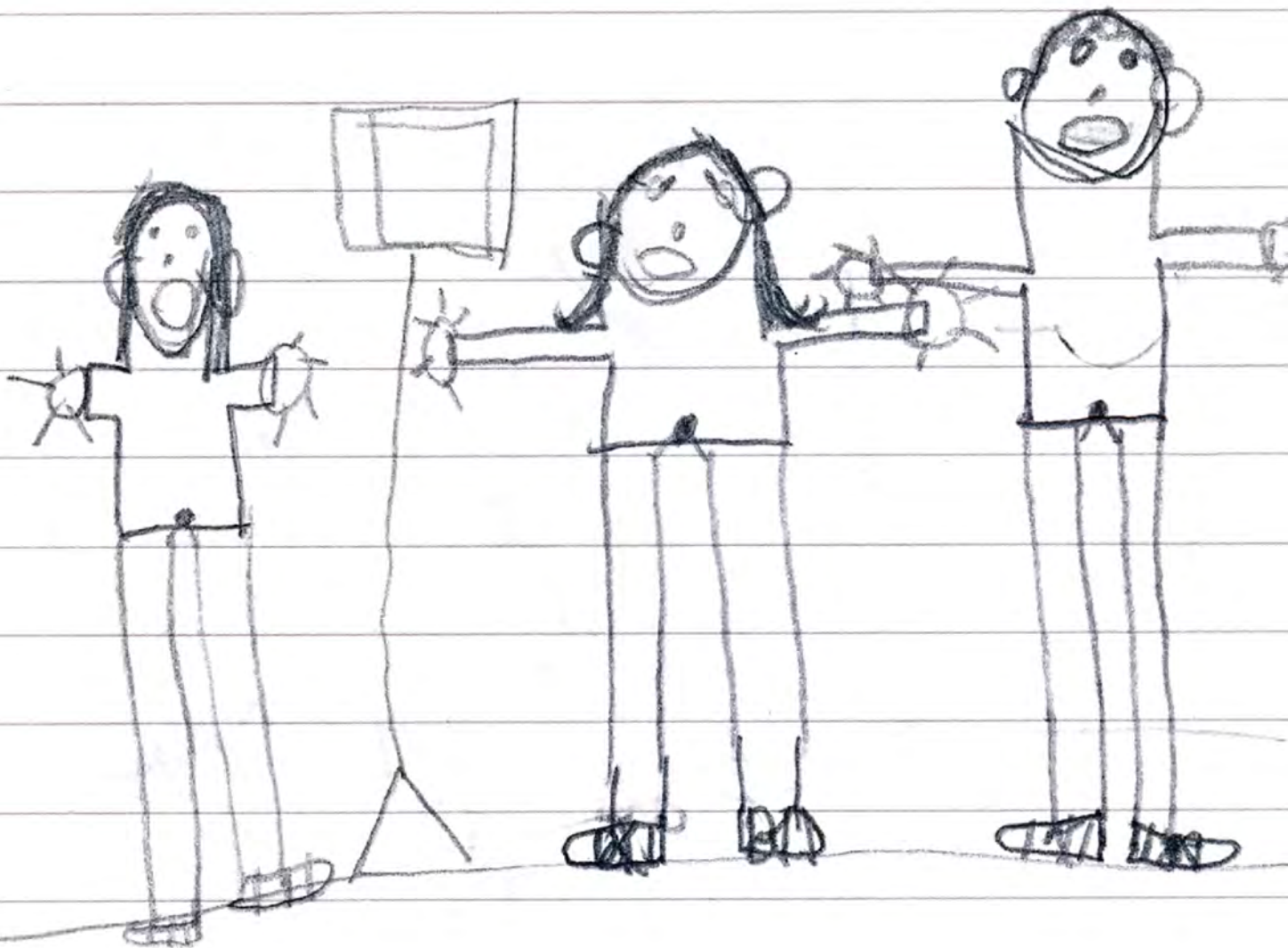


From Pastor John's house

Childhood Stories



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Childhood Stories: From Pastor John's house
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Table of Contents



My Miraculous Healing	1
<i>Rebekah Embry</i>	
Jesus Gave Me a New Family	3
<i>Ellen Savelli</i>	
Jesus Healed My Eye	5
<i>Aaron Nelson</i>	
“The Master”	7
<i>Jenny Holstein</i>	
Jesus Healed My Ear	9
<i>Timothy Weber</i>	
My Dream	9
<i>Hannah Mills</i>	
Invisible Hands	11
<i>John D. Clark, Sr.</i>	
Healed of Childhood Illness	13
<i>Sandy Sasser</i>	
Influence of the Spirit as a Young Girl	15
<i>Amy Boveia</i>	
Jesus Holding My Hand	17
<i>John D. Clark, Sr.</i>	
When Grandmother Martha Died	19
<i>Jessica Token Embry</i>	
“Lord, if You Are Real”	21
<i>Lyn Hammonds</i>	
Getting the Holy Ghost	23
<i>Naomi Embry</i>	
Jesus Gave Me Strength	23
<i>John David Clark, III</i>	
“Sing, Anna, Sing”	25
<i>Anna Drane</i>	
Sweet Childhood Memories with Jesus	27
<i>Lee Ann Burkhart</i>	
Childhood Memory	29
<i>Tim Sellers</i>	
I Remember as a Little Girl	31
<i>Kathy Tuck</i>	
Laying the Foundation	33
<i>Tom Traugher</i>	
Light Story	35
<i>Sheila Puckett</i>	

