose their slaves and were chasing down the Israelites to the Red Sea. I would need many miracles and the continued grace and mercy of God and prayers of others to help me stay out of slavery and not to wish to go back to Egypt, like how the Israelites had felt many times when they said, "it would have been better if they went back to Egypt, than to die in the wilderness". I would face my battles; it would take much consistent co-operation with God, and many times I would need to fall on my knees and pray earnestly for God to draw

me closer to Himself and deliver me from my old carnal nature that would want to run away from God and go back to Egypt. He was faithful to deliver me and give me the victory every time! Eventually, the pull of the flesh and the temptation would disappear, and I would be at peace again...until the next temptation.

There is a quote from a devotional by one of my favorite authors, which focuses on health and healing. I can really relate to it in my experience and in the struggle to come back to the Lord and live a life of holiness.

“Wrongs cannot be righted, nor can reformations in conduct be made by a few feeble, intermittent efforts. Character building is the work, not of a day, nor of a year, but of a lifetime. The struggle for conquest over self, for holiness and heaven, is a lifelong struggle. Without continual effort and constant activity, there can be no advancement in the divine life, no attainment of the victor's crown. The strongest evidence of man's fall from a higher state is the fact that it costs so much to return. The way of return can be gained only by hard fighting, inch by inch, hour by hour. In one moment, by a hasty, unguarded act, we may place ourselves in the power of evil; but it requires more than a moment to break the fetters and attain to a holier life. The purpose may be formed, the work begun; but its accomplishment will require toil, time, perseverance, patience, and sacrifice. We cannot allow ourselves to act from impulse. We cannot be off guard for a moment. Beset with temptations without number, we must resist firmly or be conquered. Should we come to the close of life with our work undone, it would be an eternal loss. The life of the apostle Paul was a constant conflict with self. He said, “I die daily.” 1 Corinthians 15:31.” (Ellen White, Ministry of Healing Pg 452)

Once again, my parents welcomed me home with great Joy and tears! God was always faithful and good in giving me a season of refreshing, a break, and strengthening before he allowed the enemy to come in and seriously tempt me. We attended one of our local Adventist churches in the area in western North Carolina and shared with people the good news that I had responded and returned to Christ, and God had answered their prayers! My grandparents were also rejoicing as they had been praying for me. My parents were now living further west of Hendersonville and Asheville, North Carolina, in a smaller countryside town called Murphy in the mountains. So, there was less temptation, and I was further away from Asheville without a car. I had sold my car before going to Australia and had not yet gotten another vehicle...at this point I did not even trust myself with my own vehicle. My parents would let me borrow one of theirs if I needed to.

I was convinced that I wanted to have a spiritual anointing and have my father and several elders lay hands on me for complete physical, mental, and spiritual healing. I wanted lasting deliverance from all strongholds that Satan had in me from my past life. We were also claiming Bible promises over the specific areas that I had struggled with. I did not want Satan to have any power over me because of any doors that I had opened (through sinful practices) to evil spirits. I wanted all breaches sealed up and covered by Christ. I was not afraid to confess my faults and bring them into the light and to my parents and elders so I would have healing, help, accountability and that they could be that channel of blessing for Christ and His Spirit to work through to bless me and to allow Jesus and His word full access into every part of me and my life. I cannot say it was some overly ecstatic experience, but it was an act of faith, and I believe God's word was having its effect and

would in time fully manifest and bear fruit, even though my path would still be rough.

THE THREE TESTS & THREE BLESSINGS: Obadiah, Do you Love Me? (X3)

I also planned to join a literature evangelism program with the Gulf States Conference of Seventh Day Adventists in the summer of 2019. Before I arrived, I would face three major spiritual battles and tests of faith within the next few months, where I would be tempted to return to my old life in the world, right before a major downpour of spiritual blessings. These tests would try the sincerity of my conversion. As I reflect on this time, I can hear Jesus speaking to me through these trials like He did to Peter after he denied his Lord three times. “Peter, do you love me?” “Obadiah, do you love me?” “Do you trust my Love for you?” Satan would try to do everything he could to steal away my anointing and reconnection with Christ, as he had before. That is how the enemy works; he will send a major attack, which God promises will not be more than we can bear in His strength (1 Corinthians 10:13), right before God has a major blessing to bestow upon us. Or the enemy will bring a strong temptation right after a big blessing is received, in an attempt to steal the blessing away and the sweet sense of God’s presence.

THE FIRST TEST: Faith Over Feeling & Learning to Overcome in Spiritual Warfare

I remember deciding to spend a couple of weeks with a dear Indian pastor and friend, Pastor Hershhal, who lived and worked as a retired pastor at the Wildwood campus, Adventist church, and in the community. I had good

memories of pastor Hershhal from my time at Wildwood and knew him to be a deeply spiritual elderly man. I wanted to stay with him while I was seeking to re-establish my first love relationship with Jesus, while at a nice country environment at Wildwood. I packed for a few weeks, and my mother dropped me off at the pastor's home, where he had a guest room ready for me. We then proceeded to take my things inside and say hello. There was about to be a serious battle in the spiritual realm over my soul. If the curtain could be pulled back to see what was going on, I guarantee there would be angels and demons there on the scene, and I am curious to watch the behind-the-scenes footage in heaven one day with my guardian angel.

I had started to let my guard down that day, and I had been entertaining thoughts about not going through with this visit to Wildwood. The pull was very strong and felt like a more-than-human influence, almost impossible to resist. I knew if I went back, I would go back to my old life. I began to bring my things back to the car and I told my mother that I had changed my mind and wanted her to take me back home. God imparted supernatural grace to my mother to not give up on me and to help me fight this spiritual battle. She asked me, "Do you really want to do this?" She gently appealed to me, "Dear son, you don't want to do this. Pray! Think of all the Lord has done for you. I have sacrificed my day and brought you all this way. Will you let me pray for you?" I gave her permission with my head bowed low, with the feeling of my soul being pulled in two different directions, it was quite intense, and the atmosphere was thick and heavy. I was still very quiet.

She invited me back inside to sing some songs with the pastor playing the piano. I did not feel like singing, but after hearing the two of them sing a

little, I started to softly sing a bass or baritone harmony part, which I had enjoyed doing many times in the past. By the end of singing, I had gained a little courage, and the atmosphere was starting to lighten up, but I had not made the surrender yet, as the pull of war over my heart was still showing some resistance on the dark side, not wanting to let go. They then invited me to kneel with them and pray, which I agreed to while still in the valley of decision. They both said a prayer first, which included claiming some Bible promises and spiritual warfare verses. By their intercessions, they were standing in the gap, and it imparted strength and faith to me. Their intercessory prayers were granting access to holy angels, moved by the Spirit of God, to work at softening my heart towards Jesus. They then asked me if I would like to say a prayer myself, and that was when I finally fully surrendered and yielded my heart to God. The enemy lost grip, and the angelic forces dispelled the evil angels and darkness. I now felt free, calm, and at peace in my decision to follow through with my commitment to stay with the pastor.

We then brought my things back inside. I even told my mother that I did not trust myself with my phone and that I wanted her to take it back home with her for the next few weeks so I could focus on prioritizing regaining my first love relationship with Jesus. I did not trust myself. I did not want to risk anything pulling me away from Jesus again. “And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into Gehenna.” (Mark 9:47) I believe one major reason so many fail in trying to gain or regain a relationship with Jesus is because they are not willing to make a complete surrender of self, the desires of the flesh, and to make the necessary sacrifices, even temporarily, that it takes to make God the priority to regain a

vital and lasting connection with Jesus. It is the same for a sick person trying to regain their health again or to lose weight. It takes self-denial, sacrifice, a special cleansing diet and vigorous exercise to heal the body, lose the weight, and regain that vitality of life that is so precious and worth all the perceived sacrifices. But sadly, many when counting the cost are not willing and would rather the temporary gratifications of the flesh than to regain their health. I hugged my dear mother, and as her car pulled away, I felt a huge wave of peace and rest wash over my soul. I felt completely at rest in the arms of Jesus. I had full confidence I was doing the right thing, and I now had heavenly joy again and could enjoy my time!

THE FIRST BLESSING: Rejoicing in My Sonship to God and First Love with Jesus

A deadly wound was inflicted on self (or “ego”). I could walk in the sunshine of the promises of God’s love as His son, as a new man in Christ. My time with the pastor was edifying, uplifting, peaceful, and healing. I was falling in love with Jesus all over again, and I was so blessed by my devotional times with the Lord; reading singing and praying. I was enjoying my prayer walks on the beautiful trails around campus, the lake, the woods, and the mountains. I felt God speaking to me, free from distractions and comforting me with his presence. I enjoyed the worships, nice chats with the Pastor, and helping him with some chores or yard work that needed to be done. I remember accompanying him for a few visitations and Bible studies. I spent much time pouring my heart out to God as my renewed best friend and Father. I was praying for God to reveal where, how, when, and why I departed from the Lord in the past and to help me find true remedy so that it wouldn’t happen again. I was praying to know, love, and trust God more. I

was claiming Bible promises for the areas I had struggled with in the past or with any current emotions that would come up. I also prayed for God's will for my life, ministry, work, and any further education I should attain. God's word would not return unto him void!

THE SECOND TEST: Learning to Make Long Term Decisions & Interrupting Old Self-Destructing Patterns

I remember returning home so on fire for Jesus again, but I had not become fully anchored, founded, strong, and established in the truth and the sanctified life yet. I was still somewhat unstable, and at times, I still had urges to go back to my old ways. I was still falling into temptation occasionally; there were still battles to fight every day and self to die (deny). We were only a few weeks away from the eight-day Feast of Passover camp meeting that my parents and I were planning to attend with some friends of ours, out in a beautiful mountain country location. I knew that if I could just get there, I would receive more of God's Spirit, blessings, light, health, and special spiritual strength to make it through the next few weeks after that, when I would be joining a summer canvassing program for Adventist youth.

The enemy did not want to let me go that easily. He did not want me to go to the Passover feast any more than did Pharaoh want to let the Israelites leave Egypt and go into the wilderness to observe the same feast. Satan is like a roaring lion, prowling about, seeking whom he may devour; any soul that he can find off their guard, he will attack with ferocity. We must always have on the armor of God and watch for any compromises with sin that could give him access to have more power over us and get us to doubt

God and his ways—any variance from God’s law creates a breach in God’s angelic hedge of protection. I wanted to witness to my old Asheville friends, despite being too weak spiritually to maintain my integrity and not fall into compromise; I went back to Asheville for a few days and tried to meet my friends on ground they felt comfortable with. I forget all that happened, but I was tempted to slip back into my old lifestyle and began beatboxing again with old friends and bandmates. We even entertained the idea of getting back together under a new band name as a “conscious hip hop” boy band. I had some coffee, and I may have had a few drinks of alcohol or smoked some weed—I can’t remember now. The point is, I was putting myself in a dangerous position again, but my conscience was bothering me; God was fighting for my soul.

I remember driving my friend’s motorcycle and almost running into a car on the Interstate, which I did not see while switching lanes. That shook me up a lot and humbled me. I thank God for people who were still praying for me and my guardian angel’s protection, as the enemy would have been happy to snuff my life out at any point. I know my life was preserved from many dangers and harms, including death, and all I can do is praise God for His everlasting mercy and tender and faithful watch care.

After a few days of indulging the old man, I responded to the Spirit of God with repentance and returned to my parents’ home. It took me until I was 25 years old for God to mature me enough and for my brain to start making better long-term decisions! I was thinking further ahead and drawn to think and look upon Jesus and His matchless love and charm. I was reminded of the assurance of the amazing plans God has for me that will have a lasting, substantial, and eternal impact on souls and for the kingdom

of heaven. I wanted to better people's lives, not just in this life, but to ultimately see them saved for eternity! What greater joy and motivation to carry our cross of self-denial, follow Christ, and be His disciple!

God was teaching me how to interrupt the old negative patterns and the downward self-destructive cycle I had gotten into so many times before, and to get back on the right track as quickly as possible. As the Bible says in Proverbs 24:16, "For a righteous man may fall seven times, and rise again, But the wicked shall fall by calamity." It was very likely that I would fall from time to time like a baby learning to walk, but God was teaching me to keep getting back up and never to give up! In 1 John 2:1, the apostle writes, "My little children, I write these things to you that you may not sin; but if anyone sins, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." The key was to fall into the arms of Jesus, pray, and realize that just because I have compromised and sinned in certain areas does not mean I have to keep going further into sin before I repent!

THE SECOND BLESSING: Outpouring of the Spirit of God During The Feast

It was time to go to our Feast of Passover and unleavened bread camp meeting towards the end of April 2019. 1 Corinthians 5:8 says, "Therefore let us keep the feast (of Passover and unleavened bread), not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." My parents and I were excited to spend a whole week in nature worshiping God with our friends, studying the Bible, listening to inspirational and uplifting messages, having good food and fellowship, singing and chatting around the campfire! It was an enjoyable

time. My soul drank from the living waters, ate from the heavenly manna, and was healed by the leaves from the tree of life. I gained strength in Christ, my mind was renewed, and my soul cleansed by the washing of the word; “That He might sanctify and cleanse her (the church or body of Christ) with the washing of water by the word.” (Ephesians 5:26). I was just so open, humble, teachable, and receptive to the truth! I did not want to miss any blessings. This Passover was symbolic for me as I had just come out of spiritual Egypt and the house of bondage to sin.

During the feast we had a time for anyone to share testimonies and praises to God for the wonderful things He was doing. One individual named Matt shared an emotional and unforgettable story of how he had a heated controversy with an elder of an Adventist church that he was a member of. He shared how he was impressed by the Spirit of God in the middle of the board meeting to get up and go get a basin and fill it with water. In the middle of that board meeting, he washed the elder's feet and asked him to forgive him! Many people could feel the presence of God in the room and moving upon hearts, and some of us were already beginning to tear up. A man named Wences was so inspired by the story that he got up, retrieved a basin with water himself, and in front of everyone with tears, he went to my father, asked him to forgive him, and proceeded to wash his feet. Now my father was crying and hugging this man. I was not expecting to then see my father go retrieve a basin himself and come over to where I was sitting to wash my feet and publicly ask me to forgive him for his faults, inconsistencies, and bad examples as a father, such as: introducing television, movies, and video games into my life. Now I too had tears flooding down my face as I embraced my father. Malachi 4:5 and 6 were being fulfilled. “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful

day of the Lord. And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the earth with a curse.”

I was aware of God’s appointed times and their mention in the Bible because my parents had been attending them for some years. Not only was it clear through Scriptures, but it made sense that the worlds pagan holidays and festivals, were simply Satan’s counterfeits of God’s true “holy days” and Biblical feasts; times where He wants to meet with and bless His people. I felt an outpouring of the Spirit of God during those 8 days of the feast, and I soaked it up like a sponge! The feasts, at least the ones I have attended, are like normal camp meetings, except at the specific times that God has set apart as a date to be with His people and to sanctify them rather than just whenever it is convenient.

The feasts of the LORD are listed in Leviticus 23 and they are as follows:

1. The Seventh Day Sabbath
2. The Passover and Unleavened Bread
3. Pentecost
4. Trumpets and the Day of Atonement
5. Tabernacles

Each one of these feasts is said to be “a statute forever throughout your generations”. This also means that a Sabbath keeper IS a feast keeper. Paul defended those who chose to observe the feasts in Colossians 2 from Gnostics who were subjecting themselves (and others) to man-made traditions regulating what they were allowed to eat and touch, in case they

were to get any sense of pleasure out of them, which the Gnostics though was intrinsically bad. Paul describes these self-imposed religionists as having a false humility in their pursuit of neglecting their bodies and withholding themselves and judging others from partaking of those things which were ordained to be a blessing to man during the feasts, such as bread and grape juice (unfermented “wine”). Paul warned the Christians to “beware,” lest these Gnostics would “cheat them of their reward.” Thus, it is that none should trouble themselves if others judge them for partaking of these blessing of food and drink—which were a Christians reward, as they pointed them to Christ’s body and blood, which was broken and spilt for them, and made their hearts merry in fellowship during the feast times.

In addition to the weekly Sabbath and the annual feasts, there was also held a feast on the new moon every month. In Isaiah 66:23 we are told that we will keep not only the weekly Sabbath upon the new earth, but also the new moon. The Shunammite woman was questioned by her husband why she sought to meet with Elisha on a day that was not either a Sabbath or a new moon (2 Kings 4:23). Many other places can be found in the Bible referring to the new moon as a feast day, such as: Psalm 81:3, Isaiah 66:23, Ezekiel 46:1, among others. This is because during the feast times (the Sabbath, feasts and new moons) there would be an extra outpouring of the Holy Spirit. We see this at Pentecost, after Jesus ascended, when the disciples were moved deeply by God’s Spirit and even spoke in tongues. This truth is reflected in the portions of bread (grain and oil), wine and animal sacrifices offered on the specific feast days in comparison to the typical daily morning and evening sacrifices.

