

So, I set out to return to God. It was as I was listening to a Christian radio program, the pastor gave a challenge, He said; "Pray and ask God to show Himself to you in a way you cannot deny it is the Lord".

Just as the prodigal, when he returned home was welcomed home with a robe, ring, and party, so My Heavenly Father welcomed me. Here's how he did so, I was working in a greenhouse nursery caring for many varieties of plants. As I watched a chrysanthemum grow from a tiny green bud into this huge flower the size of a hand! I knew in my heart that I had grown in my faith in God and that he had welcomed me back. All I had to do was believe in Him and confess Him (Romans 10:9-10). When I began to tell my friends of my conversion, one by one they disappeared (Proverbs 19:4), but my relationship with Jesus Christ filled that empty spot, and with open arms He received me, just as the Prodigal son's father received him back with open arms.

### Mike Rooney

My story is a lot like Timothy of the Bible. Timothy had a very religious family. His mom and grandma instructed him in the Bible (2 Timothy 1:5). I was raised just like Timothy. My family also was a very Christian family. Getty and Ray Rooney, my parents, took me to Sunday School every week and taught me the Bible stories and the basic of the Christian religion. It was at that time that I learned that I was a sinner and could not save myself by any of my own good works (Romans 3:23; Ephesians 2:8-9). I also learned that Jesus died to take away my sins (John 1:29). This led me to accept Jesus as my Savior (John 1:11-12) and be baptized when I was 11 years old.

The idea that Jesus could be my personal Savior was such a great and wonderful idea to me. I must admit that as I started out, I only had faith the size of a mustard seed. However, over the years that faith has grown from the size of a mustard seed to the size of an oak tree.

After childhood Timothy met the Apostle Paul on Paul's second missionary journey. Paul became his mentor. That's when Timothy really began to grow in his faith. The same was true for me. As I grew older, I also continued to seek out Jesus through many good Pastors and Sunday School Teachers. They all taught

me the Word according to the Gospel as revealed in John 3:16, "For God so loved the world that He gave his only Son, so that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but will have eternal life." By going to church I have learned the power of living in a community of likeminded people to serve our God. I have also strengthened my ability to pray. What a powerful way to live as you can talk to Him at any time, any place, for any reason. The decision to follow Jesus Christ and accept Him as my Savior has been the best decision of my life.

### Rodger Zeller

My story is so much like that of Nicodemus found in the Gospel according to John in the Bible. He was a very religious man who attended worship services all the time. So, did I. As a child I attended weekly and thought I was fine, even though I was a sinner just like Nicodemus. (*Romans 3:23;6:23*) Nicodemus thought he was fine too, after all, he was a teacher of the Bible in Israel. But when he met with Jesus, Jesus bluntly told him that he needed more. He needed to be "born again."

There are some difference between Nicodemus and me. He was old and I was young. He met Jesus at night, I met him in the day. When I was about 7 years old, I started attending church with my aunt and cousin. I became very involved in Sunday school, church services, and youth group. Like Nicodemus, although I was very religious, I too, discovered it wasn't enough. I could not do enough "good works," or "religious services" to save me. *Titus 3:5* says that it's, "not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth..." I could not save myself.

I needed to be born again like Jesus said. So, when I was 13 years old, I was listening to Billy Graham who helped me to see that Jesus is God who came into the world to save me (*1 Timothy 1:15*), that Jesus took my sin and paid for it on the cross. I learned that I needed to confess my sins and admit that I needed God's help. (*Romans 10:9,10,13*) It was then that I asked Jesus to save me, and I asked Jesus Christ to be my Savior and Lord. That's when I was born again like Nicodemus.

Jesus told Nicodemus in *John 3:16* "for God so loved the world (meaning me, Rodger, and you) that He sent His only Son (Jesus) so that whosoever believes in Him will have eternal life." Well, that is how my spiritual journey began. Tell me about yours.

# My Story

Stories of New Life by:

Nona Bos  
Tina Davis  
Al Dixon  
Mike Rooney  
Rodger Zeller

## Nona Bos

I was going about life as usual when Jesus called me. I was kind of like Andrew. He was a fisherman. Every day it was the same old thing. Get up. Go to work. Load the nets. Hit the water. Fish. Bring in the catch. Clean the fish and the gear to start all over the next day. My routine was pretty much the same, just in a different job. Even my religious life was like that. Every Sunday, get up, get ready for church, go to church, sit through Sunday School class then church service and go home. Then one day, Jesus showed up to Andrew and said to him, “Come, follow me and I will make you fishers of men” (Matthew 4:19). He left his nets and followed Jesus. In a similar way, while I was in the church service and the preacher was preaching, I heard Jesus in my heart saying, “Come follow me and I will make you touch peoples lives spiritually.” And I did. That’s how my spiritual journey of faith started.