Conviction	37
<i>Gary Savelli</i>	
A Vision	39
<i>John D. Clark, Sr.</i>	
Jesus Loves Me.....	41
<i>Hope Mills</i>	
Playing with a Rake	41
<i>Daniel Mills</i>	
At the Ball Park.....	43
<i>John D. Clark, Jr.</i>	
Jesus Tickled My Feet.....	45
<i>Billy Mellick</i>	
I Remember.....	47
<i>Stuart Hiser</i>	
Uncle Joe and Me.....	49
<i>John D. Clark, Sr.</i>	
My Childhood with Jesus.....	51
<i>Barbara Myers Clark</i>	
Correction and Encouragement	53
<i>Jason Embry</i>	
My First Home Prayer Meeting.....	55
<i>Amanda French</i>	
Jesus Shapes a Young Life.....	57
<i>Cris Mills</i>	
A Childhood Testimony	59
<i>Natalie Embry</i>	
Praying for Forgiveness	61
<i>Betty Pittman</i>	
The Last Days of God’s Goodness	63
<i>Jenny Holstein</i>	
“There Is One Faith” (Eph. 4:4–6).....	65
<i>Suzi Traugher</i>	
A Good Memory.....	67
<i>Bess Sellers</i>	
Piano Story	69
<i>Sheila Puckett</i>	
Pure Love	71
<i>Danielle Crum</i>	
Little (Big) Prayer	73
<i>Betty Pittman</i>	
Two Angels.....	75
<i>John D. Clark, Sr.</i>	

My Path Takes a Turn.....	77
<i>Jimmy Tolle</i>	
Ten Dollars and a Ten-Year-Old.....	79
<i>Billy Mellick</i>	
The Mother, the Daughter.....	81
<i>Jenny Holstein</i>	
The Night I Received the Holy Ghost.....	83
<i>Cathy Bartow</i>	
A Lesson in Rome	85
<i>Amy French</i>	
A Childhood Vision.....	87
<i>Sarah Callaghan</i>	
The Scarf.....	87
<i>Sarah Callaghan</i>	
Fear of the Unknown . . . Gone!.....	89
<i>Jordan Ayscue</i>	
Reading the Bible.....	91
<i>Sheila Puckett</i>	
Love of Music.....	93
<i>Rob Nelson</i>	
Healing Knee Testimony.....	95
<i>Amy Boveia</i>	
The First Time	97
<i>Vince Boveia</i>	
When I Was Twelve Years Old	99
<i>Kathy Tuck</i>	
A Special Touch	101
<i>Sister Willie Walker</i>	
Singing to Jesus.....	103
<i>Donna Nelson</i>	
A New Language.....	105
<i>Jenny Holstein</i>	
God Put Music in My Heart.....	107
<i>Gary Savelli</i>	
The Hand of the Lord Was upon Me	109
<i>Tom Traughber</i>	
Growing up in Holiness	111
<i>Ashley Clark</i>	
Jesus Watched over Me	113
<i>Jonathan Sellers</i>	

My Desire To Play Guitar.....	115
<i>Darren Prater</i>	
Saving My Life.....	117
<i>Leah Weber</i>	
Christian Communion	119
<i>Sheila Puckett</i>	
He Rescued Me!	121
<i>Donna Nelson</i>	
My College Days Visits with My Grandmother	123
<i>Donna Nelson</i>	
How the Holy Ghost Led Me	125
<i>Earl Pittman</i>	

Jesus became very displeased with his disciples when they tried to prevent some little children from coming to him (Mk. 10:13–14). The stories that follow show that Jesus still loves children, and he still reaches out his hand to bless them. In these stories of Jesus' care for us in our childhood, we are reminded that his kingdom still belongs to those whose hearts are like little children.

John D. Clark, Sr.

My Miraculous Healing

Rebekah Embry, 1994



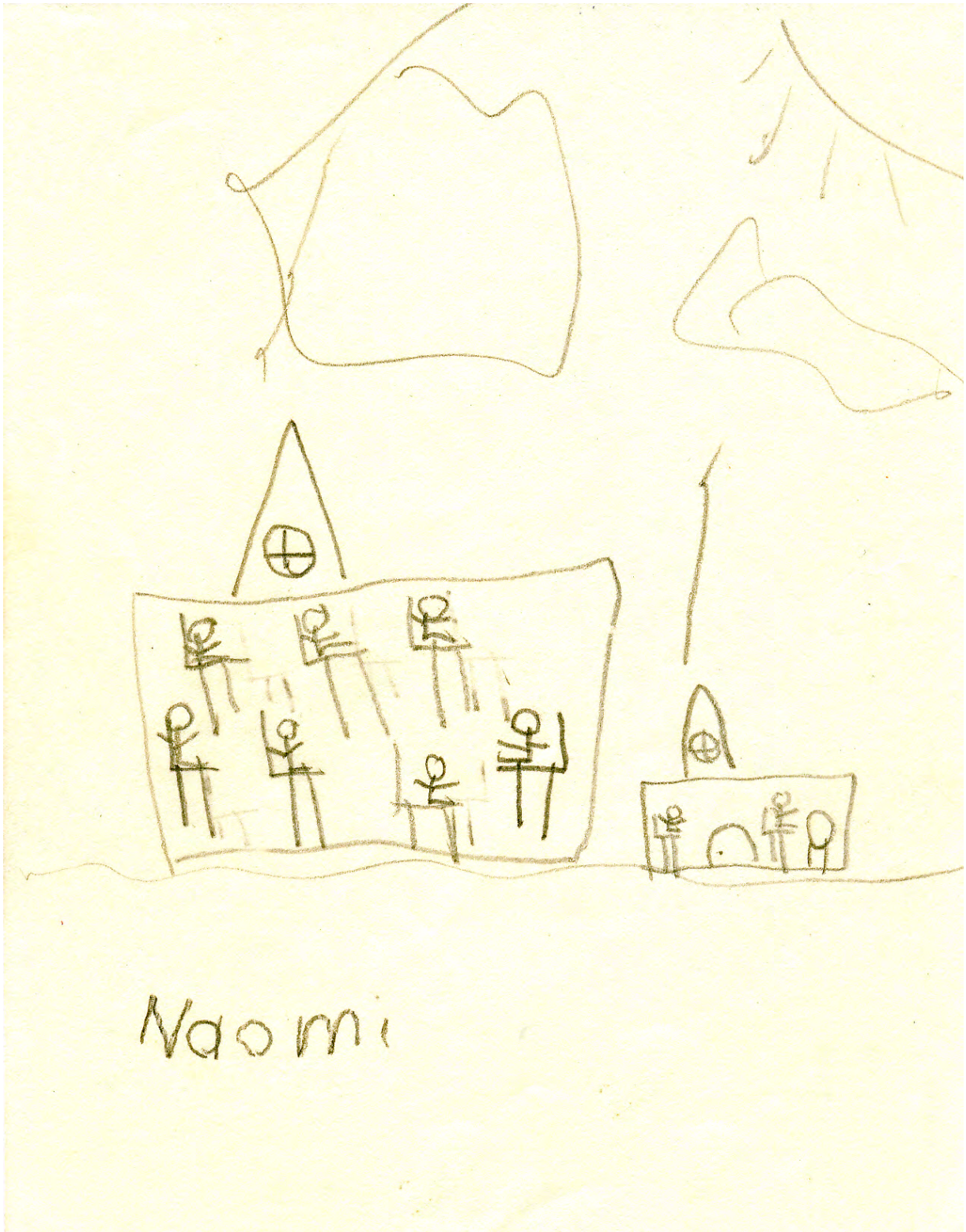
My name is Rebekah, and I want to share a piece of my life story with you. I was only two when the doctor gravely looked at my mom and pronounced the diagnosis from my recent leg muscle biopsy. They told my Mom, “Mrs. Embry, your daughter has Spinal Muscular Atrophy. Her muscles are gradually degenerating, and she will be confined to a wheelchair by the age of ten. Life expectancy in such cases is late twenties, maybe thirty.”