Event	Animal Sacrifices (L)ambs, (B)ulls, (R)ams, (G)oats	Bread		Hins of Wine
		Ephahs of Flour	Hins of Oil	
1 st Six Days: Morn' & Even' Sacrifices	(L)=2	$\frac{1}{5}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{2}$
Seventh Day Sabbath	(L)=4	$\frac{2}{5}$	1	1
New Moon	(L)=9, (B)=2, (R)=1, (G)=1	$1\frac{7}{10}$	$4\frac{1}{4}$	$3\frac{7}{12}$
Passover and Unleavened Bread	(L)=65, (B)=16, (R)=8, (G)=8	$12\frac{9}{10}$	$32\frac{1}{4}$	$26\frac{11}{12}$
Pentecost	(L)=9, (B)=2, (R)=1, (G)=1 *same as the New Moon*	$1\frac{7}{10}$	$4\frac{1}{4}$	$3\frac{7}{12}$
Trumpets	(L)=16, (B)=3, (R)=2, (G)=2	$2\frac{9}{10}$	$7\frac{1}{4}$	$6\frac{1}{6}$
Day of Atonement	(L)=9, (B)=1, (R)=1, (G)=1	$1\frac{2}{5}$	$3\frac{1}{2}$	$3\frac{1}{12}$
Tabernacles	(L)=123, (B)=71, (R)=15, (G)=8	$36\frac{3}{5}$	$91\frac{1}{2}$	$71\frac{1}{4}$

The sacrifices pointed to the “Lamb of God” and “the Bread of Life”, who poured out His life as a “Drink Offering” for us. These symbols point to Christ and further affirm that Christ’s Spirit is being poured out in greater portions during these appointed feasts. Thus, it is during such times that I ask, in faith,

for God to apportion to me a super abundant outpouring of His Spirit upon me. It's not about a legal standing with God by simply attending a festival, but it's about cherishing a relationship and the gift of refreshing that is being offered to us by our Beloved at these times. Just like a married couple that celebrates their anniversary on their anniversary day, when their hearts are extra warm and not on some random day. It is at these times that the words of the Father speaking over His saints, is clearly heard, "these are My noble ones (My children), in whom is all My delight." (Psalm 16:3). The feasts are like a big spiritual hug. The feast of Tabernacles has over 180x more oil (Spirit) than a regular day! I wouldn't miss that for the world. "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the LORD of hosts." (Zechariah 4:6). This is 180x more rest from my works; 180x more of Christ and His righteousness!!

I think back upon the times I came out of the world and how blessed and at rest I felt in God's presence during the Sabbath hours! Just like Jesus felt at his baptism, when God the Father said, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." During God's appointed times these words seemed to resound within me, and I felt accepted by my heavenly Father; He has made us accepted in the Beloved. (Ephesians 1:6). The Sabbath was a weekly date with my Lord and my God. If the Sabbath is our weekly date with God, where there is more of God's Spirit available than any other day, then the new moon is our monthly date with God, and the feasts are our yearly dates with God! I have tasted and seen this to be true for myself, and these appointed times feel like a spiritually romantic date with God where He is courting me and the body of believers, the church, and wanting to purify His bride to be! "That He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish." (Ephesians 5:27).

THE THIRD TEST: Learning To Get Back Up and Keep Going Forward In Faith When I Fall

Our family returned home from the feast with such joy in the spirit; our hearts overflowing with love and blessings. But as is to be expected, tests swiftly followed as the enemy sought to steal away the holy atmosphere surrounding us, but God's grace was sufficient. I was choosing to keep on pressing forward towards my next goal of getting into the summer canvassing program, despite my shortcomings. I know the enemy did not want me to go, and there was some resistance against it rising within me. Since I would be meeting the canvassing team in the panhandle of Florida, my mother and I packed up my things and left a few days earlier to go camping near the beach.

In my born-again nature, under the influence of the Spirit of Christ, I desired to be in an environment with other spiritual young people who too were serving the Lord. But my flesh was at war with the idea of committing ten weeks of selfless service to the cause of Christ. Canvassing is, in one part, a joy to me because I love getting truth-filled books into homes and ministering to souls at the doors and businesses, but on the other hand, it can be a real cross to bear, dealing with a lot of rejection and the hot summer sun. I was tempted to tell my mother to turn the car around and take me back home, but I prayed and resisted the urge. I knew if I went back home now, I would soon be back in the world and in a deeper state of perdition. The questions to ask are not, "Is it easy or convenient?" "Do I have the money?" "Will I suffer loss?" "Do I feel like it?" "What does the majority say?" BUT "Is it right?" "Is it true?" and "Is it God's will?" God's grace would always supply my needs and enable me to soldier on in the faith of Jesus.

I was tempted to let my guard down this weekend with my mother and enjoy the time since I would need to be stricter and more conservative once I got to the program. As we were hanging out at the campground, Satan was tempting me to start making compromises. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9). I realized that my flesh, like in the past, was trying to get me to compromise in different areas to feed and strengthen itself and gain the supremacy over my renewed spiritual nature. In the back of my mind, I knew that the enemy would try to use this to weaken my faith and grasp upon God and entreat me to back out of the canvassing program. We should not be ignorant of the enemy's devices and be careful not to tempt ourselves. We should know ourselves; that we are weak and untrustworthy. I was tempted and yielded to some coffee and beatboxing with more temptations starting to enter my mind.

My old man was making his final and last push for supremacy, but deep down I wanted to live for Him and go through with this canvassing program—God heard my heart's prayer and delivered me! "No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it." (1 Corinthians 10:13). I did not want to be going down this path again, and I was not happy or at peace. It was almost sunset Friday evening and the Sabbath was approaching. I thought of the Bible verse in Ephesians 4:26, "do not let the sun go down on your wrath." I had the conviction and spiritual desire that I did not want the sun to go down on my sin and rebellion! I did not want to go into the Sabbath hours without a vital connection with my beloved and best friend, Jesus. In preparation for the canvassing work ahead

of me, I knew I needed to fill up my cup with blessings so that I could pour it out upon those to who I would be ministering; I wanted to rest in the double portion of the Spirit upon the Sabbath day, and enjoy the sweet communion with my heavenly Father. I did not want to mar the joyous spiritual atmosphere of the last Sabbath I would have opportunity to spend with my mother for the next 10 weeks.

I confessed my struggle and asked my mother to pray with me. After she finished, I had a big sigh of relief...victory! A wave of peace washed over my soul. I felt a deep, trusting assurance of my heavenly Father's forgiving nature. A mortal blow was inflicted on my flesh. I could now, once again, say, like in Galatians 2:20, "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." We had worship together at sundown and enjoyed a nice Sabbath on the beach. That Sunday, she dropped me off at the Adventist church school where the canvassing team was meeting.

THE THIRD BLESSING: An Established, Consistent and Growing Experience in Christ through Literature Evangelism

That summer of doing literature evangelism was life-changing! I had done canvassing work before, but this time was different and better. I was older and more spiritually mature. I thrived among the other young Adventists, and we were all on fire for the Lord. I met a brother there, Steven, who I am still friends with today. An unforgettable group of zealous young people from Australia joined us for the canvassing work. There was

structure, accountability, encouragement, uplifting worships, and powerful corporate group prayer sessions. Inspiring testimonies from the canvassing field were reported every day.

Canvassing became an integral part in stabilizing my faith. Letting the blessings I had received, flow to others, prevented my faith from stagnating and putrefying. The continual self-sacrifice, bearing my cross, while going door to door to work for others' salvation, was saving my own soul! I was not alone; I knew Jesus was always there with me, being my teacher and bearing his cross with me, especially when people would reject me or the books. I knew people were ultimately not rejecting me but Christ. People often had a false picture of who they thought I was or what I had to offer them. I learned to deal with rejection like a man and persist, in faith that I might reach another hungry soul perishing for want of the truth! I would pray to meet those whose hearts were going to be receptive to truth and were ripe for the harvesting; those who hear the voice of the Good Shepherd. God was always faithful to provide divine (providential) appointments every day, in response to my prayers! Some days I'd make a lot of sales, and others not so much, but reaching just one person or selling only a few books made the day well worthwhile. It is such a satisfying and rewarding work, and I could rest in a good conscience knowing that these Bible-based devotionals, health, and kids' books would have a positive influence upon those who received them and would create spiritual waves in the community. It might take years, but I had an assurance that the seeds I had planted, God would care for and that some would bring forth fruit unto eternal life—I never regretted a single day of canvassing!

The colporteur work is unlike anything I have ever known, and it is one of the best faith-building experiences and ministry work of the highest order. I cannot recommend this type of ministry enough. I think everyone should try at least once in their lifetime, if not more! It teaches you how to make friends with strangers, how to handle rejection, allows you to share and sharpen your faith, strengthens your prayer life, and gives you an opportunity to see how powerfully God can use you to reach others and have a saving impact upon their lives. As a bonus, the book sales can be used to help fund missionary work, school or even as a means to support yourself. Of course, anyone can simply give a book away, but people often value what they pay for. Unless you already have a trusting relationship with the person you are sharing the book with, it is more likely they will read it if they buy it, otherwise they may just take it and throw it in the trash or put it in a “never to read again” pile in their basement..

The canvasser’s greatest reward in Heaven will be to see and meet those precious souls who can trace their conversion and eternal salvation to meeting a canvasser and receiving those truth-filled books. I can imagine (with tears in my eyes as I write this) the moments in heaven where I finally can meet and rejoice with these dear souls! On that day, it will all be worth it! “For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” (2 Corinthians 4:17). None of us will ever regret any sacrifice made for the salvation of souls. “Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.” (Hebrews 12:2).

After that summer of canvassing, my life and relationship with God continued to grow over the next 6 years. I found maturity in putting away bad habits and became much more consistent in keeping them away. I no longer had these long periods of abandoning the faith and returning to the world. I would have struggles and sins from time to time, but something had shifted in me—I no longer desired the dainties of this world. I give all the glory to God! God was teaching me the keys to gaining and maintaining that first love relationship with Jesus. I was thinking about the long-term impact of my choices; the fruit would be sweet. At the time, my dad was struggling with discouragement, and that motivated me to be even closer to God and to spend more time in prayer and intercession and to be there for my dad as much as I could, as he had for me. Sometimes he was very close to God, and we would all be rejoicing in the Lord together, but at other times he would begin to make compromises which gave Satan a foothold in his life. When we pray earnestly for others, it not only can help bring the other person closer to God, but we will draw closer to Him. As we offer to help carry the burdens of others, we develop a special bond with Christ and He brings about a deeper level of consecration in our own lives.

MISSION TRIP TO AFRICA: Developing a Love for Overseas Missions

My mother met Thomas, an African pastor/evangelist who was visiting America, and was planning an evangelistic series back in Gabon, Africa. I ended up joining him in the fall of 2019. Some home church family also recommended I get in touch with a young American Adventist and evangelist named Malcom Reedy (who I met after this trip to Africa) who had previously visited and supported an orphanage in Uganda, Africa which my

church family recommended I should visit after the evangelistic series in Gabon was over.

It was an enriching experience to immerse myself in the African culture and my perspective of the world was broadened. So much was different about how the way people lived: language, work, food, homes, family life and worship. It was both humbling and inspiring. Interacting with the children was one of my favorite parts of the trip. It made me appreciate many of the luxuries and conveniences we so often take for granted in the Western world. I was impressed by the support team who wanted to pray, intercede, sing, and worship God every 3 hours, everyday (except during midnight) during the evangelistic series! We also had a health expo for a few days before the series. The gospel meetings were a success in this part of Gabon, which did not have an Adventist church yet. Over 12 people were baptized, gave their hearts to Jesus, and a small Adventist home church plant was able to be established, after the meetings. Praise the Lord!

I then had my flight to Uganda, where Mukiibi picked me up and took me to this small, remote village in Northern Uganda—surprisingly there was still good cell signal. I enjoyed meeting the many precious African orphan children, whose eagerness and joy to see me brought to tears of joy to my eyes. I remember those beautiful hugs and their innocent love. I have funny videos of them joining me for my exercises, singing songs with or for them, sharing Bible stories, and gifting them clothing. It was a precious experience. We also ended up having over 1 week of evangelistic series Bible meetings, including health lectures with translation to the local language by a Sunday pastor, since no Adventist could do it. There was also no Seventh Day Adventist church in the village. The meetings went well; a few souls

dedicated their lives to Jesus publicly, and many seeds were sown in hearts and minds. The best turnout of people was when we played the movie about the life of Jesus based on the gospel of John word for word.

MIRACLE HEALING: Women with Epilepsy and Third degree Burn Healed

I experienced a miraculous and unforgettable healing in that village. It was morning time, and I was having my devotions and prayer time before breakfast when a person in the village brought to me a lady who had a terrible third-degree burn down her leg...it looked horrible. She explained that this lady would have episodes of epilepsy, and this time she boiled water and poured it all over her leg. I knew she needed to eventually go to the hospital, which we did ultimately end up taking her to. All I had was some colloidal silver wound gel which I applied several times to her burn. I immediately thought of stories in the Bible of demons causing or manifesting through epilepsy. I told the lady, through a translator, that she may be dealing with a spiritual problem and not just a disease, and I asked her if she wanted complete forgiveness, cleansing, healing, and freedom from the demonic oppression. She responded with “yes”. I thought of James 5:14-15, which says, “Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.”

I was impressed to ask if she would like me to anoint her with oil, to lay hands and pray over her for healing, which she agreed to. Thankfully, we recently purchased some olive oil. There was no other Adventist elder or

pastor here to be able to do this, and I felt very humbled and almost unworthy to carry this out, but I prayed and asked in faith for God to use me for the sake of this dear soul. I will never forget the moment when I dipped my finger in the oil and applied it to her forehead. I immediately felt virtue, or the Spirit of God, flow through my whole body like an electric current to this woman. I had tears streaming down my face, and I could barely offer up to God a short and simple prayer on behalf of this woman because I felt so overwhelmed in the presence of God. I knew without a shadow of doubt that this woman was healed! Positive evidence that I have of this was that she came out to most of the remaining Bible meetings that we had, among other confirmations, including her wound healing up beautifully. I communicated with Mukiibi a month or so after I had arrived back in America, and he said that this lady was so thankful to God and that she felt free and happy and had not had another epileptic episode since—a miracle!

THE FALL FEASTS: Swimming in the Spirit, Multiplied Blessings

Right before I left Africa, I observed the day of Atonement, or “At-One-Ment,” in memory of the great antitypical day of atonement. Not only was the day regarded as Holy in the Old Testament, but it was also the day which marked the Great Second Advent Movement’s “Great Disappointment”, on October 22, 1844, and the revelation of the final work of Jesus in the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary. It was this vindication of God’s character and law that would begin to occur at the end of the 2300 year prophecy of Daniel 8:14 which became the central pillar of the Seventh Day Adventist Movement. I took the day to fast, pray, read my Bible and the amazing book “Great Controversy.” I set out to search my

heart, praying for God to reveal and cleanse me of any and all sins in my life and any way in which I am unlike Christ. I prayed for nothing to separate me from God.

The Day of Atonement is right before the Feast of Tabernacles, therefore, almost immediately after arriving back in America, I was blessed to join my family for another feast celebration: a week-long Tabernacles Camp meeting in Tennessee. In the Review and Herald, November 17, 1885 Ellen White, one of the founders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and a woman embued with the gift of prophecy wrote, "Well would it be for us to have a feast of tabernacles, a joyous commemoration of the blessings of God to us as a people." Verse 41 of Leviticus 23 also says of Tabernacles, "You shall keep it as a feast to the Lord for seven days in the year. It shall be a statute FOREVER in your generations." This feast is supposed to direct our minds towards the future time when we will, along with all the redeemed saints of God, dwell (or "Tabernacle") with Jesus in heaven for 1000 years during the marriage supper of the lamb. We studied the word of God together and asked in faith for the blessing of God's Spirit to rest upon us in abundant measure, according to the promise of Scripture. I think we all felt the Spirit of God upon us, as I did. My spirit was edified; my soul refreshed.

The feasts have continually been a help in establishing my faith more firmly upon the Rock. The washing of the word and the sanctifying power of the Truth gives me a spiritual boost, propelling me forward toward the promised land and away from the bondage of Egypt. The feasts are a special protection for God's remnant people in the last days. Those who are hid with God in Christ receive a greater outpouring of the Spirit during the appointed times (or feast days). This will protect us from the destruction that will fall

upon spiritual Egypt and the world at large. We see this clearly in Exodus: Moses asked Pharaoh to let his people go so that they could keep a feast unto the Lord, but because Pharaoh refused, destruction came upon Egypt, but the people of God were protected with the life blood of the lamb. Zech 14:18 says, "If the family of Egypt will not come up and enter in, they shall have no rain; they shall receive the plague with which the LORD strikes the nations who do not come up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles." I needed all the spiritual rain that I could possibly receive, which the Bible says in Deuteronomy 32:2 is doctrine: "My doctrine shall drop as the rain". I was falling more and more in love with the begotten Son of God and learning more of His charms. I was learning to look forward with great anticipation to spending time with Him during these appointed times when he is extra close to us with his presence! Since the culmination of all the feasts show the complete plan of salvation, I believe it is very likely that the final outpouring of the latter rain will happen on a Pentecost feast day, just like the early rain fell on the disciples in the upper room. (Acts 2:1-47).

SECTION 6: TRUTH SEEKING AND SPIRITUALLY MATURING

MEETING MALCOLM: My Introduction to the Father of Love Movement and Character of God Message

Upon my return to the states, I had it in my heart to meet Malcom. My parents had previously visited this church called Talking Rock Sabbath Chapel in north Georgia. Malcom invited me to meet with him and some others in a Bible study group he was a part of at TRSC. We met on Sabbath, and I was delighted with their warm and welcoming hearts. There was something special about this group; I sensed they had a deep love for Jesus. I could see the Spirit of Jesus and the positive fruits of the Spirit in their lives, which I was attracted to. A man named Ben was leading a Bible study about the character of God, which I found very intriguing. I was very impressed with the profoundly loving gentleness and meekness I perceived in Ben. There were also a couple of young men named Garret and Andy who were involved in the Bible studies, who also had powerful testimonies of how God had redeemed them out of the world within the last few years in their search for health, truth, community, and God.

I quickly became friends with Malcolm. He was friendly, caring, loving, and easy to talk to. Malcolm is a very friendly man and always makes conversation easy. For Malcom, strangers are family he hasn't met yet. He

lived a wild life before he came to Christ, so, although he did not grow up Adventist, we could relate. Malcolm was converted just a few years before, but had been on a truth-seeking journey, and I could clearly see this young man was born again and loved Jesus with his whole heart and desired every person he met to be saved and in heaven. He wanted to dedicate his whole life to ministry and missionary work. He was also supporting two orphanages in Africa, which he is still involved with today. Malcolm and his wife also currently support missionary work in Pakistan.

