

DANIEL'S TESTIMONY



I grew up in a good Catholic home in Belmore in Sydney, with parents that taught me good morals, and a mother that devoted her time to me and my brothers. My father was hardly ever home, however, he always provided for us and was a good father.

I started my schooling years at a Lebanese Catholic school. By the time I was seven years of age, my father purchased a business in Newcastle, and the whole family moved there. The school I started to attend in Newcastle was very different to the one in Sydney. Primary school was O.K, but when I reached high school, a lot of my problems started.

As a result of being the only Lebanese boy in the school, I was subjected to a lot of bullying. This is when my attitude towards life changed drastically. I started fighting back with aggression. I became very violent and it didn't take long before the bullying stopped. I was feared by everyone in the school. This attitude and behaviour gained a lot of attention from the wrong crowd, which only fed my ego. It didn't stop there; I started getting into trouble with the teachers and the principal.

After my schooling years, dad expected me to work with him in the family business; however, I decided to get an apprenticeship as a mechanic at the local car dealership. I made this decision mostly

because I blamed my dad for taking us up to Newcastle, away from my cousins, and into a place where I didn't seem to fit in.

As I grew older, my anger issues worsened. If I didn't like the way someone was looking at me I would confront them in a violent way. Also, due to my love for fast cars I would frequently be in trouble with the police for street racing. My life consisted of: binge drinking, nightclubs, and getting into fights. I was really resenting the person I had become.

When I was about 20 years of age, I started to feel that Newcastle was too small for me, so I decided to move back to Sydney. In Sydney, I lived with my grandma in Redfern, and got a job in the motor industry. Due to the move, I had a lot of time to myself, and began to reflect on my life. I decided to clean up my act and start attending church again. There were many things I didn't understand in the Catholic Church, but due to how I was raised I never questioned them. About three or four months later, my mother and my youngest brother decided to make the move to Sydney, and six months later my dad and older brother joined us.

In 2001, I was a passenger in a very bad car accident. The paramedics, police, and doctors, told me that I shouldn't be alive. After two weeks in hospital I went back home and suffered very little long term injuries. About 5 years later, again, I almost lost my life in a Jet Ski accident. This made me think a lot about how I could still be alive, but I had no answers. I now know that God had a purpose for saving my life these 2 times.

Not long after I met my now wife Jackie. After I got married, the fighting and violence toned down, but I still frequently went to night clubs, and pubs, and getting drunk was a still part of my life. Jackie and I started to attend church together as I thought it was important to do so. We started attending different churches. Every church service we attended we would walk out saying to each other never again. There was always something that was said or done that didn't sit right with us.

At the start of this year, we were at Jackie's parents' house having dinner. I noticed something very different about Jackie's mum. She seemed to have this new found happiness and confidence. The whole night she was talking about Jesus, and although I was very happy for her, I starting to get a little annoyed.

A few weeks later, Jackie and I decided to try the church her mother was attending. We arrived a little late and sat right down the back in the very last row, I noticed a huge difference from what I was used to. I found the preaching to be honest, and I agreed with everything the preacher was saying.

After the service was over, we were about to leave, when a couple sitting in front of us, Dave Porceedu and his wife, turned around and introduced themselves to us. I found them to be very polite, and it didn't take long before more people were coming over to say

hello. Then a preacher at the church named Robert approached us. After talking to him for a while, he asked to come and visit us at home. I remember saying, "sure I'll take your number and get back to you", then out of nowhere my wife says, "Sure how's Wednesday?" I asked her later why she agreed so quickly, and she replied, if someone wants to come over its rude to say no. I agreed, and sure enough Robert came over.

He began to ask us a lot of difficult questions, like do you know where you would go if you died tonight, and how do you think you would get to heaven. I knew that I was a sinner because of all the things I have done in my life, and I was sure I wasn't going to heaven. I wanted to go to heaven but I didn't think I could get myself there, and even if I could I didn't feel like I deserved it.

Robert told us the biblical way of getting to heaven and that salvation didn't depend on my actions, but it had everything to do with what Jesus Christ did. The message seemed too simple, it made Jackie and I think about, and discuss, a lot of things.

After a couple of weeks, my wife Jackie accepted Jesus as her personal saviour. I was very happy for her; I really wanted to be saved as well, and in April this year, I accepted JESUS CHRIST as my personal saviour, and my life took a turn for the better. By the grace of God I am a different person now and am no longer a slave to my sin. This doesn't mean I'm perfect but God is working in me to overcome my sin. I have extremely different goals in life and my relationship with my wife has never been better. Just when I think

God has blessed me with so much, my wife's family starts getting saved one by one.

Thinking back now, it seems like God was preparing us for true faith and I now know that there is a hole in our heart that can only be filled by the Holy Spirit that Jesus gives us when we accept him as our personal saviour.

I used to ask myself, why would God want me when I am a sinner doing bad things, I used to think I had to fix myself before I came to God, but in God's word Matthew 11:26 says, come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

I know I don't deserve to go to heaven, but I thank God every day that he counted me as one of his children, and added me in the book of life.

I know I'm still going to sin, but I thank God I'm now sensitive of it, and I can grow and be a better person because of Jesus and not anything I've done.

I ask your help me to pray for my family that have not yet experienced the greater Love, our God has for us. John 15:13 says Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Jesus Christ is that friend that lay down his life so we can live.

Thank you for allowing me to share what Jesus has done in my life.