Tears were streaming down my mom’s face as she walked to her car, and too young to understand, I looked up and rubbed her face and said, “Don’t cry, Momma.” Broken-hearted, my parents went to their little home prayer meeting group and asked them to pray for me. Little did they know, but God was going to answer their prayers!

For the first few years, my muscles continued to degenerate despite the prescribed weekly therapy, and my parents needed insurance to cover the doctor’s bills. They scheduled an appointment with a leading children’s specialist in Lexington, KY, hoping he could help them get the insurance they needed. By this time, I was ten. We arrived at the hospital, and they completed several tests that day, but one test I’ll never forget. A group of physicians walked in. They placed needles in my back and wiggled them around to check nerve activity and then proceeded with this same process for both of my legs. They could not believe what they were seeing and scheduled an appointment with the chief physician for later that afternoon. He completed the test again to check their results, and he concluded that my nerves were actually regenerating!

It was truly amazing – Jesus had heard the prayers of our little home prayer meeting group from years before. Yes, even the doctors changed my medical records to show that I no longer had Spinal Muscular Atrophy! By the time I finished middle school, I didn’t need braces on my legs any longer to walk. Today, I’m a healthy thirty-three-year-old and very thankful to be alive. Friend, I hope you can feel how much Jesus truly cares about you, too. He can be touched with your deepest heart’s prayer.





Drawing by Naomi Embry

Jesus Gave Me a New Family

Ellen Savelli, 1991



As a five-year-old Korean little girl, a lot happened to me in a short amount of time. My biological parents had gotten a divorce. Most of my time I spent with my mother, and my father was someone who I recognized but didn't have any type of relationship with at all. While we were living apart from my father, my mother and I would often stay in hotels and eat on a tight budget. One day, my mother and I were at the airport in San Francisco where we were heading back to Korea, her home country, and I remember my mom was acting very strange. From what I recall, she kept going up to the ticket counter and asking a question. Whatever the question was, she kept asking so many times that the employee working there was worried and called security because she was acting so strangely. I don't remember everything, but I remember a police officer asked if I wanted a ride on the luggage cart and my mom and I went into a little room at the airport. After some time went by in the room, my mom was being rolled away on a stretcher and kept asking for me; I wasn't allowed to go with her and I was frightened. After she left, an officer stayed with me at the airport and he gave me his jacket to keep myself warm and I think I fell asleep. Later, I was told that my mother

was led away at the airport due to mental issues, and due to her situation, I was put into a foster home in California until a different living situation could be found for me. At the time, Korean was my first language, and I could not understand what was happening to me, but Jesus knew everything, and this is my story of how Jesus placed me with a new family.

The Savelli's were a family of three: Gary, Song, and their daughter, Cara. They tried to have more children after Cara but couldn't have more after her. Gary and Song decided to become foster parents to young infants in need of a place to stay until other arrangements become available for these children. One day, they received a call from social services, not about a baby needing care but about possibly seeing if they would be interested in meeting for possible adoption of a five-year-old Korean girl who just came into the system. They called the Savelli's because Song is Korean and thought their family would be a good fit for the child since someone would be able to communicate with this little girl. The Savelli's were interested in adoption but were looking for a baby. But after some discussion, the Savelli's decided to arrange a meeting to find out more about her. On the day of the meeting, Gary was the only one able to go to meet me at my foster house. As he drove alone (he later told me), he felt the Spirit tell him in the car that my name would be "Kim." Thinking it was just a passing thought, he ignored it but he said the feeling came back very strong again with the same words, "Her name is going to be Kim, and you're going to take her." With that, he held on to the feeling and went to meet her.

I do remember meeting with Gary at my foster house. He came in and spoke with Pat, the African American lady who took care of me and whom I will always remember as the lady who had long, painted red nails and a bright red phone to match. At the time of the meeting, I was outside digging for worms in the back yard and came inside to see him. Pat introduced me to him and told him my name was Ellen. Gary was disappointed because he was sure, from his experience in the car about Jesus telling him my name, that it would be Kim. After I went back out



Cara & Ellen Savelli

to play, Pat told him my history and my current situation, although he was still disappointed and couldn't concentrate well because he had really felt that Jesus was telling him that my name would be Kim. The social worker continued to tell him about me and then pulled out my birth certificate, and Gary saw my name on it, "Ellen Kim." My last name was Kim! The same name he heard Jesus tell him in the car! Gary went home and told Song what happened in the car when he met me, and about the paperwork that had my name on it, and a few months later, I officially started to live with the Savelli's. After about a year, my adoption was official, and my name became Ellen Kim Savelli.

During those few months when I lost my family, Jesus already had a plan to give me a brand new loving family and a new life. I'm thirty-one years old now, had a wonderful childhood, went to college, became a pharmacist, Jesus gave me a job right after college, and I get to live around those who love Jesus. I am very thankful for everything Jesus has done for me and always in amazement of my story of how I got here. He has always taken care of me, and I love Him for giving me such a wonderful life.