It was December of 2019, and Malcolm had invited me out to some Bible meetings hosted at Talking Rock with Pastor Adrian Ebens as the main guest speaker. I told my parents about it, and at first, they gave me a word of caution and warning—they thought strange doctrine was being taught at Talking Rock recently, namely God’s non-violent character (which to some, appears to contradict the plain reading of Scripture, especially in the Old Testament) of the which Adrian had been preaching. But they did not tell me not to go; they encouraged me to go prayerfully and to trust that God’s Spirit would give me spiritual discernment to know what is in accordance with God’s Word. We claimed the verse in John 7:17: "If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority."

TRUTH SEEKER: Discerning Advancing Light

The greatest safeguard against error and deception is a love for Jesus. Jesus is the Truth (John 14:6), so if we love Him, we will love the truth, and light will be joyfully received. Jesus is the Spirit of Truth who “will guide you [any genuine truth seeker] into all truth! Some people fear examining ideas that they are not familiar with or have heard a bad report about, but

the truth never fears close examination. If we sincerely love Jesus, what have we to fear? Will He lead us astray? That's not what the Scriptures say. Furthermore, we are implored by the Apostle Paul to "prove (test) all things; and to hold fast to that which is good." God wants us to study doctrines that we might be apprehensive to and to examine them in the light of Scripture prayerfully. If they are wrong, God will show us. If we have been wrong, perhaps even bearing false witness against some doctrine, God is faithful to forgive us. Let us thank God for His tender care for our souls and press forward in seeking for more light (truth) to guide our path to heaven. The greatest treasure is the truth! Jesus said in John 8:32 "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." What does it cost to investigate prayerfully, read a book, hear a sermon, or study the Bible? Sadly, most people who profess to believe "the truth" haven't thoroughly studied the doctrines they claim to believe for themselves but rather take them on authority of some other person's sermon, book, or flippant Bible study. The other trap is to study to prove what we already believe and discard anything that does not agree with our orthodoxy. I love Jesus so much! I have found it is worth selling and leaving all to obtain the truth, which is to have more of Jesus!

When orthodoxy or the creed of a church, is wrong, it is a deadly barrier to truth. With performance-based thinking and long-standing tradition people's identity becomes attached to these traditions and beliefs of a church. If these traditions or beliefs are shown to be wrong, people can see it as an attack on their identity and value system of "knowing the truth" Often a person's identity is so linked with a denomination that is respected and their community of faith that they can't imagine losing their membership because of their new beliefs. This performance-based value system prevents

them from coming into the light and truth because they might lose their position or their friends which is perceived as a loss of value. This is in comparison to finding our identity in Christ as sons and daughters of God in a relational value-based kingdom.

I remember asking myself, “Does the Seventh Day Adventist church have ALL the truth God is trying to reveal to His people, or is there more He desires to share?” It often feels like once a church lays out their creed or “fundamental beliefs,” people stop thinking for themselves. It creates a mold that influences the minds of the congregation and an arbitrary fear for anyone who might have some idea that goes beyond the bounds of their man-made creed. I am still a firm believer in the Seventh-day Adventist movement and I have been abundantly blessed having had the opportunity to attend Adventist schools, churches and fellowships. However, having lived among the community for so long and having wrestled with my own faith as a Seventh-day Adventist, I have been faced with the glaring reality that many Adventists are struggling to find spiritual fulfillment. We hear many sermons about “righteousness by faith” and “the 144,00 having perfected characters in Christ”—which I still whole heartedly believe, now more than ever—yet such sermons are often only deflating our faith and causing us to plummet further into vice and unrighteousness of character. I had to ask myself, “What is wrong with this picture? Surely we are missing something.”

I believe the SDA Church is the final (the 7th) church of Revelation 2-3, Laodicea, God’s end-time remnant. But I also believe that God will continually be revealing to His people more truth as that Great Day grows nearer. “The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.” (Proverbs 4:18). It is an uncovering and rediscovering of truth

that is going to sanctify the soul. “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy Word is truth.” (John 17:17). I realize that many of these sermons on “Righteousness by Faith” were just sermons about “you need to do more good things before God can save you.” And I don’t blame any preacher; that is the default mode of the carnal heart. The problem is that we, as Seventh-day Adventists, have become proud of all the truths we think we have and built walls around these truths with creeds and fundamental beliefs. These walls have shut Christ out of the church and prevented Him from causing our path to shine brighter with further truths and from correcting the errors we have made. Only when we, as a movement, can accept that we really know nothing as we ought to know and repent of our rejection of Christ, will we be clothed in the garments of righteousness, which is by the faith of Christ.

“Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.” (Revelation 3:17-18)

The sealing mentioned in Revelation 7 is a settling into the truth—all the truth! So, God’s children can’t be sealed with the Father’s name (or character) unless we believe and receive ALL the truth (particularly in relation to God’s character) and, by God’s grace, live up to it. (We can’t receive more light unless we live up to the light we have.) Then Christ will see His bride is ready and He will take her home, just as He did with Enoch.

My parents were willing to follow the truth wherever it led them, no matter the cost; friends, family, work, ministry, and even the SDA church they

grew up in. Their devoted, truth seeking, spirit inspired me with strength and zeal to follow in their footsteps. My father, Wayne, had studied the character of God before and had already read most of Adrian's published writings. He agreed with a lot, but not everything that Adrian believed; He had questions about some of the conclusions to which Adrian was coming. My dad is never prejudiced against anyone for believing differently and has always been willing to listen and discuss theology with anyone, even if their beliefs appear strange. He is always willing to study a subject and compare it with the Word of God, like the Bereans in Acts. If convinced by evidence shown in Scripture, my father was always willing to change his beliefs. And since my dad reads so many spiritual books and is so devoted to Bible study, I have had the privilege to witness my father's faith evolve and his character change to be more Christ-like. I have learned through him to remain humble and teachable and to have a hunger for learning and development.

BIBLE MEETINGS WITH PASTOR ADRIAN: Illumination on the Glorious Character of God

I called Malcolm before the meetings and questioned him about Adrian Ebens and the character of God. I remember Malcolm showing a humble confidence in his convictions that Adrian was being inspired by the Spirit of God to write and share what he was. Not only did Malcolm's words encourage me to attend the meetings, but his willingness to study the character of God doctrine out thoroughly for himself encouraged me to keep pressing forward in faith to deeply investigate this topic for myself. I was willing to hear Adrian, reason with him, and weigh the evidence with Scripture. Because I had prayed earnestly, I had no fear of close investigation and no resistance to the truth; prejudice was dissolved as God shed precious

beams of light upon my mind. I became convinced, through Scripture and reason, that Jesus' life, character, and teachings, as revealed while on earth, was the complete revelation of the Father's character of love!

I attended the meetings over the weekend and took plenty of notes! I sat near the front, trying to listen intently and understand what was being presented before I came to my own conclusions. I wanted to believe what Adrian was presenting was true; deep down in my heart I did not believe God was a killer. Yet, I could not reconcile the Biblical accounts of the flood, Sodom and Gomorrah, the conquest of Canaan, the lake of fire (and many other things) with this idea of a non-violent God. I did not want to believe that God was the one condemning and directly and supernaturally responsible for killing billions of people throughout history and at the close of time. Naturally, I was very open to hearing the different perspectives Adrian was offering as to how we can reexamine these violent stories in the light of Jesus Christ, "the express image of the Father". But I also did not want to give myself over to doctrines that simply tickled my ears, but rather, I submitted my emotions to my reason and endeavored to apply William Miller's rules of interpretation (a set of systematic principles derived from the Bible itself as to how to weigh all the evidence of Scripture and arrive at the truth. For more information please see the following [How Do You Read](http://www.FatherofLove.info) from www.FatherofLove.info and test this doctrine.

Adrian was clear to articulate that there are natural consequences for sin, that sin is self-destructive, and that many souls will be eternally lost and left out of heaven in the end because God respects their free will. The wicked are so out of harmony with God—His character and government—that heaven and the presence of Jesus would be a place of torture for them, for

Jesus fully revealed the character of God and was in complete harmony with God's law. Jesus never did violence to any person (Isaiah 53:9), never took life, and never condemned anyone, and so God, the Father, must be the same. God is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8, Malachi 3:6). Adrian made an appeal for us to take Jesus by the hand and let Him lead us to a right understanding of the Father in the Old Testament. It was this process that would remove the veil from our eyes. For an introduction to the character of God I suggest you read following [Acts of our Gentle God](#) and [Agape](#) available at FatherofLove.info

He also shared a new perspective on the subject of the two covenants. He taught that the typical protestant understanding of the covenants—(before the cross = Old Covenant) and (after the cross = New Covenant)—is wrong and that in reality, the two covenants are two heart experiences each soul can have in relation to God—(salvation through works of the flesh, and the promises of man = Old Covenant) and (Trusting in the promises of God by faith = New Covenant). This wrestling between trusting God (new covenant) and seeking to attain His blessings by our own promises and works due to doubt (old covenant) is clearly illustrated in the life of Abraham and the Israelites response to God at Mount Sinai. See Galatians chapter 4 and Exodus 19. For a deeper dive into the subject, I recommend *Removing the Veil* Daniel Bernhardt available at www.FatherofLove.info.

Adrian also explained how the crucifixion of Christ is not simply a 24-hour event that happened on a cross two-thousand years ago, but a very present reality that has been taking place since the very inception of sin; that Christ continually suffers the penalty for sustaining those who choose to sin. The cross represents self-denial. Adrian shared this powerful quote from the

book Education, by Ellen White, on this subject of the "True Cross" that really stuck with me:

"Those who think of the result of hastening or hindering the gospel think of it in relation to themselves and to the world. Few think of its relation to God. Few give thought to **the suffering that sin has caused our Creator**. All heaven suffered in Christ's agony; but that suffering did not begin or end with His manifestation in humanity. **The cross is a revelation to our dull senses of the pain that, from its very inception, sin has brought to the heart of God.** Every departure from the right, every deed of cruelty, every failure of humanity to reach His ideal, brings grief to Him. When there came upon Israel the calamities that were the sure result of separation from God,—subjugation by their enemies, cruelty, and death,—it is said that "His soul was grieved for the misery of Israel." "In all their affliction He was afflicted: ... and He bare them, and carried them all the days of old." Judges 10:16; Isaiah 63:9. His Spirit "maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." As the "whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together" (Romans 8:26, 22), the heart of the infinite Father is pained in sympathy. Our world is a vast lazarus house, a scene of misery that we dare not allow even our thoughts to dwell upon. Did we realize it as it is, the burden would be too terrible. Yet **God feels it all**. In order to destroy sin and its results He gave His best Beloved, and He has put it in our power, through co-operation with Him, to bring this scene of misery to an end. "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." Matthew 24:14." Education, p. 263. (emphasis supplied)

For more on the subject of the true ever present cross please see [Jesus Christ and Him Crucified](http://www.Fatheroflove.info) Kevin Mullins available at www.Fatheroflove.info.

The light of the true cross was so bright that it exposed the darkness of my previous misconceptions and dullness of my own spiritual discernment. My mind was doing its best to take all this in. I did not immediately believe and accept everything that was shared; I still needed time to evaluate these claims in reference to the rest of my theology, but I could already see that there is truth and light in Adrian's teaching. I had to re-examine many of my previously held beliefs, and I began to look for any inconsistencies, or holes in my reasoning—I wanted to be founded upon the Rock, not falsity.

Learning what Adrian was sharing was somewhat like trying to drink from a fireman's hose. It is much too much to take in all at once, it knocks you over on your back but leaves you feeling clean and thirsty for more. God had been preparing the soil of my heart up to this point so that the seeds of truth could take deep root and bear much fruit, and I am still reaping fruit from the seeds here sown in that very important season of my life.

Initially, all of this almost sounded too good to be true, because the God of the Old Testament appears to be so different from Jesus in character. God appears to be the one personally and supernaturally responsible for condemning, punishing, and killing millions, if not billions, of people in the Old Testament. I was also struggling to believe that God does not judge and condemn because, as a fallen race, we naturally want to think that God judges and condemns people so that we have an excuse to judge and condemn others. This is a rather desperate sub-conscious effort to cover our own hidden enmity within ourselves in fig leaves of self-righteousness, self-

justification and projection of the enmity onto others. This also explains why there is so much violence in the world, because people worship a God of death. I still had questions, and more things needed to be reconciled in my mind, but I was hearing enough that I believed to be true, full of light and sound biblically to keep me pressing forward and hanging on. I saw the sweet, kind, and gentle spirit of Jesus in Pastor Adrian, visiting from Australia, and Elder Daniel, visiting from Argentina, among others like Ben and Malcolm, from here in America. I was attracted to the beautiful character and fruit of the Spirit that I saw in the lives of others who had already embraced and accepted these ideas about God's character. I told myself that if these truths are having this kind of effect, bearing this attractive and tasty fruit of the spirit in people's lives, and if these things are true, then I want to believe it and let it have this refining influence upon me. I did not want to continue to do violence to myself, to others, and to my dear and precious Jesus.

WHAT LACK I YET?: Precious Gems of Truth for Laodicea

I had not yet joined the same ministry as Adrian, Daniel, Malcolm and Ben. Still, I started listening to every sermon that Adrian was putting out on his Maranatha Media YouTube channel. I began to read and listen to his books since I wanted to hear him out and give what he was sharing a fair and honest chance. If Adrian was a messenger to deliver truth to the people of God, then I wanted to hear, understand, and receive it! I am a truth seeker because to embrace more truth is to embrace more of Jesus, and I wanted Him to sanctify my life and character that I might be like Him! I visited Talking Rock for their home church Bible studies every few weeks, sometimes with my parents and sometimes alone. I encouraged my parents to continue to

study this topic of God's character with me, which they did. My dad continued to read every book that Adrian printed and shared, and listened to most of Adrian's sermons on YouTube. I remember some good discussions that I would have with my father after we had both read or listened to something. The more I studied, the more I was convinced and convicted that what Adrian, Ben, Malcolm, and others were sharing was true, biblical, beautiful, and life-changing! I was gaining a more intelligent and practical answer for my faith, and I had answers to questions I did not have a good answer for before! Such as...Saul killed by who? David moved to number Israel by who? The flood, Sodom and Gomorrah and the Israelites inheriting the land of Canaan by force of arms.

1 Corinthians 8:2 "And if anyone thinks that he knows anything, he knows nothing yet as he ought to know." The problem with Laodicea is that there is often a spiritual pride in thinking that we have the truth and no longer need additional light. So many become truth defenders and accusers of error, instead of earnest truth seekers. May we not lose our connection with Christ in seeking to stubbornly defend what we think is the truth, for some will find out they were defending lies, and what will that profit? How can anyone make an intelligent decision about what they believe or view about God unless they can see or hear both sides and compare with Scripture? But sadly, we live in a cancel culture where some have become the thought and word police, preventing free and open communication and reasoning together. During the dark ages, the papacy tortured and killed those who taught contrary to their man-made creeds, and we too can have that same spirit if we judge and condemn those who we think are heretics. This spirit of censorship will inevitably lead to censoring, persecuting and prohibiting liberty of conscience as well as eventually killing the reputation of

the person or group, and if persisted still, literally killing them as the Papists of old (all the while thinking they do God a service). I pray I will never follow this course and lose my first love like the first church of Revelation. You can do nothing against the truth but for the truth. (2 Corinthians 13:8). Truth will triumph! The more I learn, the more I know how much I still don't know, and I praise God that we will still be learning for eternity! I thank God for giving me a love for learning and a humility that is not afraid to admit I was wrong.

I thank God for helping me to be a peacemaker and for giving me the gift of reconciliation. If I care about someone and think they are in error, I am willing to go to them and talk with them and get clarification instead of talking about them or what I think they believe behind their backs. I can listen to their reasons for why they believe what they think and see if they have evidence to back it up from Scripture. Maybe they are missing something that the Lord could use me to enlighten them on, and perhaps I am missing something that they could be a messenger to share that truth with me. Maybe they misunderstood or misheard what I believe, and I can clarify things for them and hopefully reconcile them back into fellowship with me or my ministry, if that is where the Lord would have them to be. As the Bible says, "Iron sharpens Iron," (Proverbs 27:17) and any good discussion, if it is not a debate, and in a calm, Christ-like spirit, can be edifying. I have had people come to me concerned that I am in error; If so then I am grateful to be corrected or to learn something new. If I am right, the conversation helps me learn how to answer objections and refine my doctrinal position to have a better answer of faith to those who will ask me in the future. Even if by the end of the study or conversation we are not in total agreement, I would hope that at least I could have shown them Christ's love, character, and spirit and allowed the seeds of truth to be planted. Often, we find out there is much we

are still in harmony about. If I perceive a spirit of debate, pride, or closedness in the other person, then it is not profitable for conversation; otherwise, it is conversational war, and I don't like war. A forceful argument or in desperation, violence, will never truly convert anyone to the truth. Only truth wrapped in Love can reach the heart.

The early Adventists and Christian Connection (of whom many of the early Adventist Pioneers were apart) did not want to make doctrine a test of fellowship, as they believed there should be some room, flexibility, and freedom of conscience to have differences of belief, but that over time the spirit of God would bring them into greater unity as they continued to pray and study together. If the behavior or the spirit manifested in a person is a problem, then that could warrant not having fellowship with that person. It could indicate what this person believes is causing this negative fruit, but not always. How many of us have tried to share any truth in the wrong way, in the wrong spirit, or to try and force it on others, even out of love and concern for them? This is another reason I find it is vital for us to come to a right understanding of God's character—that He does not use force—so that, in my zeal for the truth, I do not use force and turn people off from the truth. Only by Love is love awakened. I realize how patient and long-suffering God has been with me over these years to bring me to a place where I understood more of the truth and was not hurting myself and other so much. I can follow in my Savior's footsteps, exercise this same patience and long suffering with others, and show the same liberty of conscience that has been shown to me. "As you judge, you will be judged. Condemn not and you will not be condemned." (Luke 6:37).

