

TESTIMONY AND CALL TO MINISTRY

It was a quiet summer evening as I felt the breeze blowing across the rooftops. High in the air, I stood on top of a 126-year-old steeple. A local Baptist Church had hired me to restore all the wood that could no longer hold paint. Because of the heat rising up from the black shingles of the Church roof, I worked mornings and evenings which were cooler. Driving spikes into the pillars that formed the octagon base of the steeple was my job this certain summer evening. While reaching into my pocket and pulling out my wallet I began to smile. Because I was raised under the influence of the Jehovah's Witnesses, I was thinking about how crazy this Church was for paying me so much money to restore their steeple, when in the end, they would only be destroyed by Jehovah God.

Now in the midst of those thoughts, something happened to me. Friends were passing by on the streets below with horns honking from time to time. This night seemed as though everyone was out and about. Placing my wallet back in my pocket I felt a little strange from the thoughts I had about this Church. The people there seemed so friendly. I began to feel bad about their destiny, but then again, who was I? What was I doing with my life? After all, it had been a good six months since I had attended the Jehovah's Witnesses Kingdom Hall. Just then a few more of my friends passed by below. I was thinking about all the friends that I had and then I thought about my age. "You know Jesus was around my age when he was crucified here on earth. He had a lot of friends, and His friends saw Him put to death." As I continued with my work, I kept thinking about how sad that must have been for those who were close to Jesus.

Suddenly, my ears began to hurt each time my hammer hit the head of a spike. The sound would echo across the air and repeat itself through the streets. I stopped for a moment holding the hammer in one hand and the spike in the other. As I looked at the thickness of the spike, I imagined what it would be like to have it driven through my wrist and then to hang on it with my body. I became very uneasy and fear was on my face. At the same time I was ashamed. I put away my tools, climbed down from the steeple and headed home.

For two weeks I couldn't get it out of my mind. I was embarrassed to tell anyone about it. Finally the night came that changed my life. I went out into the backyard and looked up through the darkness of the sky. "I give up! I know it's you! I don't know for sure what your name is... Jehovah! Jesus! Lord! Yahweh! God! I surrender! What ever you want me to do I will do it. What ever you are going to do to me, please do it. Amen!"

I returned to bed and told my wife what I had just finished doing. Her eyes began to fill with tears and she said, *"Two days ago I got on my knees and asked Jesus to come into my heart. I have been talking to our Christian neighbor and she led me to Christ. Look what He's done Rick, He's called us at the same time!"* Then we both cried. I told her that we should start attending that little Baptist Church and she agreed.

I remember attending our first Sunday morning service there. I followed through each Scripture that was quoted by the Pastor. For many years I was told that these kinds of Churches were of the devil. Even though I had not dismissed those thoughts, something compelled me to keep listening and learning. Each week I became more excited about what I would hear in the sermons. Always testing what the Pastor would

teach became the main event in our home. There were times when our entire Sunday afternoons and evenings, were spent seeing if what he said was true. We finally felt confident enough to tell someone that we both had asked Jesus to come into our hearts.

I made a comment one day to the assistant Pastor about the similarities between the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Baptist Church. It seemed to me that both religions emphasized the importance of Bible study. It was then that he handed me a booklet. It described differences between the King James Version of the Bible, and the Jehovah's Witnesses Version of the Bible called, "The New World Translation." I was convinced, then ashamed, hurt, mad, and finally humbled. I called all of my Jehovah's Witness friends and relatives. I tried telling them how we were misled by false teaching. It was then that I found myself being shunned. They told me they could no longer speak with me. So we started our new life. The old friends had gone, and the new friends were coming. We found a new home in our Church.

After learning how the Jehovah's Witnesses had changed certain Scriptures to match their doctrines I became a believer in the doctrine of the trinity. It was very simple. I found the scriptures that the Watchtower had changed when compared to the original Greek or the King James Version. Many of those changes occurred in the passages that support the truth that Jesus is God! I had been deceived for all those years by the teachings of the Jehovah's Witnesses. So I prayed and asked God to illuminate me in the Scriptures. I never wanted to be deceived again. I have never left my Bible reading. I pray that I never lose the desire to stay in God's word. My passion in life is to rescue people out of manipulative organizations that try to mimic Christianity and to remain dedicated in reaching the lost and teaching the found.

The Lord called me into the mission field in 1990 with a burden in my heart for reaching not only those deceived by cults, but all who are lost without Christ. Humbleheart Ministries was founded and we published our first newsletter April 1991 with a mailing list that soon grew to over 2000 readers. In February of 1992 I recorded my first album of original Christian songs.

*Location of conversion on steeple – First Baptist Church of North East, Pennsylvania
Under the preaching and teaching of the late Rev. John R. Elliott*