Ellen, Song, & Gary Savelli

Jesus Healed My Eye

Aaron Nelson, 1993



Rob & Aaron Nelson

This is the story of how Jesus healed my eye when I was only a toddler. I have heard the story many times over the years, and I thank God for my mom who cried out to Him in her distress. I hope I take full advantage of the sight that He has given me.

I was in my family's living room one afternoon in 1993. I was just a toddler, less than two years old. After my mom, Donna Nelson, had walked out of the room, I reached up, as toddlers do, and grabbed some new crayons (that my older brother had left out) from the edge of a table. When my mom came back into the room, I was face down, crying, with the crayons, clinched in my little hands, sharp end up. My mom held me and told me, "Aaron, open your eyes. Aaron, are you ok?" However, I didn't answer and kept crying. I also wouldn't open my eyes. She could see, however, that there was some clear liquid beside one of my eyes. So, she gently put me down and opened my eyelid. When she opened my eye, what she saw was the back of a damaged-looking eye.

Then, frantically, she started praying. She called our family practice in Burlington, NC. The nurse who picked up asked if there was any fluid currently coming out of my eye, to which my mom replied, "No, but there was some kind of fluid coming out the side at first." They told her to bring me in immediately.

She took me out to the car and put me in the car seat, where she could see me easily in the rearview mirror as she drove. As she was putting me in the car, I started softly wailing. The way she described it was that it sounded like a hurt puppy. This about broke her heart, as she had never heard a toddler cry like that. In her words, also, I was not a baby or toddler that cried much anyways, so she knew this was very serious.

At this point in time, my mom had not had any real experiences with Jesus or the power of God. But as she drove down the road, she was begging God from the bottom of her heart, "Please don't take my little boy's eye." She did not know what else to pray, but she knew to cry out to Him for help. She kept praying as she drove, all the time hearing me softly wailing in the seat behind her. Still, I would not open my eyes.

About five minutes away from the doctor's office, she heard me instantly stop crying, and then say, "Momma?" She looked in the rearview mirror and saw that my eyes were now open, and I was looking around and talking like a normal toddler. She looked at me, then turned her attention back to the road and kept driving towards the doctor's office.

Although it was a busy day at the office, they immediately took me back to examine my eye. The doctor that was available visually inspected my eye, but was unable to see anything wrong. Then, they put special dye in my eye to be able to see more clearly. She was asked to tell the whole story of what happened several times to several different doctors as doctors kept pulling in colleagues in the practice to examine my eye for themselves. Finally, the main doctor in the practice, Dr. Johnson, was brought in to look at my eye. She told the whole story for the last time. Dr. Johnson could not find anything wrong with my eye. Thank you, Jesus! My



Aaron & Rob Nelson

mom immediately said, knowing who to give credit to, “If there’s not anything wrong with his eye, it’s because Jesus healed him!”

Eight or nine years later, when my mother saw Dr. Johnson again, he immediately asked her about my eye and if I was doing alright. He remembered what had happened. She was able to tell him that I was doing fine and could see clearly, because of what Jesus had done.

“The Master”

Jenny Holstein, Late 1970's



When I was very small, we lived at a place called “Riamukka”: a rather isolated community of Australia. I recall from around that time when I was probably about two or three years old, I was playing in the front lounge room of our small house which was just a little way away from the sawmill where my father worked. I was alone playing dollies.

In time, I noticed a man had appeared in the lounge room, and he was sitting in one of the chairs. At first, I didn’t take much notice because he was a grown up, and I suppose I figured he was there for my mother. I carried on playing, and after a little, my mother came into the room, perhaps to check on me, and I noticed they did not talk to each other, and I also noticed he didn’t go and talk to my mother but stayed where he was. In time, I realized that he was there to see me, and in my heart, I knew that he was “the Master”. So, I went over to him, and because I knew he was special, I gave him my dolly. I asked him if he was the Master. He didn’t reply, so I went back to playing, and though he didn’t confirm it, I knew in my heart he was the Master.

I can’t recall much else that happened that day except that the Master asked me if I wanted to go and be with him in Paradise. I knew I did want to go, but I was troubled because I thought he meant for me to go then. It’s difficult to describe my thoughts back then, but I had the thoughts that, “I am only just a small child – I haven’t lived yet.” I was hesitant about going to Paradise just yet.

When the Master left to go, I knew he was going back to be with his Father. I can’t recall if he told me that, or if I just knew in my heart he was going back to his Father.

Perhaps it was that night when I told my siblings about the visit I had. I knew I had been blessed with that visit from the Master, and I couldn’t keep it in. I had to tell them because I knew it was special. I was boasting. So, I told my older sister and brother about it, but they didn’t believe me. I was very hurt when they didn’t believe me, and they began to tease me about having an imaginary friend. That made me angry because he was NOT imaginary! They kept teasing me even though I cried in protest, and they proceeded to go about all the chairs in our lounge room, sitting in each chair space saying, “Is he sitting here?” Then they would move onto the next one saying, “Is he sitting here?” and the next, “Is he sitting here?” and so on around the room. It made me so mad because he was NOT imaginary – he was real! And I thought they were mocking the Master in a way (though now, I suppose they weren’t), and I thought, “They cannot do that about him – he is special.” I was so angry! Then I think I pinched my brother with all my might, and I began to cry very loudly, and our mother came and sorted it out. I overheard my mother, when she went back in the kitchen, tell my father something about, “Jenny’s imaginary friend”. No one understood! He was NOT imaginary!!!

Amongst all the toys I shared with my siblings was a toy I found very difficult to play with. It was one of those Tupperware toys called a “Shape O Ball”. It is a sphere shape; one half is red, and the other half of the sphere is blue. It has all different shaped holes with corresponding yellow pegs that go in the holes. Well, that toy was so hard for me. To me, if you could do that toy, you knew everything! I thought to myself, “I bet the Master knows how to do that,” and, “I bet my sister can’t do it.” So, I gave it to my sister and was disappointed when she easily put all the pegs in all the holes. Still I thought, “Well, the Master can do it better.”