TIME OF TRANSITION: GYC & Trade Work Experience

Malcolm and I became closer friends when we attended a GYC (Generation of Youth for Christ) at the end of 2019 and the start of 2020. While enjoying the meetings and fellowship with other young people, I ran into some of my old classmates from Ouachita Hills College. They heard

about my recent conversion, and their faces glowed with happiness and joy to see me on fire for God again! They pulled me aside and said they wanted to play guitar and sing a song for me! It was the song “Welcome Home” that my sister in Christ and classmate, Teresa, had written about my experience falling away from the faith and her prayer that I would return home to my heavenly Father like the prodigal son. They had sung this song at their graduation a year or two earlier, while I was still in the world, which would have been my graduation if I had stayed in school there for 4 years. As they sang this song for me, I could not help but get emotional and feel the Spirit of God move upon me, bringing me to tears. God had answered her prayer in song for me, and it was a beautiful experience for all of us. I will now include the rest of the song's lyrics, which was written in faith, in the positive, that I would return home! This song will always have a special place in my heart.

Bridge:

I don't want to disappoint you, God!
Here's my heart; It's all I've got.
Will you make it clean? Will you make it clean?

Chorus:

I'll come home my Father, I'll come!
These wounds on Your hands
Were able to break the bands
That held me to the ground
My broken heart, a new place has found
In your arms
Where You whisper, welcome home!
Where You whisper, welcome home!

At the time, while living with my parents, I was working a trade job with a roofing company installing roofs and gutters, which gave me good manly work experience, refined my character, and helped me save some money. My parents and I visited Talking Rock Sabbath Chapel for Sabbath worship and fellowship at least once or twice a month, which was a blessing. I remember Malcolm sharing testimonies about how he and Sabrina, his girlfriend at the time (who later became his wife), did not work a normal job and were both involved in full-time ministry and how God had been providing for them. Malcolm would work an odd job here and there to fill in the gaps for his financial needs. Although Malcolm was entirely on board with the message, he and Sabrina had not yet joined the Father of Love, Maranatha Media, and the Talking Rock Sabbath Chapel ministry. I was inspired by how God was using them, but my faith was still a little too weak, and I was not yet ready, nor was it the time yet for me to step out in faith into full-time ministry, as I believed at the time I needed to work a normal job to earn money.

JUICE FEASTING: The Rise of The Health Enthusiast

On a side note, a young man named Garret, attending the group in Talking Rock, Georgia, was into raw foods. He inspired me to try out juice feasting. Being the health enthusiast that I was, I decided to try drinking only homemade fresh-pressed juices that I made myself from dark leafy greens, carrots, apples, cabbage, grapes, pineapple, celery, cucumber, and all kinds of other fruits and veggies! It is called a feast because I drank four to six quarts of this juice daily, which allowed me to still work my roofing job with plenty of energy and strength, versus a fast, which would involve more

calorie restriction and make physical activity more difficult. Even though I was fairly healthy already with no chronic disease or health challenges, I knew how much of a toxic world we live in and how much bad food I had eaten in my life, so I knew my body could use a good hyper-nourishing cleanse and detox. I was able to sustain this by the grace of God for 40 days with good results! I was also doing some water enemas. I felt great most of the time, had plenty of energy, and had more mental and spiritual clarity.

If someone wants to get into juicing, they could try experimenting with a 1-to-3-day juice cleanse to get a good digestive rest and reset. I like to explain it like this. It is like your boss telling you that you can take off work for a few days, get paid twice as much, and your house gets cleaned for you! That is the incredible benefits of juicing and its effects on the body. Your body gets to rest from the energy consuming work of digesting normal food to being able to cleanse and detoxify your body with double or triple the nutrition! Juicing even changed my taste buds, and I now appreciate simple and raw foods more. I did not usually like cucumber and celery before juicing, but after 40 days, I actually enjoyed eating raw celery and cucumber!

COVID LOCKDOWNS 2020: Questioning the Narrative and Investigating for Truth in the World of Health

We all experienced the world's craziness in 2020 due to the worldwide pandemic. I already had plans to visit the Philippines in 2020, but that got postponed because of travel restrictions, and I refused to get the COVID-19 vaccine under any circumstances as I trusted in my in-built, God given, immune system. I was listening to alternative news sources, doctors,

and investigative journalists, and decided there were too many risks and too little benefit to getting the vaccine. It grieved me how many people were willing to sacrifice their convictions to take the injection because of threats to lose their jobs or other coercions or perceived needs. The level of censorship and the stripping of people's liberties was very troubling, but it is not a surprise that "the powers that be" would use such an emergency as a ploy to take away people's freedoms and rights.

I bring this up because it is a lesson in not putting too much trust in our governments, health authorities, and even denominational churches in a time of crisis. We should do our own research and study and follow our personal convictions with integrity, no matter what the cost. It takes faith, but God will provide. In matters of conscience, it is better to obey God rather than men. I am captive to the word of God and what it teaches. We all know many of the churches shut down or only had online services during the pandemic, which is totally against the Scripture's injunction not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together. I also thought it was so sad how the Seventh-day Adventist denomination not only closed down churches for a period of time during the pandemic, but in addition did not support their members convictions by denying religious liberty exemption letters to members who decided not to be vaccinated and as a result people lost their jobs. The Adventist church and associated institutions even endorsed vaccinations and the Adventist hospital system required them as part of the vaccine mandates across the healthcare industry.

I was grateful that I could still go and worship with my new Adventist friends at the Talking Rock Sabbath Chapel fellowship, which was more like a home church and small group Bible study on Sabbaths, giving hugs without

masks and without social distancing. I say all this because I still visit the Seventh-day Adventist denomination mainstream churches, but there will come greater times of crisis, when more of us will need to start attending home church fellowships—the compromises of the different denominational churches will only get bigger and the restrictions stricter and this will likely happen to the Adventist churches as well.

I remember my parents and I staying home during the week of Passover in April 2020 because we were still doing our own research and were still unsure about the virus and attending a bigger group camp meeting. Later, we realized that in matters of assembling to worship God, it is better to obey God rather than men, and that we had nothing to fear about the virus anyway. We were still blessed from home by listening to messages from Adrian's meetings in Australia.

SUMMER CANVASSING 2020: The World Is Waking Up and Searching for Answers

I had planned to join another summer canvassing literature evangelism program with other Adventist youth but it almost did not happen because of the pandemic. I finally got word that the canvassing program would go forward, but with some health safety measures in place, like sanitization, masks, not putting the books in the people's hands, and some social distancing when necessary. I did not fear the virus or getting sick by ministering to souls, just like Jesus was not afraid to approach, hug, and heal the lepers and other sick people. I knew I needed to do my best to stay healthy with my diet and lifestyle to keep my immune system strong and resilient. We were also getting plenty of sun and vitamin D while out

canvassing and exercise from all the walking and fresh air. I don't remember any of us getting sick, and if anyone did, no one went to the hospital, so we were just fine.

Given the circumstances, I was astonished by how successful the canvassing program went that summer! Some people would yell at us for coming to their doors or neighborhoods during a pandemic, but amazingly, we were still very well received by many people! I believe the pandemic shook up and began to awaken a lot of people to an interest in spiritual and eternal things, as well as health and how to keep themselves well. Plenty of people were not afraid of us or the virus and were really happy to talk with us and give donations for the books. God blessed us so much with many divine appointments, and our sales were surprisingly higher than we had ever seen in a summer canvassing program! God prospered the work in the face of a mountain of obstacles, and faith won the victory!

POWERFUL CANVASSING TESTIMONY: A Taste of Pentecost

I will never forget what happened at the end of this summer of canvassing. I had a spiritual breakthrough and amazing testimony that I would like to share about the power of prayer, having a vital connection with God, and being in the flow with God's Spirit and holy angels in ministry work. The last couple of weeks started getting much more difficult and character-building. I was also not having the same number of sales or books going out as in the first 8 weeks of the program. I was at the end of my rope, even to the point of tears, and it was tempting me to be discouraged, but I would not give up! I prayed that God would be glorified as much or more than He was at

the program's start and that my friends and I could finish strong. I was praying that during the last week God would help me get out more books in one day than I had ever gotten out in a single day of canvassing.

I remember one of the last days waking up earlier than I normally would have to spend extra time in my personal devotions and prayer with God. I was praying for a vital connection with Jesus, for God's Spirit, blessing, and favor to be upon the work that day, not just for myself but for our team. I sent out prayer requests to probably over 100 people to pray and intercede for us that day, and that I was praying for, I think it was 40 books to go out to people through me. It was the end of the program, so I was tired and wanted to nap that morning, but I persevered in prayer. I even decided to eat very simply and light for breakfast and to skip my lunch so I could have extra time for prayer and claiming Bible promises. I was totally surrendered and consecrated to God, and like Jacob, who wrestled with the Angel, I desired a breakthrough!

When I started going business to business and home to home it felt like God's presence and holy angels were with me in a special way, almost like a small taste of what the results of the day of Pentecost in the book of acts would have been like for many souls to be reached with the gospel in one day! It was like a series of uninterrupted victories! I was having a much higher reception rate of people happy to give donations, to receive the books, to fill out our survey, or even to receive a prayer or word of encouragement! The few individuals who said no or rejected me did not discourage me. It was like God's spirit or presence in and with me and through the Holy angels was driving away the forces of darkness and surrounding the people I was talking to with a heavenly atmosphere of light

and peace so they could think clearly and make intelligent decisions for now and for eternity! Before the end of the day, God had blessed me with 40 or more books out, many divine appointments, and a large sum of donations. I was thrilled with holy joy in the spirit! What would happen if all of God's remnant people had this experience and had it consistently!? How soon would God's character be vindicated, and Jesus would finally be able to come back and take us home!

I wish I could say the day ended on such a high and positive note, but I found myself eating a big piece of humble pie. That day, I learned a lesson that is a good reminder for me to desire and strive to remain in that vital connection and communication with my heavenly father so that nothing would break the flow of living for God in the spirit and the amazing and powerful results that follow. I slipped back into the old covenant of trying to fulfill God's will and promises by my own strength and wisdom in my own way. I decided I wanted to try and revisit a home on the other side of the neighborhood with books I had replenished in my bag that I did not have when I visited their family before. I wanted to raise the number of books that went out even higher during the last hour, but this was not God's will. I neglected my duty to keep moving forward to reach more people in different homes. I had neglected to pray and ask God if this is what He wanted me to do or if I should keep going to the houses in front of me. I ran to this man's home, but he did not want to purchase any more books, so I ran back. When I started going to the next homes on my street, I had lost that sweet peace and Joy in the spirit. I did not feel like God's presence or blessing was with me in the same way I experienced it before. After that point, no one donated for any of my health, devotional, or children's books. I ended the day deeply

humbled and in tears of repentance, but also with satisfaction and happiness for the amazing things God had done through me and others on our team.

WHAT IS GOD'S WILL FOR MY LIFE? Finding Purpose through Rejection

Since I had a growing interest and passion in natural health, nutrition, and medical missionary work, I wanted to continue my education in this direction. I had applied for Wildwood Health Institute's advanced lifestyle educator program and the advanced program at Uche Pines Institute, but my applications were denied. I don't understand why Uche Pines denied my application, but I believe it was God's will, as I prayed for Him to open and close doors according to where He wanted me to be and what further education He wanted me to get. However, I do know that Wildwood rejected my application because I do not believe in the trinity, even though I never made my personal beliefs in that matter an issue while attending their 6-month program.

I had also applied for another evangelism training program called C.O.R.E. with the Adventist denomination which also denied my application even though I am a member of the Seventh Day Adventist church because I could not check "yes" on my application that I agreed to all of the current 28 fundamental beliefs (creed) of the Seventh-day Adventist church, since I do not believe in the trinity. I explained to the director of the program that I honestly do not see the trinity in the Bible and that I believe the Bible teaches that there is only one God, the Father, and that Jesus Christ is truly the only begotten Son of God, which also makes him God ("Theos" in the Greek, meaning "Divine") by inheritance—"like begets like": dogs give birth to dogs,

birds beget birds, humans beget human babies, and therefore Divinity (God) begets one who is also Divine (God). “No one has ever yet seen God. **The only begotten God**, the *One* being in the bosom of the Father, He has made *Him* known.” (John 1:18, Berean Literal Bible). It is also important to note that John 1:1 is missing one word that is present in the Greek, the definite article “the”; if inserted, the text could read as such: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with **THE** God [THE Divinity, aka the One TRUE God Almighty, the Father], and the Word was God [Divine, by inheritance].” —and that He is our Creator and worthy of our worship. I shared with him that I still believe in the Holy Spirit, but as the omnipresent Spirit of the Father and Son, by which they communicate with and bless us. (It should be noted that the Holy Spirit of God is symbolized all throughout the Bible and the sanctuary as oil, bread, water and a dove but never as a third being like the Father and Son.) The influence of the Holy Spirit is the life of Christ in the soul. Even though this man could tell that I loved Jesus and that I made it clear that I would make an effort not to make this topic an issue while I was in the program, he said he could not accept me into the program. It was disappointing to have three applications denied, but I believe this was God’s will and that He had a much better plan for me anyway!

My friend Garret, who was attending our home church in North Georgia, was telling me about this online Naturopathic medicine Training school he attended online, called International Institute of Original Medicine, or IIOM, where he got his nutrition certification. I liked the idea of being able to complete the course at my own pace, whenever it was convenient for me to work on school, with the freedom of schedule to be able to do anything else. It was also very affordable. I just needed to purchase the books, answer the questions online, and do my other practical course assignments and

health reports. So, I applied and finally got accepted for their accredited Bachelors of *Original Medicine* degree program!

When fall came around, Malcolm invited me to go out to Arkansas with Him and Sabrina for a short evangelism, Bible worker, and medical missionary training program with a youth ministry called the Army of Truth. We also helped a man named Joshua put on an evangelistic series in the local area. It was a blessing to be among spiritually minded and ministry-focused young people, which was inspiring and made me think about God's will for my life. I was praying about God's plans and ministry for me after this program. Since I was already enrolled in school with IIOM, I just needed to figure out where I wanted to live and what ministry I wanted to be involved with while going through these online classes. I had an invitation to be a paid Bible worker somewhere; I also had an invitation from the "Father of Love" movement ministry in Talking Rock, Georgia, at the time; or I could remain living with my parents and find other work.

SECTION 7: FINDING PURPOSE IN THE FATHER OF LOVE MOVEMENT

EMBRACING GOD'S CALLING FOR MY LIFE: Entering Full Time Ministry with My New Family of Faith

After much prayer, seeking Counsel from my parents and discussing with my friends, I made one of the best decisions of my life to join the ministry at Talking Rock in December of 2020, which would change my life forever in the best way possible! I was now part of an amazing, warm, inviting, small yet close and supportive Adventist community and family of faith that were truth seekers and did not discriminate based on beliefs. I was beginning to discover God's purpose and meaning for my life. I could live and work part-time at the ministry while I was going to school online. We would have regular midweek Bible studies and weekly home church gatherings for Sabbath in our big meeting hall or lifestyle center, which I loved to attend! Since I am gifted in music and singing, I would usually help lead out with our song services, including with my parents when they would attend with my mother on the violin. We even had our own printing press on which we could print and publish many of our ministry's Bible-based books that I enjoyed reading and sharing with others. I was growing, maturing, and learning so much, especially about God's non-violent and non-condemning character of love and how to explain difficult stories in the Old Testament. Pastor Ben and

assistant pastor Malcolm became two of my closest friends and ministry companions.

Most of our ministry staff lived on the campus at the time. I lived upstairs in an apartment above the church. My life consisted of going to school in the morning or afternoon, depending on the ministry's needs for me that day. I was volunteering part-time with a ministry stipend. I had the privilege of working in our awesome and spacious organic garden and greenhouse several days a week, cleaning the church or helping in our lifestyle center as a therapy assistant. I would help the guests with our different natural therapies like hyperbaric oxygen chamber, Bemer, Ozone Sauna and other Ozone therapies, Infrared sauna, among others, in addition to helping to keep the place clean and tidy. After some months living on campus at the ministry, I would begin to go out canvassing with Malcolm once a week which was always a blessing, got us more connected in the community and gave us more ministry contacts that we were able to invite to come and visit our health center, garden or ministries home church on Sabbath. We also enjoyed hiking on the nature trails in the mountains and valleys nearby, especially on Sabbath afternoons. I enjoyed some of the best years of my life there!

When I wasn't thinking, praying or singing, I was edified listening to many hours of sermons and audiobooks from Adrian Ebens and Ellen White, among other authors, while I was working in the garden, doing laundry, and cleaning the lifestyle center, church, or my room. I was hungry for the truth and to progress physically, mentally, relationally, emotionally, and spiritually. I also did extra health education by listening to and watching many hours of professionally done health docu-series by an Seventh-day Adventist named

Jonathan Otto and his company, *Health Secret*. I wanted to try a 30-day raw foods parasite cleansing program, since I had never done a parasite cleanse. I had heard about how most people, even in America, are exposed to and dealing with health issues due to parasites, and that it would be beneficial to do a parasite cleanse every few years. I decided I would do it and began taking the recommended herbs and supplements like fulvic acid, black walnut hull, and mimosa pudica and papaya seeds, among other herbs, while eating lots of dark leafy greens, green smoothies, salads, cruciferous vegetables, and fruits. I did this cleanse preventatively just in case I may have picked up any parasites over the years. I felt amazing during the detox with more energy and mental clarity since I was eating so many vitality boosting raw foods! I don't know for certain what I eliminated, and I did not do any tests before or after, but I do know I was much healthier after the cleanse.

