



## Jennifer's Testimony

My name is Jennifer Lord. I was greatly privileged to be born into a Christian family, with both my parents valuing God's word, missions and the church. From the earliest of age I was taken to church, Sunday school and taught about God. The other major influence in my life was my mother. Despite been the youngest of three kids and frequently having visitors, family and others in the house, my mother, every night as far back as I can remember, set time apart for devotions and prayer time, just mum and I. It was one such evening after devotions, at the age of four, I asked my mum how to become a Christian.

My mother explained the steps of salvation very simply, and I accepted. Whilst I was only four years old and had not committed any major crimes or was particularly a "bad" kid, I understood that I had sinned in disobeying my parents (generally on a daily basis) and telling the occasional lie. I understood this was sufficient to have broken God's rules, and for that I deserved punishment including separation from God. I understood that God wanted to forgive me, and make things right. I knew God had sent his son Jesus to die on a cross to take the punishment for me, (much I like I often took my sisters punishment when I managed to get blamed for things, except Jesus choose to take my punishment to make things right with God). If I admitted my sin to God and was truly sorry, I could ask Jesus to take the punishment and remove my sin, he would, because that how much Jesus loves us.

Growing up, my parents were the initiating influence in me attending church, youth group, Sunday school and other such activities as well as encouraging me in personal devotions and family prayer. While I did not mind been involved in these activities, and generally enjoyed them, my walk with God in many ways was more my parents leading then personal conviction.

As I grew into the middle of my teen years I started to become more independent, take more responsibility for myself, formed my own perspectives and priorities. I was happy to be involved in church activities, seeked out bible studies, was baptised,

involved in outreaches and even went on a short term missions trip. While all these things were good things in themselves, I had a key problem; Pride.

While I was saved, and living “the right life” (at least outwardly), through arrogance and pride, (of who I was and what I believed), I had little compassion for those who were lost, hurting and needing restoration. In many ways this condition and general attitude crippled my relationship with God. While I still *did* all the right things, my motivation was to remain a religious appearance rather than focusing on pleasing God. This was more a slow process of change of heart and mind, until I would look at people out shopping with the “I can’t believe that they dress, act or say those things, I would NEVER do that.”

God showed me many things over the coming years. The first and most important is that God wants a relationship with us not service or appearance. God is not pleased with sacrifice but with a broken spirit. Psalm 51:16 – 17 “For thou desirest not sacrifice; or else I would give it; thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise” . Whilst I always *knew* this fact, I managed to turn a relationship with God into religion, and sadly it took me a while to notice.

Secondly, God showed me that no-one is above falling into sin. Now been in my late teens, I had found independence from my parents who for many years had been a stabilising influence. Now I had my own car, job (and according money), was studying and formed my own friends, and rarely was at home. Whilst independence in essence is not wrong, and indeed an important aspect of growing up, for me it meant doing things Jen’s way, instead of God’s way. Whilst I frequently had looked down on people for immodest clothing, being involved in the drinking and clubbing scene and improper relationships, I was to fall into the same sin I had cast stones at other people for. Having a significantly weakened relationship with my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, I found the progression into sin, like the original degeneration of my attitudes and perspectives to be a slow slide that at first I barely noticed.

I figured I had everything covered, I could manage work, study, church and partying, not miss meetings or appointments. Just as I could still read the bible, go out partying, get just a few hours sleep before attending church. To me, everything was

under control, sure I felt guilty most of the time but with practice, I could block God conviction, and convince myself everything was OK.

The one thing I had not considered was Ephesians 4:30 “and grieve not the Holy Spirit whereby you are sealed unto the day of redemption”. Whilst my salvation was secured by Christ’s death on the cross and my true acceptance of this as a child, this also meant I was indwelt by the Holy Spirit. This fact took me a while to figure out the true relevance. Whilst I could ignore God directly speaking to me, I grieved the Holy Spirit. Whilst this was grieving God, it was grieving the spirit which indwelt me, and thus grieved me. Whilst I was out looking for fun and things to make me happier, I was in fact on a perpetuating misery trip.

Looking back I can see God was trying to get my attention in many ways. Finally one of my friends who I socialised and partied with was saved. Finding salvation and a love for Jesus, his life and perspectives changed. As a friend, he knew I was a Christian but also the life I lived. As a good friend he would challenge me about my life and life choices, not in a judgemental way as just weeks before he had been at the same place I had. God used my friend, often in a very irritating way, to illumine where I had journeyed to, and the extent of the coldness of my relationship with God. This realisation brought major change to my life.

Again before God I knelt, keenly aware of my sinful state, I think more aware than ever before, confessed my sin, and prayed for mercy. Knowing my sins were already paid for by Christ, and I was already saved from the consequence from sin, my recommitment of my life to Christ was a matter of reconciling the relationship with Christ that I had broken.

Still many lessons were to be learnt. I have learnt that partial obedience or limiting what one is will be obedient in, does not count. God wants complete obedience and readiness to be conformed to his will in all things. Whilst God is a loving God, and does not wish our harm, he desires that we trust him in all things even when it seems what is asked does not suite us. One such example is midwifery. As a nurse interested in working in rural communities, several friends including my pastors wife had suggested I become a midwife, even just as back up skill. This idea I readily and frequently rejected, as I could at that point, not think of a worse job. However when

God placed midwifery on my heart, I found job that is not just rewarding and enjoyable, but joy in knowing I am in the place I am designed to be.

I praise God for his longsuffering mercy shown toward me over the years, and the many people God has used to assist, encourage and direct me, even those I may not have originally welcomed. Whilst God has used many things to teach me life lessons and has grown me to have a closer walk with him, maintaining a consistent daily walk with Christ as a focus in my life could have evaded much grief. Through his grace, I aim to walk closer to my Lord and Saviour each day, growing in my knowledge and love for him.