Perhaps it was a few days later when the Master came back. Seeing him there, I went over, and with great anticipation, I gave him the Tupperware toy to do it. I was very confused when I watched him struggling with it. He was trying very hard to put the pegs in the holes, but he could not do it. He would try and put one in, then stop and look at it, seemingly unable to figure it out. It seemed as if he was

showing me he couldn't do it. I didn't understand. He can do everything, so why couldn't he figure out the toy?! Once I saw he wasn't able to do the toy, I thought, "Well I don't know what's going on, but he can do it – better than everyone." I soon began to realize that he was showing me something for when I would be older. I often wonder about it, and I really think he was showing me how as a grown-up I would try very, very hard to make Christianity fit with what God put in my heart. I tried and tried to make Christianity work, but I could not make it fit in with what God had put in my heart. It was only when I learned the truth from Pastor John and his father, "Preacher Clark", that everything fit SO EASILY into place!

The next thing that happened is difficult to write about because I can still feel the inconsolability I felt that day. I guess you could say pride was there in my heart, and I knew I had been blessed with a visit from the Master. I can recall I had the idea to tell my mother the Master was here because I wanted her to know I had been blessed. He told me, "Don't tell her. If you tell her, I will be gone when you come back, and I won't ever come back." (I don't think he said this in words – I think he just spoke to my heart???) I didn't listen. Although I knew what he said was true, also at the same time, I didn't quite believe him. I went and told my mother, and by the time I got back, he was gone. He never came back.

I sat down with my dollies in the back room, and the reality of his words overwhelmed me like an ocean. I felt the most immense inconsolability wash over me. I was drowning in it. It was just complete finality – he was NOT coming back, and I knew it with everything that was in me. I began to cry the worst cry I'd ever cried. I began bawling with great lamentation. My mother rushed in to me, greatly alarmed, and tried to pick me up, but I pushed her away. I knew that my mother's hugs could not comfort me. I cried and cried. Gradually, I began to think, "Surely there will be an answer," and I began to be comforted by that hope – knowing that there will be an answer after all, when I am older. I gradually calmed down and decided I could talk to him in my heart. And so, I talked to him, though I cannot remember what I said. I felt so strongly if he ever did come back, I would tell him how sorry I was.

Later when I was perhaps six or seven, my mother began to tell me and my little brother about God the Father, and the Son, Jesus. I recall as she told us about Jesus that he sounded a lot like the Master. I was in a dilemma about which one I should believe in: the Master, or Jesus. I remember lying awake at night worrying and wondering about it. I gradually decided they were the same. Sometimes it's so easy when you're a child!



Jesus Healed My Ear

Timothy Weber, 2014



Our son, Timothy, has had issues off and on during his little four-year-old life with bad allergies and what could possibly be considered asthma tendencies. We have raised him so far to have faith that Jesus can heal, and sometimes I think he has more faith than we do. He loves to pray for people, and whenever he knows of someone sick or hurting, he will tell us that Jesus can help, and Jesus can heal. One day when he was three years old, he began to get very sick, and I knew there wasn't much I could do to help him. He woke up saying his ear hurt badly and cried and would lie on the couch for a while. Before I could get an appointment set up with the doctor to check for an ear infection, his grandma suggested that we try peroxide in his ear to clear out an infection. I would try anything.

I got off the phone and told Timothy that's what we were going to do, but before I could really get out what I was saying, he interrupted with, "Mommy, we don't have to do anything. Jesus healed my ear!" I asked him what he meant, and he continued to tell me, "I asked Jesus to heal my ear, and he did. It doesn't hurt at all!" He was so excited about it, and we went on to thank Jesus. It didn't bother him from that point on. To this day, he remembers and likes to tell his testimony of his healing. It is no small thing to a little boy with an earache!

My Dream

Hannah Mills, 2011



When I was three or four, I had a good dream. There was a big animal coming toward me in a forest. Then a net trapped it. The trees went away so I could get out. Jesus made me feel safe.



Drawing by Ben Hosler

Invisible Hands

John D. Clark, Sr., 1955



I was about four years old, playing outside, and I needed to use the restroom; so, I went inside. It was summer, and sitting on the toilet, I remember looking down at my dirty little bare feet dangling at the end of tiny legs too short to reach the floor. But it is what made me look down at my dirty little feet that amazes me today. As I sat there, I felt hands, gentle and unseen, begin to slowly rub my right foot. It was as real as any physical touch I have ever experienced. I felt the individual fingers of the invisible hands moving around my dirty little foot, and I stared down at it as the massaging continued. I remember realizing that I could not see the hand that was touching me, but I was not frightened; if anything, it was comforting. It did not last long, but that sweet scene is still fresh in my mind. I can still vividly picture my dirty little foot being rubbed, and I can still feel how I felt, looking down and watching my foot as it was being rubbed by invisible hands.

The feeling of being known and loved touches my heart today much more than it did then. Then, I was just a small child, constantly learning new things about the world into which I had been born. Now, however, I realize the grace that touched me that summer day, and I am humbled by it.



Healed of Childhood Illness

Sandy Sasser, 1951



Sandy & her aunt

When I was a young child, around four or five years of age, I had a hard, cyst-like growth on the lower lid of one of my eyes. My mother was a nurse in a surgeon's office and took me for an evaluation. He told her that he would have to cut it out and that it would scar me for life. My great-grandmother's faith in Jesus led her to ask my mother to allow her to take me to a healing tent meeting that was being held in our town before she decided on any surgery. I can see that big brown tent right now (you can imagine how big it looked to a four or five-year-old) with the fold-out wooden chairs and the raised platform where the preacher was. When I went down front to where he was, he bent down and asked, "Honey, do you believe in Jesus?" "Yes sir", I replied. Again, "Do you believe that He can heal your eye?" "Yes sir." He reached down and pinned an anointed cloth on my little dress, laid hands on me, and prayed, and told me to thank Jesus every night for healing my eye.

My great-grandmother took me home that night, and I remember praying (still wearing the anointed cloth) with my mother and thanking Jesus for healing. I believe it was the next morning that the cyst just rolled out of my eye. My mother and I found it in the bed!! Praise God! I do not to this day have a scar! My mother passed away recently, but before her health declined and she died, I had the opportunity to talk with her about this miraculous event in my life, and I asked her if she could remember the name of the preacher who held that healing tent meeting. She told me his name was Creech. My pastor, John Clark, said that his father, Preacher George Clark (deceased now), knew a preacher in his earlier days named Creech. Preacher Clark, as a young man, had been in some of Brother Creech's healing meetings!