FREEDOM OF CONSCIENCE: Practical Examples of the Character of God

One thing that's blessed me about being with this ministry is the sense of freedom and liberty of conscience I have felt and experienced from both the laity and the leadership. It is such a relief not to have that heavy pressure to conform and perform that you get when living and working in the world, or even in strict, legalistic Christian or Adventist churches and homes. This was in perfect harmony with the message being presented; that God's method is not to use force or coercion, but that truth and love are to be the prevailing power and influence. We wanted anyone who visited us or came out for church on Sabbath to sense liberty and freedom to come as they were and that they would feel welcomed and loved and part of a family, even if their dress, diet, and lifestyle were different. No, we were not of a liberal, "do

anything that you want...it doesn't matter," kind of mindset; but by example we would share the ideal principles of right Christian living through our dress, behavior, conversations and diet. We wanted the Spirit of God to be able to convict hearts and minds when they were ready; We wanted people to experience the love of God, the beauty of the truth as it is in Jesus, and to have a vital connection for themselves with God and the Bible so that necessary changes would naturally happen over time. Through personal experience we knew that if we tried to impose our own flavor of religion upon others they would naturally be repelled away from us and not want to have fellowship.

I think of how gracious, patient, and long-suffering God and my leaders, including my parents, have been with me. I want to show the same grace and mercy to those on a different part of their Christian journey to the celestial city. I learned the importance of giving others the liberty of conscience to be convicted about things in their own time and way and to pray for them in the meantime. For example, when I believed that occasional or regular caffeine use was ok, Pastor Ben would not condemn me for its use, even though he did not promote its use and was aware of its dangers and harms. I was free to make the right choices as God's Spirit convicted me when I received more light and truth on different things. In time, I would be convicted and strengthened to give up caffeine and coffee use by my personal choice, love for God, and the desire to have my body as the temple of the Holy Spirit.

I was convicted that caffeine use, especially in higher doses and with habitual use, is harmful to the body's life force because of its artificial stimulation of the body and mind-altering effects which act like a drug.

Habitual caffeine use alters brain chemistry and prevents us from achieving stabilized energy levels and balanced emotions. I found from personal experience that caffeine use tended to lead me down a path of awakening my carnal nature by feeding the flesh. Like most drugs, caffeine numbs or covers up negative symptoms without addressing the true root cause of the problem. Caffeine use fed by impulsive “live and enjoy life to the fullest in the moment without care or thought for the future” kind of mindset. An ancient Chinese proverb says that “Caffeine is like borrowing energy from tomorrow for today.” This could be likened to withdrawing money from the bank that may be needed for future needs and emergencies. I encourage anyone reading to do your own research about caffeine and stimulants to come to your own conclusions and convictions. I have written an article about the pros and cons of caffeine, as well as several other health articles, which I would be happy to share with anyone who contacts me.

Part of the character of God message is that God does not condemn us for our sins but warns us of the natural consequences, separation from His presence, and the resultant guilt and condemnation which Satan, the accuser, would use to cause us to doubt our salvation and cast us into despair. When Jesus said to the woman caught in adultery, “Neither do I condemn you, go and sin no more,” in those words is the secret to victory over sin! It is impossible to overcome sin when you feel worthless. It is impossible to achieve complete victory over sin if we think that God and those in authority over us will condemn us for sinning, which adds artificial pressure to perform to avoid condemnation. This prevents a soul from actually feeling safe and free to go to God to confess and repent of the sin and receive forgiveness because the person fears God will punish, condemn, kill, or torment them if they mess up. I realize how, in the past, my

subconscious misunderstandings about God when I fell into sin, were preventing me from feeling safe to go to God for comfort, grace, righteousness, correction, and instruction. The same can be true with our leaders if they do not correctly represent the character of God.

EXPERIENCING GOD'S RELATIONAL KINGDOM: In Contrast to Satan's Performance Kingdom

I have had lots of different secular jobs in the service industry, retail, and other various industries where I felt the pressure of Satan's performance kingdom. It's not nice when you know your shortcomings and are striving to do better, but you still have your boss coming down on you hard when you mess up, and you feel like they are just watching and waiting for you to mess up, so they can write you up and criticize you. It was hard for me to perform well when I felt a critical and fault-finding eye was looking over me. It was so encouraging when a boss would actually compliment me on a job well done. I remember working a job when, after my third write up, my boss would scold me saying, "Ok, it's been three strikes...you're out. You're fired!" To me, this felt very arbitrary because I was trying my best and wanted to do better. You wonder why so many workplaces have such a high employee turnover rate...This happened to me too many times, but I was also not living for God then, and my work ethic still needed improvement.

I was now really grateful to be working for the ministry in such a relational work environment where there were still expectations, needs, and standards to meet, but still so much love, freedom, and flexibility in getting those jobs done, and how long it took to get the job done. I felt free to do a

good job and to do it quickly when I could, for the sake of doing all to the glory of God and being a good steward. It was almost always granted if I needed some time off to spend with family. If I wanted to take a day off for some nature recreation, I could usually do my work assignments at another time, as long as it was not too pressing and important to do right away. It was also good having a more open and flexible schedule so I could focus on completing my bachelor's program of naturopathy and to be available for God to take me places he wanted me to go and to interact with people he wanted me to meet. My leadership wanted me to feel free to put God first, then my family, other important relationships, and then the ministry, work, school, and hobbies. From the leaders I still have currently, there was no controlling, dictatorial, micro-managing, tell you what to do, my way or the highway type of leadership, which is so rare. They wanted me to have a personal relationship with God as the owner of my unique individuality and to pray and follow my convictions as to what God would want me to do with my talents and gifts to advance the gospel message and to fulfill God's purpose for my life, which is so freeing and inspiring! This Christ-like spirit produced within my heart a desire to seek their counsel and to heed their advice as often as I could. I wanted the blessing of those above me in the channel of blessing I had put myself under when it came to important decisions, and most of the time, there was no problem. I wanted their wisdom and experience, and if they counseled me against something I was considering, I would seriously consider it and pray about it. And if their advice did not violate the Bible or my conscience, I would take, heed, and obey. My leaders also encouraged me to be free to disagree with them and follow my convictions if they differed from theirs, while warning me of the possible consequences of my decisions. Our leaders are not infallible, and if we are asked to do or believe anything contrary to Scripture and God's will, it is

better to obey God rather than men. In some areas, a leader's strong personal opinion may go against my convictions, in which case I need to pray about what I should do to be true to my conscience and yet remain as obedient as possible to those in a shepherding position over me. I appreciated that my leaders were open to reason and welcomed me to come to them with any humble appeals if I questioned something and thought I might have a better idea, which they occasionally accepted and had a change of mind, which I respect.

During my time at Talking Rock, I prayed and desired a clean and clear conscience, sensitive to the Spirit of God, free from harmful and worldly media, music, food, or other influences or bad decisions that would have risked searing my conscience, which may have made it harder for me to discern between right and wrong. I prayed for God to shine the light of truth again into my life to convict me of areas where I did not heed the convictions of conscience in the past. I prayed for God to help me make the right decisions based on principle, by reason, in faithful obedience, even against my feelings until the feeling of conviction of this thing being right or wrong returned again to my conscience on the matter.

I strove then and still strive today to be like the disciple John, who had the closest relationship with Jesus. Still, I can also relate a lot with the disciple Peter since he would often act impulsively and passionately and fall short of the glory of God but was quick to repent. Peter loved Jesus much because he knew he was forgiven much, just as Mary Magdalene was. I had my faults, sins, and shortcomings, but I was always open to rebuke and correction from my elders, parents, or pastors. I would always take everything to God in prayer. I also always wanted to live peaceably among all

men and make any effort I could to reconcile with anyone that I might have had a problem with or they with me. I would pray, apologize, ask forgiveness, and communicate to make things right and be at peace and harmony with each other as much as possible by God's grace.

Even though some of our leadership, who, since 2023, have left the ministry, at times thought it might be a good idea to terminate my employment, most of our leadership, including Adrian, Ben, Malcolm, and Daniel, wanted to keep me with the ministry. I did not realize and was not aware until later how much they interceded, stood up for, and defended me. I did not realize for a couple of years the blows that my leaders took for me while dealing with some of the antagonistic elements at work at Talking Rock during that time. They could see that I did not have a spirit of rebellion but the spirit of Jesus, and they never gave up on me! I felt comfortable going to them about anything I was struggling with, and I was only ever approached, talked with, and rebuked in a spirit of love and for the purpose of restoring and helping me. They could tell that I really did want to improve and do better, and that I always took these things to heart and in prayer to God to help me overcome my shortcomings. My leaders were and are so patient and long-suffering with me. They also could see I was responding positively to the Spirit of Jesus, the truth, and they could see and acknowledged the different ways God was already mightily using me. In never giving up on me they revealed the agape love of God towards me! They continued to believe that the work that the Lord had already begun in me, He would be faithful to complete. Their faithfulness and gentleness in dealing with me have won my heart, love, trust, loyalty, and respect even more!

I felt listened to in the efforts of my pastor Ben, and others, to correct and resolve things with me. I was free to appeal to them, and they would consider what I was saying and either agree with it or respectfully disagree and advise me against my appeal or justification. But ultimately, I was always free to make my own decisions, as God respects the free will He has given us. This is in contrast with other experiences in the past with leaders, where there was a confrontation to tell me where I went wrong, with the expectation for me to say “Yes, sir, I was wrong. I will do better next time,” but with no room for relational conversation or response to listen to my side of the story and of my struggle, or my honest thoughts on the matter, to make me feel understood. However, “God works all things together for good, to those who love Him and are called according to His purpose” and I learned in those instances the importance of (1) not defending myself, (2) remembering my identity and worth as a son of God who is completely known, understood, and loved by God.

I do not covet my leaders, elders, and pastors' positions of responsibility because I know the cross they must bear and the sacrifices they make so that I can have a relatively enjoyable, good, and peaceful life and ministry. I know it is not easy for them, as they serve more. They deal with interpersonal problems, criticisms, and differences of opinion on how to operate and do things with others in leadership positions who have a different mindset. I do not seek or strive for a position, as God has given me a spirit of humility, where I know my weakness and inability outside of Christ, even to be faithful with the responsibilities that I already have. If I am asked or invited into a position of influence or leadership, I will pray about it to make sure it is God's will and trust that His grace is sufficient to help me rise to the occasion and fulfill the added or increased responsibilities.

WILL YOU STILL LOVE ME IF I DO THIS?: Testing and Proving God's Character and His Accommodation with Sinners.

Some people misunderstand what we teach and think we are giving license to sin because we say that God does not condemn, but that is not the case. We share the consequential nature of sin. Sin causes a separation between us and God, it damages earthly relationships also and often carries with it physical degradation. Ultimately, sin always ends in eternal death. If the separation made between God, who is our source of life, is not repaired, we will have no source left from whom we can draw life. Even if we understand that death and violence do not originate in, or come directly from God, and that He never condemns and is always willing to accept us back and freely forgive us, it is still a dangerous and self-destructive path to indulge in sin willfully because of how deceptive sin is. It warps our perception of God, our feelings, and can cause us to condemn ourselves and keep us locked away in the dungeons of despair and guilt, far away from God, with no desire to face our Maker, devoid of all hope. The other problem is that we can misrepresent the character of God and the standard that He is calling His children to, thus giving us a false impression that our sinful state is really nothing bad at all. It could cause us to think that we do not need to come to God for forgiveness and that we can go on living without Him—but this too is a fatal delusion. Compromise always has negative consequences even if God is still able to use us.

I certainly tested my understanding of the mercy and grace of God more than I should have. The longest journey a man will ever take is 18

inches, from the head to the heart; It takes time for doctrine to go from an intellectual understanding to an experiential transformation into the character of Christ.

After learning of the character of God, as revealed in the life of Christ, I began to notice a shift in my relationship with sin and the many ways I would allow myself to compromise with it. Before, when I would indulge in a known sin, which to my conscience was something like coffee or masturbation, I would begin a self-destructive cycle of seeking comfort in other sins, such as food, entertainment, or whatever I wanted, until I either repented or completely walked away from God. Now, if I were to fall into sin, I knew I could safely and immediately fall into the arms of Jesus and find comfort through His spirit, word, and prayer to help me get back on the right track. Many years before, I would buy coffee that would artificially stimulate my flesh and mind, then I would be tempted to beatbox, which would summon another spirit and lead me down a further course of rebellion. Now, if I desired or even felt I needed a coffee or caffeinated beverage, I would drink, but I still desired to be loyal to God because I knew He didn't condemn and so I wasn't tempted to rebel or give up in despair and go into a cascade of increasingly destructive behaviors. Knowing that God doesn't condemn me did make it much easier to make subtle compromises, and these compromises made it much more difficult to live a fully surrendered life. I subtly slid into more of an old covenant mindset of trying to do God's work in my own way and under my own terms. I still wanted to witness for Christ, and I would, sometimes with my mouth speaking at high speeds due to the caffeine. I was comforted to know that God would still not leave me, that he would still use me to reach others, but I was still crucifying Christ afresh to a degree and not fully letting His Spirit and life live and flow through me freely.

The danger was that since I did not want to condemn myself, since God does not condemn me, I was not always as sensitive to my conscience as I should have been, like with caffeine. I tested this understanding a few times by subconsciously testing God, “Ok, you say that you don’t condemn and will always love me, well, what if I do this? Will you still love me? And then what if I do this? Will you still love me and accept me back?” I found my old man was coming out at times in ugly ways that I did not like to see, and I repented of it with tears. I thank God that my enlightened understanding of His character helped me to come back to Him as a loving and tender Father to help me and comfort me, when in the past I would run further away from Him in fear, in my guilt, shame, and condemnation for much longer.

The amazing thing is that God was still accommodating me in my compromise. I was still used by God to be a spiritual blessing to others or to share literature with them, but how much more could God use me if I was totally consecrated and surrendered and if I would let Him bring me higher spiritually, free from artificial stimulants and more dependent upon Him and the natural health laws! I was still misrepresenting the character of God at times and putting myself in dangerous situations, which was presumptuous. The compromises I made did bring me much further away from God than I wanted to be, which made it harder to come back to that same level of intimacy and closeness with His presence that I so treasured. Since then, God has given me complete and lasting victory over all the lusts of the flesh or any open sin that I am consciously aware of. Praise His Holy Name! God has given me a much more consistent, intimate, and maturing relationship with Him!

JEHOVAH-JIREH: The Lord will Always Provide

Ever since entering full-time ministry, I have never had a lot of money, but my needs have always been met above and beyond. God has always been so faithful to provide for me, my ministry and the mission work He has been doing through me, even when I have not always been the best steward, which I have also repented for many times. My parents would often help and provide me with things, and friends and church family sometimes handed me money randomly to support my ministry. God was also always faithful to provide donations through the canvassing work for the books sold.

One of the biggest Jehovah Jireh moments for me was how God blessed me with a 2008 Toyota Sienna van. It already had a lot of mileage, but it was still in great condition and had new suspension and tires! I had been without a vehicle of my own for years, and I was content with that, but God saw fit to impress a dear brother in the faith to offer to purchase this vehicle for me for \$6000 and to put it in my name! He wanted me to be freer to be able to do evangelism and go where the Lord would call me to go, and since then, I have been on many little and larger missionary ventures with that van. So, it is the Lord's missionary van, and I am just the steward. All that I have is the Lord's. I am so blessed beyond measure and eternally grateful! A few years later, someone in our church family even handed me money to be able to purchase new tires for the van, so God has really sustained this van for His service! The van has been used to do a lot of canvassing and literature evangelism work, and even for a ministry road trip with Pastor Adrian Ebens and some other brethren as we drove across America preaching and sharing this message and handing out books.

MAKING MYSELF AVAILABLE: Seeing How God Can Use Me as a Channel of Blessing Every Single Day

God has been giving me a living experience in seeing how He can use me daily to reach souls for Him, especially when I go out in public. I make myself available, pray for divine appointments, and God never ceases to amaze me! In the past, I would think of myself as either in ministry mode, where I was intentionally witnessing or canvassing people, or in normal life mode. So, when doing errands, shopping, hiking, or biking, I would focus on that and not really on reaching souls for Christ. Now I have learned, as long as I am not too rushed or busy, to smile and have my spiritual antenna or radar out, no matter what I am doing or where I am, sensing for who may be my divine appointments for the day. I am always carrying our ministry tracts and cards with me to share with people, and God is so faithful to provide divine appointments all the time. I can get into great spiritual conversations, pray with people, or share one of our books with them. It is amazing! I even have people who will come up to me without me even approaching or talking to them and tell me that I must know Jesus by my cheerful smile, positive attitude, peaceful atmosphere, joyful singing, or uplifting words. Sometimes, after handing someone a tract with a bright smile or having a short and positive interaction with them, they ask me, "What church do you go to"? They might be thinking or asking, "What church or message inspires its members to be so friendly and evangelistic? I sense the presence of God is with this individual, and maybe I will experience the presence of God at their church?"

The secret for this to happen is to make sure I have a vital connection with Christ before I even go out in public. When I have had my personal devotions, prayer time, singing praises, and there is a glowing love in my soul for Jesus and my heavenly Father, people can tell that I have been with Jesus. I pray for the sheep who hear the shepherd's voice, the ripe fruit, and God has been so good to work out providence and timing of things in ways that only He could do to bring us together. The Spirit of God in them can recognize the Spirit of God in me, and it is this amazing moment where they can say, "This is a God thing, a divine appointment, and wow, you must love Jesus, and a special anointing is upon your life." And I can tell them, "I see that you love God and are responding to the Spirit of Jesus, and that you would appreciate the Bible-based books that our ministry puts out, since you seem like a truth seeker!" We will then often pray together, and it just brings me so much Joy and brightens their day and my day to have these kinds of interactions with people. I have also gotten many new contacts this way. I believe God wants to bless many more of His children with these types of divine appointments, and more frequently, if we will simply make ourselves available, pray for it, get out of our comfort zone, and let God use us to speak to people who may also be strangers. Let us dare to ask for more!