You know, even though I started following then, over the next decade, I grew tired, weary, unhealthy, stressed, disappointed in almost everything. All my responsibilities were overwhelming me. Something had to give. I found myself so much like those in Galilee to whom Jesus said, “Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.” That’s when I discovered that I could not save myself. I needed Jesus to save me from my sin.

So, I began to search for Him. Now, being an avid reader, I read it all, books on the occult, new age, and the Bible. However, I struggled with the scriptures, could not focus, did not understand much of it, got frustrated, and basically stopped trying. But somehow a book by Hal Lindsay titled, *Satan is Alive and Well on Planet Earth*, piqued my interest and kind of frightened me. At the same time, I had started watching 700 Club on the Christian Broadcasting Network. One evening after a particularly depressing day I prayed the prayer of salvation with the program host, I think it was Ben Kinchlow at the time. I confessed that I was a sinner (Romans 3:23) and I could not save myself (Ephesians 2:8-9). Jesus loved me and took my sin on the cross to save me (Romans 5:8). I asked Jesus to save me (Romans 10:13). I felt better immediately. It was as if a light went on with my Bible reading. I was now devouring the word and understanding it.

Soon after this, I attended a Christian women’s weekend in Kalamazoo with some church friends. When the guest speaker asked for a response to the invitation, I raised my hand. A huge ‘lead weight’ lifted from my heart and I knew I had been “born again” (John 3:3,5). From that moment on, I was a new creation in Christ (2 Corinthian 5:17).

## Tina Davis

Part of my life has been like the “lukewarm” people of Laodicea in the book of Revelation Chapter 3. They had left Jesus outside knocking to get in—that was me, shutting Jesus out of my life. Another aspect of my life was like the lost sheep of Luke 15. You know, “The Parable of the Lost Sheep.”

I have attended church, off and on, all of my life. Sometimes more off than I would have liked. Even after my years of growing up in the church, I just didn't know Jesus. I kept going back and forth, I was very committed and involved when I went to church but then lost my way. Isaiah said, “We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. (53:6). That was me.

I kept moving around and avoiding Jesus, but He kept knocking on my heart’s door--knocking, knocking until I let Him in to stay. Before I would make up a guest room for Him, now He stays in the Master Suite. He tells us that He fills us with His light so that we can uphold Him in the darkness. In the darkest hours it is His light that shines the brightest... be assured that the preceding light has prepared you for the darkness. He would not let me go even though I resisted Him. We cannot do it alone. I cannot do it alone. We need Jesus in our lives, I need Jesus in my life. It is only through Him that all things come together. I am blessed to be the one of the ninety-nine sheep and that Jesus didn’t give up and found me (again).

## Al Dixon

My story is a lot like the prodigal son of the Bible (Luke 15:11-32). too, like the son in the parable, I came from a home of God-fearing parents. I would be considered a PK (pastor's kid). And much like the prodigal son, when I turned 18, I told my parents that I wanted to leave home and go out on my own. I thought it was my time to go out and see what the world had for me. I always felt that there

was something missing in my life, and at that time I thought being out in the world was where I would find my answers.

Just like the prodigal, I lived it up. I lived a self-centered, sinful life of drugs, lust, and partying. When you have money, you have lots of friends (Proverbs 19:4 NLT). So did the prodigal. The Bible tells how the prodigal blew all his money and then had to live with the pigs. That didn't happen to me, but after year upon year of this sinful lifestyle, I seemed to be going down deeper and deeper into darker roads. I knew my life was a mess and I could not save myself.

Of course, the prodigal, when he hit bottom, came to his senses and thought he could return home to his father and work as a slave—that would be better than eating with pigs. Just like him I remembered from sermons during my 18 years of church attendance as a child about God's love and that I could return to Him.

Now at that time, I was still unfulfilled in this lifestyle, I ran into one of my old friends who I used to party with. He told me that he had become a Christian and he began to explain the Good News of The Gospel of Jesus Christ. How Jesus paid the debt of sin I owed (2 Cor 5:21). I only needed to accept Him as my Savior and make Him Lord of my life. It was then that I realized I was not a Christian at all. I didn’t have a relationship with Jesus Christ.

Many American church goers truly believe that going to church and doing good deeds will automatically makes them Christians and guarantees them a place in heaven. Even in the Army, they told us that we were soldiers in God's army. We were the peacemakers that Jesus spoke about in Matthew 5:9, the Sermon on the Mount. And even those who didn't believe would go to heaven because they were doing God’s work! But in Titus 3:5 it says that it is not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy he saved us. In another place it say, “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-- not by works, so that no one can boast.” (Eph 2:8-9) After hearing from my friend, something stirred in me, and, just like the prodigal who set out to return home, I set to return to my Heavenly Father.