A remarkable thing about this story is that I did not know of Preacher Clark or his son John Clark (my pastor now), until Jesus crossed our paths and brought me into a humble holiness meeting in 1989 where I received the holy Ghost at age forty-two – some thirty-seven years after my eye was healed! It was not until after I received the holy Ghost that Jesus brought back this wonderful memory of healing me as a young child to let me know that he had always had his hand on my life. It was good to finally be home with Jesus and the sweet memory of my childhood healing. Now, it is not just thankfulness to Jesus for a healed eye, but also for a healed heart and a new life . . . and blessings too numerous to count!



Influence of the Spirit as a Young Girl

Amy Boveia, 1975



When I was a little girl, I loved to feel the feelings of the Spirit. I grew up around holiness and going to home prayer meetings at “Grandma’s house”, where people danced and testified in the Spirit. My parents were both holiness people, and we watched people like Oral Roberts and Jimmy Swaggart, and I particularly remember on Sunday mornings before meeting time, we would watch Ernest Angley as he prayed for people to be healed. The hairs on my arms would stand up and I had goose bumps all over. It was such a sweet feeling. I remember being glued to the television as those sweet people were being healed, young and old. I loved seeing people healed by Jesus.

The earliest memory I have of a dream or visit from the Lord is when I was five years old or so. I had a dream that an angel came to me and handed me a box. Inside it was a golden dove. My dad told me that I was excited about it, and I told him all about the angel that came to me and handed me the dove.

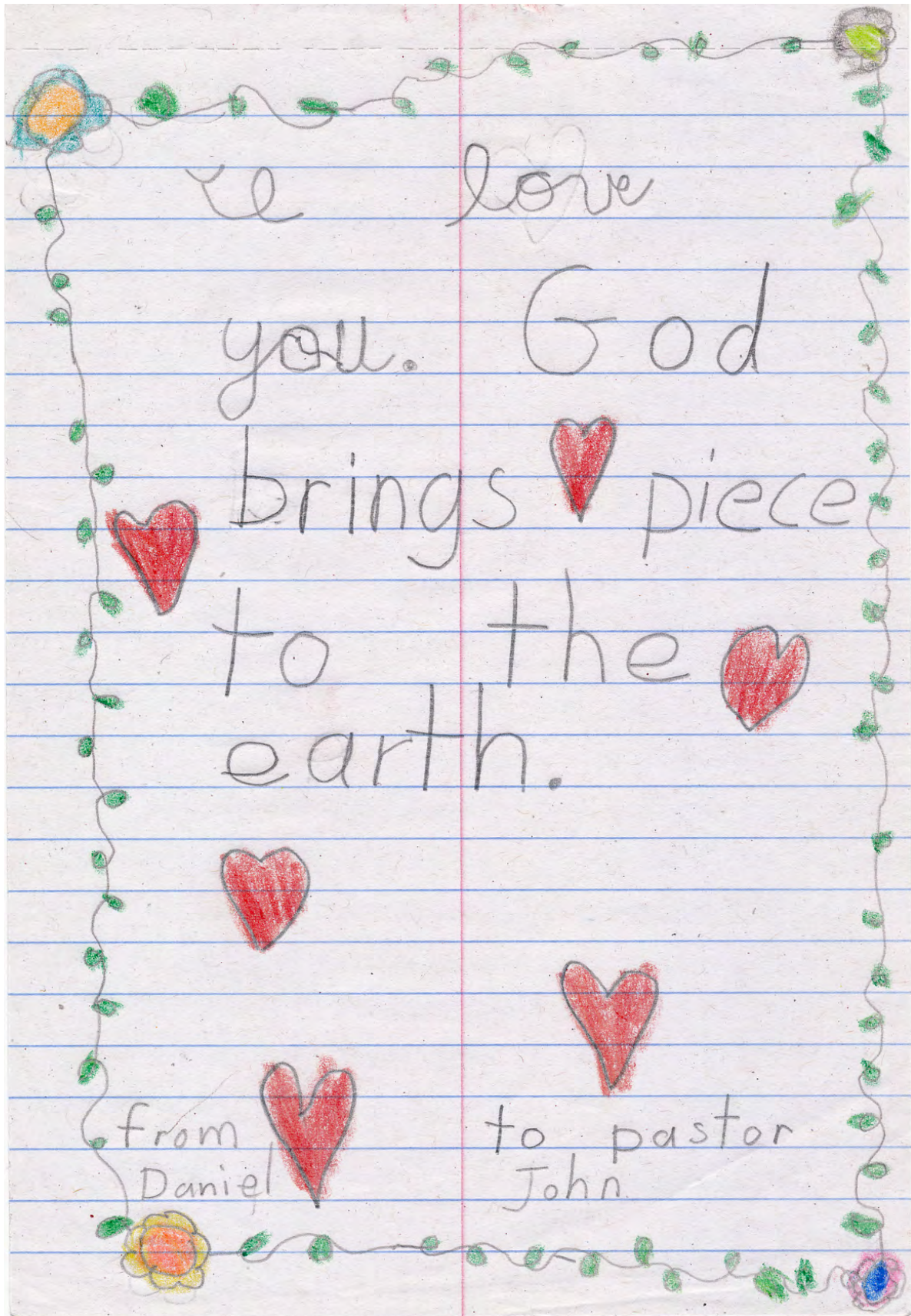
A few years later, I had a vivid dream of the Lord returning. I could see the stars falling from heaven and the moon turning to blood. It was so clear, just like in the Bible. At eight years old, that made an impression on me. I told the saints at Grandma’s house about the dream I had. It was their influence of holiness in my life that caused me to think about Jesus.

Later in my life, after straying away from holiness and living a life of sin, the Lord used a similar dream to convict my heart and turn me to him. Because of my dream as a young girl, when I would see a red moon at dusk, I would get scared and start praying that Jesus wouldn’t come that night because I knew I wasn’t ready to meet him. I don’t know why I didn’t just call out to him right then, instead of praying for him not to come, but I didn’t, and thankfully, he didn’t come! I *wasn’t* ready yet. Those earlier thoughts of Jesus helped me not to go too far in sin.