A GOOD LIFE: Positive Memories & Character Building

I went through many valuable, character developing experiences during my stay at Talking Rock, and with the openness in which our sermons and Bible studies were presented (where one could ask questions and make comments during the sermon or study) I learned more of heavenly realities than ever before; glorious truths about God the Father and His begotten Son,

God's non-violent character, identity and value, the old and new covenants, and the feasts or appointed times. It was clear that this precious light was yielding beautiful fruit, not only in my own life, but in those around me as well. I really believe God has given us a message not just to prepare people for heaven but to prepare people for translation and to fully vindicate the agape character of God! Truly, the truth sanctifies! Error, lies, and traditions of men cannot and will not sanctify, and make holy. I gained many new friends and church family as our local church grew greatly from the small Bible study group of less than 12 people when I first joined to several dozen people on a Sabbath and many more during feasts. God was blessing us in many ways. Over the years I became very close with Pastor Ben, his wife Marie and Malcolm and his wife Sabrina.

We gained a lot of valuable work experience in our big, beautiful garden on the campus. It was a blessing to eat our healthy plant-based garden vegetables and greens, and even to gift them to some of our neighbors and canvassing contacts! It will be good for all to have a small plot of land where they can grow their own food, especially in the last days when we cannot buy or sell unless we have the mark of the beast (Rev 13:17). Many of us are too dependent upon the government and grocery stores.

During my Time at Talking Rock, I started attending some zoom call worship and week of prayers with a Filipino Missionary group called "Chosen Vessel" who are English teachers in South Korea, as well as another ministry called "1000 Missionaries," which is also a Filipino Adventist missionary organization. I got connected and made friends with many precious young people from the Philippines because of this. Over the next few years, I was asked to lead out several zoom worship calls including two separate online

weeks of prayers where I was the main speaker. For one of the week of prayer meetings, I emphasized principles on the character of God and for the other one I shared the 7 keys that I found in gaining and maintaining my first love relationship with Jesus. I will briefly share the 7 points right here. If you would like the full document with Bible verses and quotes, you can reach out to me personally and I can share it with you. The 7 keys may be released as a smaller booklet in the future.

7 KEYS TO GAINING AND GROWING IN YOUR FIRST LOVE WITH JESUS:

KEY #1. Pursuing God and God Pursuing Us

KEY #2. Being Born Again and Forsaking All for the Pearl of Great Price

KEY #3. Knowing God and Knowing Yourself

KEY #4. Don't Compromise; Aim for the Ideal

KEY #5. Spiritual Warfare and Victory Over Spiritual Adultery

KEY #6. Loving and Self-Sacrificing Service

KEY #7. When You Fall, Get Right Back Up and Maintain Commitment

TROUBLE IN PARADISE: Uprooted and Dispersed

Towards the end of 2022 and into 2023, something was beginning to shift with the direction the founder of the ministry wanted to go. To make a long story short, the ministry director was abruptly fired with no plausible explanation, the board of directors were ignored, and appeals from the staff to reconsider were discounted. One of the owners stepped in as an interim manager and a new philosophy of leadership and organization was instituted that we felt was contrary to the principles of God's character. Because of this new framework and the desire to change the entire trajectory of the ministry, including the very message we were sharing, we agreed to leave the property in February 2023, find places to live in the north Georgia area and continue ministry efforts under the name "Father of Love Fellowship". This was not an easy time for us as it was emotional and stressful at times, especially since some decided not to move forward with us, which was sad, but God allowed this, and we trusted His leading. It was not easy to walk away from our comfort zone into the wilderness, to not have a nice big church building, and to not have the same level of financial support as before. Still, we knew God would provide for us, and the work he had for us to keep sharing this glorious gospel message built upon the Bible and the Adventist foundation of faith.

I ended up moving back into my parents' home in western North Carolina. Malcolm and his wife and Ben and his wife ended up finding separate homes to rent in the north Georgia area which were still within 30 minutes of my parents' house so we were still close and could carry on our ministry. We held Wednesday night Bible studies a couple times a month, and had home church about twice a month in north Georgia and eastern

Tennessee. My parents also started opening their home for dinner and Bible studies on one or two Friday nights a month and occasionally hosted a new moon fellowship gathering for dinner and Bible study. Malcolm and I would continue the canvassing work together about once a week, and I was continuing to do more colporteur canvassing work on my own and with my dear mother, Laura. Ben was our pastor, and Malcolm was our assistant pastor. Even though change was not easy and we had some friends that either no longer would meet with us or thought that we were too far away to come and worship or study with us, we knew God was still with us, and we had His peace and comfort and courage to move forward with the banner of truth.

NEW BEGINNINGS AND NEW FRIENDS: A Movement Motivated by a Message

God provided us with a nice venue out in nature to rent that we could continue hosting our feasts (camp meetings) 3 times a year (Passover/Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, and Tabernacles). Even though the number of attendees went down initially, we were free from the antagonistic elements present at Talking Rock. God was humbling us and preparing us for greater blessings and a new influx of people, that we might be confident in the points of the message we were preaching. The spiritual atmosphere was higher than ever and it felt as though heaven had come down upon us and it was not just us who were feeling this, but many of those who visited our gatherings and feasts were sharing powerful testimony to the experience, the love they felt and rejoicing in the truths we were presenting. We had many confirmations that God's presence was with us, one of which was during the feast of Pentecost, when after almost three hours of corporate prayer and

repentance during the hot summer heat, Pastor Ben closed the session with song. He decided we should all sing the first verse of “Be Thou My Vision”. Towards the end of the prayer session a storm began to brew on the horizon and it brought a “mighty rushing wind” to cool us down. As we all sang the last line “Thy presence, my light”, as if in perfect harmony with the following beat, an enormous downpour slapped the tin roof of the outside gazebo we were under—it had not rained for 2 weeks prior, nor did it for the 2 weeks following. We were beside ourselves with joy for the physical manifestation of God’s blessing, even as He had done for his disciples on the day of Pentecost after Christ’s ascension.

Matthew 16:25-26 says, “For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?” So, I believe that He who compromises truth to seek to save his friends and family will lose them, but whoever is willing to lose friends and family for the truth’s sake, (which is for Christ’s sake), will gain eternal life and will have a greater chance to truly gain and save their friends and family, not just in this life, but for eternity also! Even though we have lost friends, we have gained many more friends and family, and there is no shortage of love and community—our desire to seek God’s truth and blessing, only drew others who sought the same. Jesus said “I have not come to bring peace but a sword.” The truth naturally divides. To use another analogy: the truth is like a sieve. There are those who refuse to be humbled, and their love for the things of this world prevent them from being sifted in and they are cast out. But there are also those who love the truth and are willing to forsake all for Jesus; these will be sifted in and will remain together in Him, as one lump of bread. That is the power of the gospel: to reconcile humanity back to their Creator and to

gather God's people together on earth, in the body of Christ if they don't resist the humbling, self-sacrificing workings of God's Spirit upon their souls.

Some people ask us, "Are you trying to start another church?" Our answer is, "No. We are Seventh-day Adventists, but closer in faith to the Adventist pioneers." We are like the early Adventists of the 1800s. Our movement is centered around a message, and it is the message which motivates us to organize ourselves according to God's design with the express intent of worshipping Him and sharing His truth, whereas many other churches organize around money, friends, family, convenience, creedalism, or tradition. We still have pastors and elders, but we do not have "memberships" (for that is not a gospel ordinance or necessity) or creeds, we don't pass around plates for tithe (those who desire to give can do so directly to those whom they want to help, or to the ministry website, or in some other way as they are impressed). We worship almost exclusively in homes (as did the early Christians) and over the internet, except at our feast times, where we all gather at various places around the world. It is more free-flowing and less rigid than an established church. We are not trying to replace the Seventh-day Adventist Church, nor are we trying to start a new denomination; we are simply independent SDA's building on the platform of truth laid out by the early pioneers (and ultimately God). Here is a quote about what has been God's true church across all time.

"God has a church. It is not the great cathedral, neither is it the national establishment, neither is it the various denominations; it is the people who love God and keep His commandments. "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:20). "Where Christ is even among the humble few, this is Christ's church,

for the presence of the High and Holy One who inhabiteth eternity can alone constitute a church” (Upward Look. p 315).

THE CONDITION OF THE CHURCH: Sighing and Crying

I still believe that the Seventh-day Adventist church is the seventh and last church of Revelation. God certainly had his hand in the start of the movement and church, but its spiritual condition is that of Laodicea. Jesus says of Laodicea, “You are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing'—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked.” (Revelation 3:15-17). Essentially all organized Christian denominations today are in the spiritual condition of Laodicea. As I now understand it, to be of the “remnant” is not to simply be a member of the Laodicean Adventist church, but to be one of those who remain vitally attached to Jesus. We are saved individually, not corporately; our union to the church will not save us unless we are united to Christ. So not all that are part of the current Adventist church can truthfully call themselves the remnant, but all those who do remain until the second Advent of Christ, if introduced to it, will embrace the true Advent faith, as it contains the necessary foundations for which God has set-up in preparing His people for the end. Seventh-day Adventists are our brothers and sisters, even though the organized denomination has stepped off the platform of truth as preached by the early Adventist pioneers. Although God’s end time church is sick, in apostasy, and drinking some of the wine of false doctrines from Babylon, she is not Babylon, nor a daughter of hers. I can only pray that the

leaders of the organized church will take the counsel given in Revelation 3:15-17, as we all must. My heart aches and grieves over the condition of my dear church, which I grew up in. “Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem (the Seventh-day Adventist Church), and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and cry over all the abominations that are done within it.” (Ezekiel 9:4) Why is the church asleep and in such a Laodicean state right now? Is it a mistrust and misunderstanding of who God is? Why are some individuals more loyal to the church than to Jesus and the truth?

Ever since the rejection of the 1888 message (where a more complete message of righteousness by faith or by other terms “Christ our Righteousness” and the truth about the covenants came to the Adventist church) by many of the leading men, the church has not been able to enter the heavenly Canaan and has had to wander around in the wilderness for many more years because of insubordination and unbelief. The same spirit was manifested in 1888 that the pretentiously pious Pharisees and Jews manifested in rejecting and murdering Jesus Christ. Sadly, we see this same spirit, at times, manifested by leaders in the church today against God’s messengers who try and bring to them again what they rejected then. It is the spirit of those who believe in a god who says, “Do this, obey me, or else I will kill you”. The church has tried to supply the lack of Christ’s righteousness by more evangelism and busy activity to gain more members and baptisms, which has grown the church significantly over the years, but what is the quality of all these conversions? How genuine are they, and how long will they remain in the pews before sensing the lack of spiritual nourishment available? How many of our youth are leaving the church around the world, especially in western countries? Something is wrong. Unadulterated truth,

which reaches the hearts of sinners and builds up strong, converted Christian children of God will be the only answer. Coercion, force, artificial stimulation, and entertainment may be sufficient enough means to bring people into a building called a “church”, but it has no power to bring people to Christ and His true church. "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it." (Matthew 7:13-14); The majority have never had everything right. With about 22 million Adventists in the world, there will sadly only be a small remnant of the remnant Laodicean church who enter in the straight and narrow gate that leads to salvation.

To be fair, I do still see many leaders and faithful Adventists who I believe are part of the remnant, rightly representing Jesus the best they know how and I can see them responding to the Spirit of God. God has a special calling upon Adventists to share the gospel with the world, but Jesus also said “I have sheep that are not of this fold.” (John 10:16). There will be many that God is gathering from other denominations to be part of the remnant, (those who remain attached to Christ Jesus as their head) who will share the last message of mercy, a revelation of the Father’s character of love, to a dying world and finish the work. God can raise up even stones to do this work, if He must. Once this work is done, Jesus will come back and take us home to be with Him, His Father, the angels, and the redeemed forever!

Many of us in the Father of Love movement, who are following this message, including myself, are still members of the Seventh-day Adventist church. My parents and I still love the SDA church and attend Adventist churches where we sense an openness, love, and a responsiveness to the

Spirit of God. We try to work with the Adventist church as much as possible without violating our conscience. We still desire to positively influence the church as much as we can. There are still many genuine and sincere believers within the church, many biblical truths are still proclaimed, but there have been major problems with the denomination itself and many of its leaders, which have been deeply compromised since the rejection of the 1888 message.

The Adventist church is now a 501 (c) (3) nonprofit organization, which means that they can be more easily controlled by the government if they want to maintain their non-profit status with its tax breaks, government grants and funding. This can easily be a set up for compromise in times of crisis. The Seventh-day Adventist organization with its hospitals, schools and other affiliated institutions receives a lot of funding from the government. The desire to have the approval of the world, to keep up with the standards of the world, and to receive government funding has led to the accreditation of Adventist schools and hospitals. This has severely compromised the church. Leaders in the church and our institutions who are motivated by power, position, approval and profit willingly cast off principle. I believe the organized Adventist denomination, as we know it, will eventually either completely collapse or completely apostatize in the face of future crisis in the world, that it may remain on good terms with the governments of this world, to keep their doors open and to continue to receive funding.

I hope this is not the case as love hopes all things, endures all things and believes all things. Either way, the faithful and true Adventist body of believers will need to go underground and gather in house churches or small assemblies when major future crisis' arrive. To remain in the organized

church, as it is now, would be to forsake the convictions of conscience, to have truth censored, and ultimately worship the beast and his image. To stand for the truth will cost us, but we must leave the consequences with God and trust He will deliver us. We cannot compromise our convictions. To quote the famous speech of Martin Luther, before the bloodthirsty Diet of Worms, "It cannot be either safe or honest for a Christian to speak against his conscience. Here I stand. I cannot do otherwise. God help me. Amen."

"The enemy of souls has sought to bring in the supposition that a great reformation was to take place among Seventh-day Adventists, and that this reformation would consist in giving up the doctrines which stand as the pillars of our faith, and engaging in a process of reorganization. Were this reformation to take place, what would result? The principles of truth that God in His wisdom has given to the remnant church, would be discarded. Our religion would be changed. The fundamental principles that have sustained the work for the last fifty years would be accounted as error. A new organization would be established. Books of a new order would be written. A system of intellectual philosophy would be introduced. The founders of this system would go into the cities, and do a wonderful work. The Sabbath of course, would be lightly regarded, as also the God who created it. Nothing would be allowed to stand in the way of the new movement. The leaders would teach that virtue is better than vice, but God being removed, they would place their dependence on human power, which, without God, is worthless. Their foundation would be built on the sand, and storm and tempest would sweep away the structure." (1SM 204.2)

GETTING ESTABLISHED IN A NEW AREA: Finishing my Bachelor's Degree

Since 2021 I kept receiving invites to be a canvassing leader for a summer Adventist canvassing program. I politely turned the offers down because I wanted to establish my own canvassing work in the area where our ministry (Father of Love) was operating. I was also focused on finishing up my *Bachelors of Original Medicine* degree online by the fall of 2023. I wanted to be able to build up our own personal ministry contacts in our local area through the colporteur work and to be able to share freely, and offer for donation, our Father of Love books in addition to the other typical Adventist books on health, kids' Bible stories, and devotionals. It was so encouraging being able to tell those who I canvassed that I was their neighbor. In a conference-run canvassing program, you just hand off your contacts to the local church, and you don't know what happens to them, since you are not following up with them yourself. But now I could revisit my contacts and keep building a relationship with them. I would go out with my mother canvassing, and the Lord got us into many widows' homes, which I would never have gotten into if by myself. We could invite our contacts out for dinner and Bible study at my parents' home, for a new moon gathering, or home church on a Sabbath, or even to one of our feasts. This approach at canvassing has yielded much fruit and made a lot of friends!

By the grace of God, I finished my naturopathic bachelor's degree and received my diploma, in August of 2023! I enjoyed cooking and taking pictures of the many healthy plant-based cooked and raw food meals I needed to make for one of my classes. My parents were also my test subjects for my hydrotherapy class. I also enjoyed writing six health reports on

nutrition and modern health science. For my final, I wrote a 15-page health report on a health coaching session I had with a lady, a canvassing contact, who had several health problems or diseases.

I celebrated the completion of my degree with a road trip up to Canada for a small camp meeting that Malcolm and Sabrina were helping to host and to visit some friends and contacts. I packed my mountain bike and slept in the back of my van. From the camp meeting in Ontario, I then traveled to Quebec, Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, New York, and then back to Ontario before heading to Michigan and back down to North Carolina—it was quite the road trip! I was blessed to have had a multitude of divine appointments during my travels where I was able to hand out books and tracts, but I was also met with temptations; this helped me to see what a blessing it would have been to have had someone to travel with to keep me accountable—“accounta-billy-buddies”—however my guardian angel was always there with me.

BIBLE TRAINING AND ROAD TRIP TO CALIFORNIA: A Very Special 30th Birthday

After I returned, we had a spirit-filled feast of Tabernacles camp, with around 70 people from all over North America including Canada, USA and Puerto Rico. Immediately after the feast we had our beloved pastor Adrian Ebens fly over with his wife, son and a new Christian, Max, who had just embraced this message and was desirous to get acquainted with the young men in the fellowship here in America. Adrian led a smaller remnant of us in a Bible training program that lasted about 10 days; we were all hungering and thirsting for deeper understanding of the sanctifying truths of the Bible.

Pastor Adrian shared some inspiring messages and Bible studies with us, and we had some great question-and-answer sessions and discussion around the campfire.

Following the Bible training session, our ministry team got to take an amazing road trip out to California and back with Adrian, his family, and most of us from the Bible training. We took two vans, one that Adrian rented and my blue (favorite color) Toyota Sienna minivan with over 200,000 miles! We had stops for Bible meetings and visitations with like-minded believers and truth seekers in Arkansas, Colorado, Arizona, and California. Our last stop was in California, where Adrian got to speak at a Seventh-day Adventist church. A recreational highlight of the trip for me was when I got to hike up the 16-mile trail with 4,800 elevation gain to Half Dome at Yosemite National Park! We then said goodbye to Adrian and his family at the airport, and the rest of us made the drive all the way back to north Georgia and western North Carolina. It was a trip I will never forget, and it was so encouraging to see the positive reception we had with the people at each place we visited. It was also a special bonding experience for all of us who travelled together and shared accommodations.

I had a moment with God that I will never forget on the eve of my 30th birthday while we were driving in one of the vans in California. I had my headphones on and I was listening to soft, calm, and uplifting instrumental music while I was thinking and praying. I was reflecting on my past decade of life, but really my whole life up to this point of entering my 30s. I felt God's presence upon me so strongly that it brought me to tears and broke me! I cried at least seven tissues full of tears. I was thinking upon the goodness, love and character of God shown to me over my whole life, through my dear

mother and father, through my elders, leaders and pastors in the Father of Love ministry. God had redeemed my life so many times from the snares of sin, self, Satan and the world. What a wonder it was to reflect upon all the magnificent revelations that God had given me! I was humbled and deeply moved by the Spirit of God and desiring a deeper experience of consecration, surrender, and dedication to the cause of Christ; I wanted a closer and more consistent relationship and walk with my Savior so that He could use me in even greater and more effective ways! Going into my 30's was a big step for me and I reflected much upon how Jesus and other Bible characters, including the priests, would begin their ministry at age 30. This was really a big shift for me, and my life would never be the same again, as God was maturing me more and more.

SECTION 8: EMBRACING AND LOVING THE MINISTRY OF MY 30'S

CAROLING CANVASSERS: Sights on the Philippines

By December 2023, I had already started making plans to do a mission trip to the Philippines for the first time. I had friends and family there, and I had wanted to go for years, but because of the pandemic and travel restrictions, I was not able to visit until I heard about the vaccine requirement for travel being removed. I started going back out to do canvassing work to raise some money to help fund my mission trip. My mother would join me most of the time, and we experienced some remarkable success in December and into January of 2024. We decided to try a unique approach to canvassing: holiday caroling door to door. As soon as the homeowner opened the door, we would start singing the first verse of a famous hymn about the birth of Jesus. You should have seen some of the reactions, it was priceless! Some people were not interested, others were shocked and unsure how to respond, but most people responded very positively, and you could see the smile on their face grow as we helped to brighten their day. Many would even start singing along with us! (Heavenly music has a power to bring a heavenly atmosphere wherever it is sung, which dispels the powers of darkness, helping people to make intelligent decisions for now and eternity. God inhabits the praises of His people (Psalm 22:3) and “temptations lose their power when Thou art nigh.” (Hymn: I Need Thee Every Hour), so when we are praising God and His Son in song, the tempters

power is disarmed—hallelujah!) People were very supportive, more than I had ever seen before, to donate for the books and to go towards my mission trip to the Philippines. God is so faithful to provide!

We had some incredible experiences, including singing at our neighbors house at their Christmas friends and family dinner party. They enjoyed it so much they asked us to sing another song! I then gave them my canvas, and several people, including the homeowner, donated and got some books! They even invited us to sit down for some food, which we gratefully partook of even though we were not hungry and it was in between meals. We wanted to accept their offer of kindness and to have more time with them.

FIRST MISSIONARY TRIP TO THE PHILIPPINES: A Life Changing and Inspiring Experience

On January 17th, 2024, I made the flight to the Philippines! I ended up staying about 10 weeks, with 2 extensions I needed to make with immigration. I spent the first 3 weeks at a medical missionary training course put on by Dr. Julie and some of her team from *Uchee Pines at Siloam Valley Institute* in Mindanao. Overall, it was a great experience getting to know what life is like in the Philippines, and I was warmly welcomed, which I appreciated. During the last week of the training, we worked with health guests who had real diseases, like what would happen with someone attending one of the Adventist lifestyle centers for healing.

For the rest of the trip, I got to stay with my American uncle and his Philippina aunt and their kids at their place in Mindanao, which was nice. I also got to travel with my good friend Danny from Thailand, who had already

visited the Philippines before and had made some connections with whom he was eager for me to meet and connect with. This was undoubtedly a highlight because these communities and individuals would become some of my closest and most like-minded friends and family in the Philippines! These individuals Danny introduced me to had been coming to some of the same conclusions and sharing messages our ministry had, like the character of God, one True God, Feasts and other truths. They did not all completely agree on everything, but the character of God message unites them together, and helps them bear with each other's differences and still have that love for each other. Despite the differences they continue working together, until the spirit of God can bring them into greater unity. Some of these Adventist communities in the Philippines are leading the way in example of what successful communal living can look like, something we all could (and may need to) learn from.

Brother and Sister Jong and Juvie opened their home and friendly community to me in Gingoog. They have a vegetarian cafe called, "Veg-To-Go" and a ministry called "Healthful Living". This would become a home base for me in the Philippines. They live according to the agape love and character of God, which is the foundation of their ministry blueprint! Their city and country living properties are so beautiful and natural, and it is so inspiring that many people from all over, all walks of life, and from all religions and social statuses will come and visit them there. They truly are a light set on a hill that cannot be hidden! I could see how they do not use force or condemn those who believe or practice differently than them. Anyone who comes for a visit is made to feel welcomed, loved and fed tasty, healthy food! I also got to visit Doc Gil and his beautiful community near Butuan. In addition, we visited

Kuya Tim Divine Grace and His beautiful Adventist community in and around Davao, where nestled within the mountains, is Tim's *Camp Divine Grace*.

The last few weeks in the Philippines, I spent in Gingoog with Jong and Juvie, working with their young people and visiting the public high schools to do a course on sexual health education with powerpoint. We also teamed up with the Rotary club from Australia, the Philippines Department of Education, and the local mayor to make this happen—all by the grace of God! As Christians, we emphasized much more than just avoiding teenage pregnancy (which is very high in the Philippines), such as not having intimate physical relationships before marriage. But even more importantly, we shared with them God's incredible love for them as His children! We shared with them about Identity and how their value is not in their looks, performance, achievements, or relationship status, but in simply being sons and daughters of God. We also got to sing and pray with them and share our personal testimonies to inspire them. It is my hope that through building relationships with these young people and encouraging them with a living testimony that their minds will be turned to Christ and that Christ's Spirit will keep them from wandering into situations that might lead to teen pregnancy in the first place, but also educating them so that if they do fall a prey to temptation, they will at least be able to mitigate consequences and help them find comfort in Jesus.

When I returned to America in April of 2024, my heart was so blessed and full to overflowing with joy and gratitude for the amazing experiences and how I saw God use me to bless so many people. I was asked to lead out in worship many times, share sermons, and give my testimony while there—my spiritual muscles got a good workout! Often, I would be asked to present

at the last minute, so I learned to be a minute man; to be ready in and out of season (2 Timothy 4:2). I already knew I would want to visit the Philippines again, God willing. I would have liked to have stayed longer, but I needed to make it back for the Feast of Passover in April, where I would be presenting several messages. I got to share with them my mission report with pictures to the Philippines, which is still on our YouTube channel at “Father of Love Fellowship”.

MY HEART IS STILL IN THE PHILIPPINES: Experiencing A Closer and More Consistent Walk with God

After being back for a few weeks, I got right back into the Canvassing work, going door to door and business to business. Since I planned to visit the Philippines again before the end of the year for another mission trip, I kept using that reason as to why I was raising donations through the colporteur work. I also wanted to experiment with singing for people at the doors during the rest of the year but this time instead of songs about the Advent of Jesus, my friend Malcolm and I or my mother and I would sing a verse from amazing grace as soon the people opened the door or after a quick introduction. Initially, it was a bit awkward, but we kept doing that for most of the doors unless the Lord impressed us not to sing for someone and simply talk with them. We still experienced a lot of success and many divine appointments. God really amazed me with how much He blessed the canvassing work with success in 2024. I sold more books and made more money that year than I had ever done before. Success is not just about the numbers, but the quality of interactions, souls reached for the kingdom of heaven, and the spirit in

which the work is done. Of course, there were still low financial or book days that would keep me humble. It was like God was using me to be a blessing to the community, who in turn wanted to bless me in return, so that I could be a channel of their blessings to those in the Philippines, who in turn would bless me with places to stay, fellowship and lasting memories—all while doing God’s work! I am eternally grateful!

God blessed my canvassing work with success for several reasons: (1) I was doing the canvassing work in my own local area. (2) People wanted to support me doing mission work in the Philippines. (3) They loved the singing. (4) We would follow up with our canvassing contacts. (5) We were sharing books from our personal ministry at Father of Love, filled with precious present truth. (6) But the biggest reason I know was my deeper consecration to God and my more consistent walk with Him—I was not the same man I was even a year before! I would not leave the house to go canvassing without spending at least 20 to 30 minutes in prayer and intercession for the work ahead. I would often feel the presence of God upon me, bringing me to tears and keeping me humble and dependent upon Him.

I was also in a courtship relationship at the time with a Filipina lady I had previously met in Korea, which was inspiring me to have a closer and more vitally connected and consistent relationship with God for the sake of wanting to be that spiritual channel of blessing to the woman I was communicating with over the internet at the time. I wanted God’s blessing upon the relationship if it was His will to keep us together, or not. Long story short, God allowed that relationship to end, but my life and spirituality were better for the time that we were friends. God was teaching me more about overcoming selfishness and living for someone else’s long-term good,

happiness, and salvation. It got me thinking about how my every day decisions and everything I do, eat, watch, or listen to how it will not just affect my relationship with God in the moment but also my future health, character development, relationships with those I care about (both in my personal life and in my courier ministry). I was learning a deeper lesson of what it means to strongly desire “nothing between my soul and my savior” or between me and someone I love. I know that this principle and lesson would deepen even more after having children, since Enoch entered into a closer walk with God after the birth of his son (Gen 5:22). The family unit and its deepest and tenderest earthly ties are designed to reflect the Kingdom of Heaven!

God was really prospering the canvassing work, and many days I would easily receive over \$200 and some days over \$300 in just 3 to 5 hours. God knew the financial needs that I would have for going to the Philippines. In the meantime, God was giving me some speaking opportunities, which also helped me prepare for the Philippines. I shared about the presence of God, and I really felt the joy and peace of heaven while preparing these messages—This was great preparative work for me because I knew I would be asked to speak and share a lot when I returned to the Philippines. After Tabernacles in October, I started packing my things to leave for South Korea and the Philippines on October 30th, 2024.

SECOND MISSIONARY TRIP TO PHILIPPINES: The Adventure Continues

I stayed in Korea for a little over a week with a Korean Adventist family and visited some Filipino missionary friends that were also in Korea. I

then caught my flight to the Philippines! I was so happy and blessed to be reunited with my beloved spiritual family in Gingoog. I stayed with my close friend and spiritual brother Jerven and his family in their humble country home in the mountains. The ministry has an escarpment country living property where I got to help lead out with some worships and health training for their young medical missionary students. It was also an emotional time for me since I was going through a breakup with my girlfriend. I believe it was God's will and that He had someone better suited to my life and ministry. I trusted that He was working everything out for the good. Despite my intense feelings, I received healing by continuing to minister to others in faith. Since God is my Source of Love and comfort, I have learned to be content in Him first and foremost.

After a few weeks, I began my missionary adventures with brother Jerven and His wife, April, and their young son, Faith. We had the privilege and opportunity to travel to many beautiful places in Mindanao, Luzon, and even Coron in the Palawan Islands. But the most beautiful part about the Philippines is the people; the warm, friendly, and hospitable reception we got in all the places we visited was really an incredible and life-changing experience I will never forget! We visited at least 15 to 20 different places where we had opportunities to give messages for morning and evening worships and hold Bible meetings at churches, homes, public venues, and even public high schools! During our ventures Jerven and I even got to visit Thailand for a week to attend our close friend Danny's wedding. There were challenges, many character and faith-building experiences, and trials, but God works everything out for the good and helped us keep persevering. I was deeply humbled towards the end with some trials that drove me deeper to

my knees and my dependence upon God to help us finish the mission strong and in the power of the Lord, for His glory.

It is so rewarding, satisfying, and fulfilling to minister to souls and to be able to share my testimony and the word of God with spiritually hungry people, eager to receive more of the precious light of truth from heaven! Having so many new friends and family worldwide is an incredible blessing! The character of God message, among other present truths from the Bible, is spreading like wildfire around the Philippines. The Filipinos as a people value relationships, spirituality, and character (as opposed to the more money, power and performance value system found in most western cultures), which makes the vineyard there so ripe for the harvest and the gospel message. There is a hunger for things of an eternal and lasting value that only our heavenly Father can offer. This world is not our home. I give a more detailed mission report with pictures on our other ministry YouTube channel based out of Australia with Pastor Adrian Ebens called “Maranatha Media”.

MEETING THE BRETHREN IN AUSTRALIA: A Fresh Revival

And now the story returns full circle to my opening paragraph, where I describe my reflections from my plane flight from the Philippines to Australia in February of 2025. I was “poured out like a drink offering” (1 Timothy 4:6) in the Philippines. I was happy yet humbled, tired, emotional, and needing to fill my cup again. I experienced a fresh revival, healing, and reformation during my stay at Adrian Ebens' country living home and property, “Pilgrim’s Rest” in Queensland, Australia. It was so quiet and peaceful there; No WIFI and lots of Wallabies and Kangaroos hopping around.

I was truly refreshed, re-energized, and inspired spiritually; I could think, reflect, and pray here with minimal distractions. I had many good prayer sessions full of tears, pouring my heart out to God and strengthening my union with Him. I was very blessed to have been able to stay at the Ebens' home for 6 weeks and to receive some mentorship with Pastor Adrian. My good friend Max also visited and stayed with us at Adrian's for about five weeks, so bonding with him and Adrian was a blessing. Max and I were also blessed to read through a good portion of Adrian's most recent book, "One Mediator," while we were there and were able to discuss with Adrian chapter by chapter. It was during my stay with Adrian that I was inspired to start writing out this testimony.

I feel much closer now to Pastor Adrian, his beloved wife, Laurel, and their precious son, Daniel, and I will forever be grateful and cherish those weeks we could spend together. Adrian is not perfect, he is not infallible (none of us are perfect and infallible), and I cannot say that I agree with everything he speaks or writes, but I truly believe that Adrian is a man of God. After all the time I have spent with him in person, reading his books, and listening to his sermons, it is very clear that He loves God with all His heart and his neighbor as himself. I believe Adrian has a special anointing and is inspired by the Spirit of God and has been given a message to share with the world and help prepare a people for translation to heaven.

I had wanted to finally meet in person some of our other brethren in Australia who are in the Father of Love movement and message, whom I had seen on YouTube before on "Maranatha media" or "Father of Love QLD" or heard from in one of our ministry group chats. I enjoyed meeting them on Sabbaths at Adrian's home church and with the other group that gathers for

church in Brisbane, Queensland. It is inspiring and encouraging to have so many like-minded believers coming to these same precious truths from around the world! It is really a taste of heaven to fellowship with some of these different groups, communities, and ministries who are all united and moved by a message, which is founded upon the Agape love of God and His only begotten Son—the rock; When everything else is shaken, only that which is built upon the rock will last.

SETTLING INTO MY LIFE WORK: Focused and Prioritized

I returned to America in April 2025, eager to see my friends and family after spending about five months overseas. We had a wonderful Passover camp meeting in Tennessee with some visitors who attended for the first time; these visitors had been cautioned about our ministry due to our teaching of the character of God doctrine, which some thought was heretical. After spending a whole week with us, they testified that the negative things others were saying about us and what we believed were not accurate. One individual even made a public apology for having joined in the criticism. They said that they could see bad fruit and a bad spirit from the people attacking us and preaching against us and that they could see positive fruit in our lives—they really enjoyed their time with us. Praise God! They came with an open and receptive mind, willing to reason from Scripture. By the end, they could testify that what we teach about God is rational, relational, biblical, and beautiful. They felt as part of our family of faith and were desirous to visit us again for another gathering. These went away from our “love feast” (Jude 1:12) feeling loved; “they shall know we are Christians by our love.” (A Christian hymn based off John 13:35).

Soon after the feast my parents felt called to sell their house and move to Central Tennessee, that they might be closer to my sister and their grandbabies. The shift was a real leap of faith for us as a family, but we moved forward in faith after God continued to open doors before us. It was hard for me to leave Murphy because I had many friends in the area and I had spent such a long time laboring in the canvassing work and making connections with the locals, but I set my heart to continuing my ministry of evangelism in Tennessee by canvassing there and inviting those I would meet who seemed receptive to truth to come and study with my parents and I at our new home. I was impressed by the fifth commandment which says to honor your father and mother by helping them with this transition and all the work involved with the move and things that needed to be done in and around the new house. The home my parents purchased is a larger house with more bedrooms and with a beautiful open mountainous view, overlooking a valley. My parents felt impressed that they wanted a place of refuge where they could house people who are in need during the time of trouble and at any point beforehand, as well as hold regular home church/Bible studies for the community. My parents allowed me to keep living with them for free that I might help them make new connections for their home church ministry in Gainsboro and to help me save up for my next mission trip to the Philippines towards the end of 2025. I felt a blessed assurance of God's calling for me as a Colporteur Evangelist and Gospel Medical Missionary; My priorities began shifting, my focus became sharper, and I began leaning into the work more full-time than ever before and God blessed it with making more connections, both for friendships and Bible studies, and I sold more books and received more donations it felt than ever before in such a short time—True success comes when we unite our human effort with Divine Power.

God was also answering the prayers I had been praying for years in relation to the canvassing work that would help fulfill Christ's instructions in Matthew 9:37, 38 "Then He said to His disciples, "The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest."

I had desired to see God use me to help disciple and train more present truth believers regarding door-to-door colporteur evangelism with not just the typical books used in summer canvassing programs but with some of our Father of Love books as well. I wanted to see more people take personal interest to canvass their local towns and communities to help advance the message and to help them generate contacts to follow up with. I was praying that the canvassing work I do would be replicated by others, especially when I am gone to the Philippines. I had already trained and gone out door to door with my mother and my friends Malcolm and Max. I also had several providential opportunities during the summer of 2025 to train up and go out with at least 7 other individuals that wanted to pick up this most precious and important evangelistic work!