When I was in my early twenties, the Lord gave me another dream of him returning. In this dream, I could hear commotion outside, and people were running around and screaming. I just knew the Lord was coming back. I knew that was what was happening. My parents and I were in the living room of our home. When everything started happening, my parents got up and started walking out the door. They turned around to me and waved bye. I watched them in fear, and started screaming, “No! Don’t go! I’m not ready yet.” But it didn’t matter. They were ready to meet God, and they were going with Him. They turned around and walked out the door. There was nothing I could do then; it was too late. When I awoke, I was so scared. I knew I was not ready to meet the Lord, and I would be left behind. And that began my road of conviction. I later received the holy Ghost and now live a sweet life married to a man who also has the holy Ghost. I’m surrounded by a family who also loves Jesus, some of whom were at Grandma’s house years ago. I’m so thankful for those experiences and the people around me who influenced me to know the ways of the Lord.



Amy & Vince Boveia



Drawing by Daniel Mills

Jesus Holding My Hand

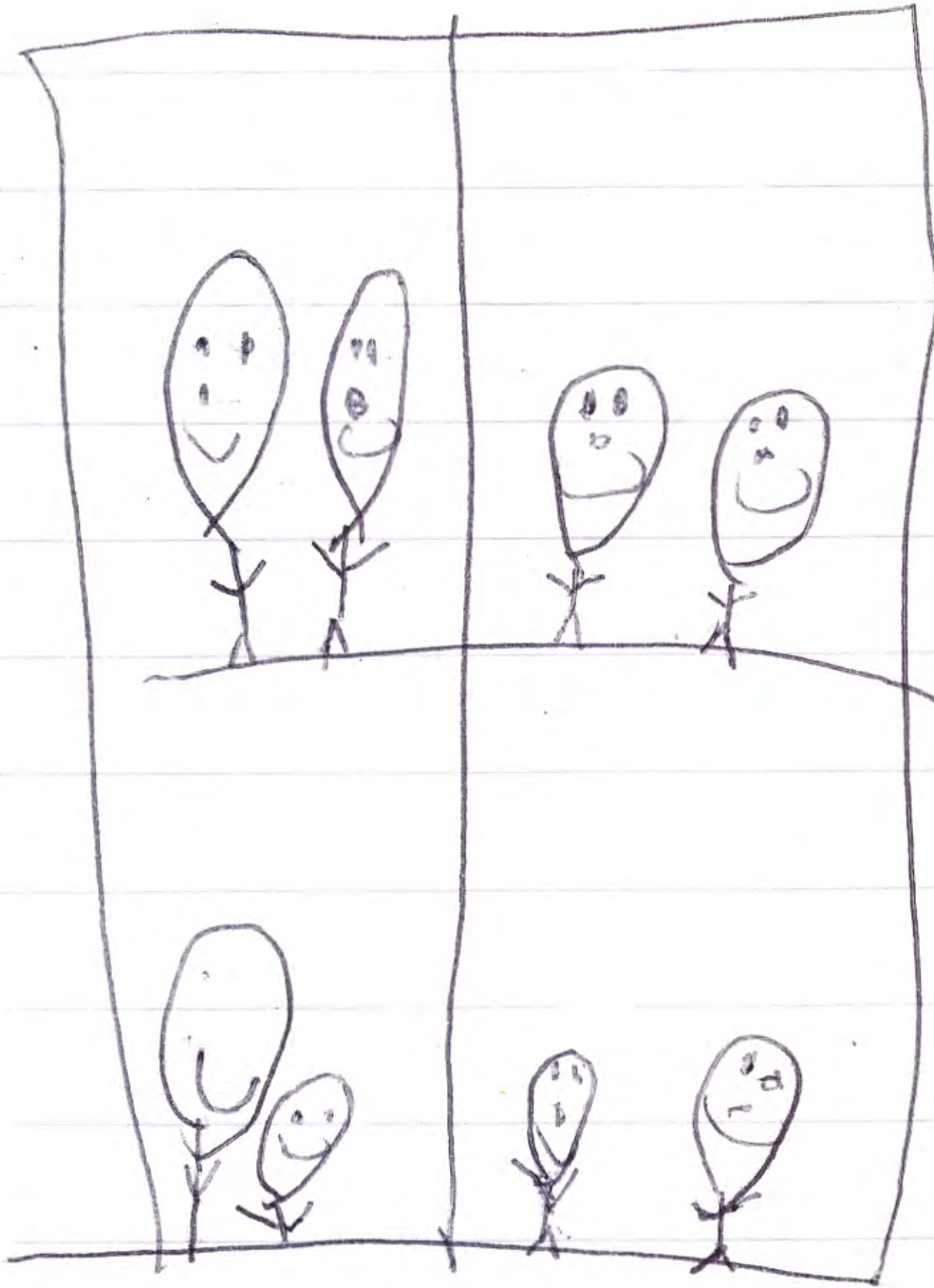
John D. Clark, Sr., 1957



I don't think I had started school yet when my parents and other family members traveled to Durham for a special meeting. The evangelist who was visiting that church had a gift of healing, but other than that, I don't remember anything about him. Near the end of the service, he asked everyone in the congregation to hold the hand of the person next to them. I happened to be sitting to the left of my Aunt Myrtle, near the end of the pew. No one was sitting to my left on my pew, but the pew behind me and the pew in front of me were full. As everyone began to join hands, Aunt Myrtle took my little hand in hers and I looked around to see if one of the adults, either in front of me or behind me would take my other hand, but neither of them did. This made me sad, and I began to have a thought like, "I'm not important enough for them to take my hand." At that very moment, the power of God hit my little body and literally shook me, and I heard Jesus say, "I'll hold your hand."



John & Barbara



Drawing by Naomi Embry

When Grandmother Martha Died

Jessica Token Embry, 1985



*Grandma Martha & Token.
(Token is imitating her)*

When I was a small girl, Grandmother Martha was one of my favorite people. She used to pick me up from kindergarten and take me to get a milkshake and french fries at McDonalds. I absolutely loved being with her. Words cannot describe how deep my affection for her ran because children love with their whole hearts, feeling many things they cannot express. She loved to be with me, and I felt that. I believe that she probably enjoyed playing whatever I wanted to play, or at least knew how to redirect me without ever telling me no. I don't ever remember getting in trouble with her or arguing with her. Looking back on it, I am sure that I was not easy to play with at times, but I never felt anything but love and sacrifice from her. She was on my side, and I knew it. She felt like the wind beneath my wings.