SECTION 9: ENCOURAGEMENTS AND MOTIVATION FOR US ALL

PERSONAL APPEAL: How Do We Move Forward?

We are all called to share the gospel message. With the unique life experience and personality we have as individuals, we will each be able to reach different classes or personalities of people, perhaps that only we can reach. God is calling us all to be born again, that we may labor with Him for the salvation of souls, in our own unique ways. As different parts of the body of Christ, we all serve a different purpose, but we should joyfully submit to our head, Christ Jesus. When we embrace the call God has for our lives and ask the Lord to give us that holy boldness in our own personal ministry, within our own spheres of influence, then this message will go out with power and effectiveness! This is not a pressure to earn our salvation (or others) by performance, but rather an appeal to each truly converted Christian to step out in faith to fulfill the great commission to “Go and make disciples of all men”; if we truly love our Lord, this yoke will not seem hard, nor the burden heavy. Let us seek to bring those who are lost to the feet of our Savior, that they too may be reconciled to God. Ellen White said, “The completeness of Christian character is attained when the impulse to help and bless others springs constantly from within—when the sunshine of heaven fills the heart and is revealed in the countenance.” (Christ’s Object Lessons, p 384) What if God’s people pressed together to meet each other’s needs and bless others continually? This will become more necessary and will be a

witness to the world that we are the disciples of Christ, by our love for one another.

If we choose to stay faithful and obedient to God, we will start to lose more support from the governments, churches, and systems of this world. This is clearly prophesied in Revelation concerning the “mark of the beast” (Revelation 13 describes the beast as being a system unifying apostate Christianity with the governments of the world, symbolized by both the beast from the sea and from the earth. For more on this subject please read my friend Sean Sutton’s book, *Forbidden Fruit* at www.Fatheroflove.info. It is time to prepare for end-time events and having our own, or connections with those who have, alternative, self-sufficient, country living outposts will be increasingly important if we want to avoid being forced into a situation where all earthly support is cut off, before it is absolutely necessary. Nevertheless, as Ellen White says in *Ministry of Healing*, pg. 281, “Our heavenly Father has a thousand ways to provide for us of which we know nothing. Those who accept the one principle of making the service of God supreme will find perplexities vanish and a plain path before their feet.”

Let us follow Christ's method alone: “Christ’s method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Savior mingled with people as one who desired their good. He showed sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He invited them, ‘Follow Me.’” (*Ministry of Healing*, pg. 73) We can follow this method in whatever line of work or ministry we have. God is going to work miracles, and many will be won into the message and into the kingdom of heaven! Let's dare to ask for more! Let's ask the Lord to increase our faith, and let's get together and pray more corporately in addition to our personal and private prayers. I know and

have experienced the power of prayer! I have seen and experienced the powerful united prayer sessions with my brothers and sisters in the faith, and we should have more of this, especially as the day of Christ's return gets closer. As this world grows darker and darker, may we be like the stars in the sky, shining brighter and brighter.

It is so exciting to see what the Lord is doing and to be a part of it! The most difficult, yet greatest and most powerful days of the church, are still ahead of us! May we keep responding to His spirit and amazing love; May we choose Jesus daily and let Him live out His life within us. Worshipping a God that does not force, threaten, or use arbitrary and imposed punishments is liberating. I delight to trust my life to a God whose law, kingdom, and character are based upon liberty, truth, and love!

THIS IS LIFE ETERNAL: To Know Thee The Only True God, and Jesus Christ, Whom Thou Hast Sent (John 17:3)

I used to have some fear of the time of trouble, the judgment, and the close of probation. Because of this message about God's character, I no longer fear tribulation with an unholy fear! I know that I can find peace and comfort in the presence of God in the time of trouble, even while all hell is breaking loose because I will know the destruction will not be proceeding directly from God and that He desires to save me from it, yet, if it is His will that I suffer many things for His name, even death, then I still have complete trust in Him. The three Hebrew worthies said, "If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that

we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.” (Daniel 3:17-18). In other words, God is not just trying to protect me from Himself, nor is Jesus trying to protect me from the Father; They are united in their love to seek to save me from sin, self, Satan, and the world. Jesus’ intercession is not to protect me from the Father’s wrathful character, but rather to reveal to me the truth about the Father’s loving character!

The judgment is bad news for the wicked because they rejected the words of Christ and will condemn themselves (John 12:47-48, Acts 13:46) when they see their unrighteousness so clearly contrasted by the righteousness of God. Even a white sheep seems filthy after a fresh snow; all our righteousness is but filthy rags. (Isaiah 64:6). Heaven would be torture for them, because in refusing to receive the glorious truth Jesus declared about God’s character, they rejected God and manifested their indignation towards Him, despite all the good things He had done for them. The Bible says that when we do good to those who do bad to us we “pour hot coals upon their heads”(Romans 12:20); the conviction of their own sins will be as hot coals within the wicked, even as it is written of Satan, “I brought fire from your midst (within your conscience); It devoured you, and I turned you to ashes upon the earth In the sight of all who saw you.” (Ezekiel 28:18).

The judgment is good news for the believer; The judge is on our side! When I mess up, I choose to get off my throne of judgment and let my God and Father sit on the throne. I choose to accept His words of life and righteous judgment over me, “This is my beloved son Obadiah, in whom I delight” and “I forgive you, for you did not know what you were doing.” (Matthew 3:17, Luke 23:34). God’s true judgment toward me, and to all of humanity, is to offer mercy. We were sorely deceived and could not find

victory over sin until we came to a deeper understanding of God's character; for as long as we judged God as a killer, we were doomed to fear death and to seek comfort from sources other than God—sin is a manifestation of a person who believes that they are going to die. We are coming ever closer to the culmination of the hour of His judgment (Rev 14:7) whereby His true character will be fully manifested in the lives of His people. God will be judged by all of humanity, and all will have made their decisions to either trust in Him or to rebel against Him.

I have learned to understand the judgement not so much in a legal framework, but more in a relational framework where God is seeking to build back friendship, freedom, love, and trust with His creation, which was broken by sin. It was sin which brought about the necessity for a mediator for sin to reconcile our carnal minds back to God. Jesus wants to mediate to us the life, spirit, and blessing of God! This is the [life]blood of the New Covenant, which cleanses us from all sin. (Leviticus 17:11 declares that “the life is in the blood” and John 6:63 says, “the flesh profits nothing...the spirit gives life.” Therefore the “blood of Jesus” is the channel through which we receive His eternal Spirit. It is only at the cross, where Jesus' lifeblood is poured out for us, that we see that truly God NEVER kills; for if there were ever a time where God would say “That's it. I've had enough with these people. I'm going to kill them!” It would have been then, but instead Jesus revealed to us that STILL, God's heart desired only to bless and forgive us.) It is the life of Christ we need abiding in our own lives. “Yet God does not take away a life; but He devises means, so that His banished ones are not expelled from Him.” (2 Samuel 14:14) “Sickness, suffering, and death are work of an antagonistic power. **Satan is the destroyer; God is the restorer.**” (The Ministry of Healing, p 113)

The close of probation is not arbitrary. It only ends when an individual makes their final decision about God's character, whatever judgement they make about God will seal their destiny and determine which side they will stand - Christ's or Satan's. I understand that we are all written in the books of life as sons and daughters of God and that the only way someone can be lost forever is to ask God to blot our names out by rejecting the spirit of His presence and the revelation of His character, thus declaring, "I would rather die, than live with You." God will bring rebellion to an eternal end: "What do you conspire against the LORD? He will make an utter end of it. Affliction will not rise up a second time." (Nahum 1:9). But if God were to use the same methods of bringing this rebellion to its end as Satan (i.e. force, violence, coercion), then the universe would remain in doubt as to God's character being perfectly trustworthy and rebellion might well rise up again. "The ends do not justify the means"; "Only by love, is love awakened."

I WOULD RATHER HAVE JESUS THAN THAT: The Seal of God and Preparing For Translation

A.T. Jones, one of the men whom God used to give a most precious message to the Advent people and the world, beginning in 1888, said these sublime words about the seal of God that I have treasured and remembered: "If the Lord has brought up sins to us that we never thought of before, that only shows that He is going down to the depths, and He will reach the bottom at last, and when He finds the last thing that is unclean or impure that is out of harmony with His will and brings that up and shows that to us and we say, 'I would rather have the Lord than that,' then the work is complete and the seal of the living God can be fixed upon that character. Which would you rather have, the completeness, the perfect fulness of Jesus

Christ or have less than that with some of your sins covered up that you never know of? If there be stains of sin there, we cannot have the seal of God. He cannot put the seal, the impress of His perfect character, upon us until He sees it there. And so He has got to dig down to the deep places we never dreamed of because we cannot understand our hearts. But the Lord tries the conscience. He will cleanse the heart and bring up the last vestige of wickedness. Let Him keep on His searching work.” (GCDB 1893, pg. 404.3-4).

A.T. Jones also spoke some profound words about the health message given to God’s people: “When the health reform was given to the people of God, it was defined as that which is to fit the people for translation. That is the meaning of health reform. The leading thing, the great thing, that God intends health reform to do, is to prepare His people for translation. But we have to go through the seven last plagues before we are translated, and if a man's blood is impure and full of gross material will he be able to pass through that time, when the air is sick with pestilence? Indeed, he cannot. (A.T. Jones, Third Angels Message 1893, Pg 88, 89). This is why I am so passionate about eating and living healthy and educating others to do the same.

MOTIVATED BY THE AGAPE LOVE OF GOD: For the Joy that Is Set Before

It is such a beautiful and satisfying feeling to have the mental peace and confident assurance that you are in God’s will and purpose for your life, with the ministry and mission work he has given you based on the gifts, talents, and experience that He has uniquely given to every one of us. I can humbly yet boldly say I know I am where God wants me to be, doing what He

wills for my life, forming me into who He wants me to be, and it brings me much joy and fulfillment! I am more driven than I have ever been before in my life to live to receive and impart the glorious character of Jesus. This relational gospel, I believe, is the key to living a life motivated by the agape of God. Even as Christ prayed, “Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You,” (John 17:1) so I too desire that the glory of God may be fully manifest in my life, that the character of God may be fully vindicated before the world and the angelic hosts—thus I may glorify God through my life. “Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.” (1 John 4:17-18, emphasis supplied). When God’s people finally see God as He truly is (totally non-violent and non-condemning), then all fear will be cast out by His perfect love and we will be as He is. Then Jesus will be ready to receive His church unto Himself and the sooner His sufferings can come to an end, once and for all. “But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.” (2 Corinthians 2:18).

What can we take with us when this life is over? We can only take with us our relationships and who we are becoming. “A character formed according to the divine likeness is the only treasure that we can take from this world to the next. Those who are under the instruction of Christ in this world will take every divine attainment with them to the heavenly mansions. And in heaven we are continually to improve. How important, then, is the development of character in this life.” (MYP 100.3). “Only one life, ‘twill soon be past. Only what’s done for Christ will last.” (C.T. Studd). No matter what it

costs me, it is worth it for Jesus! No matter what cross I must bear, it is worth it and will be worth it! God will never leave or forsake us, and His grace will always be sufficient for us.

“For the LORD God is a sun and shield; The LORD will give grace and glory; No good thing will He withhold from those who walk uprightly.” (Psalms 84:11). His resources are unlimited to do His work and get this glorious gospel out into all the world, then Jesus can come again and take us home to be with Him and the Father, the angels, and the redeemed forever and ever! God loves me as much as He loves His Son! “We love Him because He first loved us.” (1 John 4:19). Oh, how my heart loves Him so much in return! Oh, how He has won my heart forever. I am willing to suffer the loss of all things that I might gain Christ and that countless others may also, through me! To receive Jesus is to obtain the Father; they will make their abode in him who does! To have Jesus, the Son of God, is everything to me! The begotten Son who inherited all things from His Father is my hope of eternal life, and by faith I will also be a joint heir with Him! Who can fathom!?

“All true obedience comes from the heart. It was heart work with Christ. And if we consent, He will so identify Himself with our thoughts and aims, so blend our hearts and minds into conformity to His will, that when obeying Him we shall be but carrying out our own impulses. The will, refined and sanctified, will find its highest delight in doing His service. When we know God as it is our privilege to know Him, our life will be a life of continual obedience. Through an appreciation of the character of Christ, through communion with God, sin will become hateful to us.” (Desire of Ages 668).

The world needs to know God for who He truly is as revealed in Jesus's life! None of us who make it to heaven will ever regret any sacrifice

we made for God and the kingdom of heaven. "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal." (2 Corinthians 4:17-18). "Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." (Psalm 16:11).

As I reflect upon my testimony, I see God's amazing love, goodness, mercy, grace, and patience displayed throughout my entire life. I am so glad that God never gave up on me and that His **agape never fails!** He has led me this far, and I know He will lead me home to heaven. "Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ." (Phillipians 1:6). Truly, God is writing a wonderful love story and making my life to be a beautiful song that brings praise to His name! I am not married yet upon writing this story. Still, I think of that day when our heavenly groom, Jesus Himself, comes back to retrieve His bride, the church; those who have become one with Him, to finally be with Him in person. We will celebrate this union at the marriage supper of the lamb, never to part again! Oh, how I long for that day!

MINISTRY ENDORCEMENT: A Call to Read and Study with Us

I am not perfect, and if I am wrong in any area of life or doctrine, I want to be corrected; I pray to be dead unto self and alive unto Christ. I want to live in the light and to represent God and His only begotten Son, in spirit and in truth. If you have seen Jesus in me or sensed the Spirit of Jesus in this

testimony, then I can only testify that I would not be who and where I am today without learning and embracing all the beautiful truths that I have shared here in my story. These truths, as they are in Jesus, have without a shadow of a doubt had a sanctifying and purifying influence upon my life, to the glory of God. I am so passionate about this glorious and precious light that God has been shining on our path to guide us to His Celestial City, founded on the Midnight Cry message given to the early Adventists. I invite anyone reading this to keep investigating, reading, and studying prayerfully, like the Bereans, to see if these things are true. (Acts 17:10-11). I can only testify to the joy and freedom I am experiencing in this message!

I am encouraged that the “Father of Love” movement has books translated and published in 40+ different languages so far—Identity wars alone has been translated into 32 different languages with dozens of home church groups and families studying the message among countless other individuals. We are all being led, by the Spirit of God, to arrive at very similar convictions and conclusions about these precious truths, culminating in the agape love of God! “You also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” (1 Peter 2:5). We have many Bible-based books (including audiobooks), many of which I have personally read, that can be found for free on our websites fatheroflove.info and maranathamedia.com, or physical copies of the books can be picked up in person, or we can have them mailed to you. We kindly ask that if you would like to offer a donation for the books it will help us keep printing more books.

CLOSING PRAYER AND SONG: God Bless you!

I pray that this testimony has had a sanctifying influence upon your life. I pray my story of God's loving hand working in and through this humble vessel has blessed and inspired you to seek the truth and have a closer relationship with Jesus and our heavenly Father. I pray that you don't have to make the same mistakes I did or take as long as it took me to learn what I did. I pray that the veil be lifted from your eyes, that you may see a clearer picture of who our Heavenly Father truly is! I pray for us all to be completely unobstructed channels for God's life, thoughts, words, and Spirit to shine through! My greatest prayer and desire for anyone who reads this testimony is that I may see you in heaven! May "The Lord bless you and keep you; The Lord make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you; The Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace." (Numbers 6:24-26)

All Along — The Nebblett Family

VERSE 1

Time just slips away, and as I look back on the years
with memories of happiness and bitter tears,
Through it all there is a common thread that cannot be ignored;
You were there, making me to be Your servant [Son], Lord.

CHORUS

All along Your hand has been guiding me,
making my life to be a beautiful song, all along.
You've led me through things that You knew would make me
strong.

Your love has been there all along.

VERSE 2

Every joy and pain had a reason of its own,
now I realize that I was not alone.

The changing seasons of my life were not left up chance;
Lord, I know You were working to fulfill Your plan.

CHORUS

All along Your hand has been guiding me,
making my life to be a beautiful song, all along.
You've led me through things that You knew would make me
strong.

Your love has been there all along.

BRIDGE

Tomorrow when I turn around and look back at today,
I will understand your purpose, and my thankful heart will say:

CHORUS

All along Your hand has been guiding me,
making my life to be a beautiful song, all along.
You've led me through things that You knew would make me
strong.

Your love has been there all along.

Your love has been there all along.

Obadiah Zealous Wright

CONTACT INFORMATION

Author- Obadiah Zealous Wright (Born 1993)

Email- obadiahz30@proton.me

USA Phone # +1 (828) 557-8477

Facebook- Obadiah Wright (Obie)

Instagram- Obadiah Wright (obie.wright)

I would love to receive any feedback from anyone after you have read this testimony book! Please feel free to contact me.

If, after you have finished reading, you have any thoughts, reflections, questions, gratitude, or any testimony about how my story has blessed, inspired, or impacted you or someone in your life, I would love to hear back from you!



Follow the dramatic story of Obadiah Zealous Wright, a sensitive man seeking for meaning in a sin sick world. Quickly overtaken by the powers of darkness, Obadiah, a Pastor's Kid, found himself pursuing comfort and identity in all the wrong places. Torn between the humble life of a Christian and the high hopes of becoming a famous beatboxing rockstar, Obadiah, like a tennis ball, was slammed back and forth between light and darkness; good and evil; Christ and Satan. This testimony is certainly a fulfillment of the proverb, "Though the righteous fall seven times, they rise again."

His journey reveals the sanctifying power of God's Word, the power of intercessory prayer and the importance of having a right conception of God's character. Through much heartache, prayer and even jail-time, Obadiah finally finds complete and lasting freedom in his relationship with God, through His Son, Jesus Christ.

Now a missionary, evangelist, musician and natural health specialist, he travels the world sharing God's last message of mercy to a dying world—a world he only narrowly escaped.