Oddly, I began to have a series of bad dreams about her when I began 1st grade. I remember them distinctly. In these dreams, she would always be leaving the house. I was so sad in these dreams because I wanted her to come back. In the dream, she was walking out the door of a house I was living in, but I didn't want her to leave

so badly that my heart ached. I knew in my heart she was not ever coming back. As the dreams continued, there was an angel in the dream who stood by the door and told me she would not be coming back. He wouldn't let me run out of the house after her, either.

One day, several weeks before she died, I asked her if I could spend the night with her. At six years old, I did not know she had cancer. I remember feeling so hungry to be with her. But when I asked, she told me, "Not tonight, honey," and I knew in my heart I would never get to spend the night with her again. She had never told me "no" before with such a tiredness and a sadness in her voice. I got really quiet after she said that. I did not beg and plead with her because I knew something was very wrong then.

Looking back, I know that the Lord was preparing me for her to die by giving me those dreams of her leaving. She did die of cancer in the spring of my 1st-grade year, and it almost broke my heart. I remember crying in my bed at night a lot with a hurt so deep that I could not stop it. Though I was young, I knew someone who loved me was gone out of my life forever. I felt heaviness in my heart for a long time afterwards. To this day, I still miss her, though I only had her in my life until I was six years old. I think when children grieve, that they usually grieve alone because they do not have the words to express themselves.

However, I began to realize after Grandmother Martha died that Jesus loved me and was trying to help prepare me before she died to let her go. I am thankful for those dreams because they made me feel a ray of love in a dark time.

Later in my childhood, the Spirit spoke to me and said, "I'll never leave you without a grandmother." Sister Patsy fulfilled that role for me for many years, until my other Grandmama Myers got the holy Ghost. Now I have many grandmothers, and I am thankful for them all. The love of a grandmother is a very precious gift to me.



Token, baby Isaac, Jason, & Naomi

“Lord, if You Are Real”

Lyn Hammonds, 1976-1978



When I was a child, I am guessing between age five and seven, I had a wonderful experience with the Lord. It happened during a visit with my Daddy’s mother, Grandma Brown. Grandma had the holy Ghost baptism with the evidence of speaking in tongues, and she was not ashamed of it. She freely spoke in tongues around me and encouraged me to live right and serve God. I am so thankful for her in my life, and most of all for her freedom in the Spirit. What that did for me on this day had a life-long effect.

My experience started with a conversation between Grandma and me that wasn’t so pleasant and left me a little irritated. The way I remember it, my Grandma was convinced that my Daddy had done something wrong, and she thought I knew about it. She started urging me to tell her. But Grandma was wrong in this matter – at least about me. I didn’t know anything, and I told her so. But she didn’t believe that I was telling her the truth. She repeatedly kept telling me to tell her, at first insisting, and then trying to persuade me that it was okay for her to know. She just didn’t believe me. I’m not sure what finally made her stop this, but I want to say it was Granddaddy and that he told us to go into the living room. But before Grandma stopped, she said something very close to this: “You might as well tell me. I’m going to find out anyway, even if you don’t tell me. I will pray and ask the Lord, and He will tell me. The Lord talks to Grand-Momma. Did you know that?”

I remember walking into the living room. I must have thought Grandma might start this again because while I was walking, I silently prayed, “*Lord, if you are real, make her shut up!*” Although silent, in my heart, I was praying with all my might. I meant it, and if the Lord was real, I wanted my prayer to get through to Him!

Not long after that, Grandma came into the living room and lay down on the couch. I watched her as she began to speak in tongues while she lay there, and she continued speaking in tongues for a while. Then, she suddenly stopped and turned her head and looked at me. She asked, “Am I bothering you?” “No,” I told her. Then, Grandma said, “*The Lord just told me to leave you alone, and that’s what I’m going to do.*”

Praise God! He answered my prayer and proved to me that He is real! It wasn’t possible that Grandma just made up those words to tell me, in an effort to make me think God had answered my prayer. She didn’t know I had prayed! Even if she had guessed that, Grandma could not have guessed what I prayed for, nor could she have guessed the perfect words to say to me at that time, which were the perfect answer to my prayer. No, God really spoke those words to her, and I knew it. And I saw that He spoke to her *while* she was speaking in tongues! That showed me that speaking in tongues was real, that there was something to it, and it went with this God whom I had just learned was real.

That was so valuable to me. Later on, in my late teens, I had another experience while reading the Bible. I was reading Romans 8:9, and I felt as if someone had shouted these words to me, personally, when I read them: “*Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.*” I was alarmed with the feeling of this, and instantly, I knew that I did not have the Spirit and, therefore, that I did not belong to Christ. This was a new understanding for me, and it prompted me to begin making things right in my life so that I could become his. So many people are taught that you can have the holy Spirit baptism without the evidence of speaking in tongues. But I never struggled with that. When I read those words, I never even had a thought to ask what was the Spirit of Christ or if speaking in tongues was part of that. I just automatically knew that I didn’t have it, and that I needed to get to work to clean up my life if I hoped to become his. I believe that my childhood experience with Grandma played a part in what I understood

that day. I am so thankful for my experience! And, I am thankful that I went on to receive the baptism of the holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues. Now, I belong to him!



James & Lyn Hammonds

Getting the Holy Ghost

Naomi Embry, 2010



When I was five, I got the holy Ghost. Now I am twelve years old. I remember it felt really good. I remember when I stood up, it felt like I was going up really high. When I fell down, it felt fun. It was like I was swinging, going up and down with Jesus. I laughed a lot because it was so fun.

I went over to the kids because I wanted them to feel it, too. I remember being beside my friend, Hope, because it felt really good, but that is the only one I specifically remember. With Hope, I felt like she really wanted to do it, too.

I also remember wanting to get over to Daddy. I was having too much fun to get over to him, but I wanted to. Finally, at the end, I made it over to him. I was very glad that I received the holy Ghost because I had been wanting it for a while.



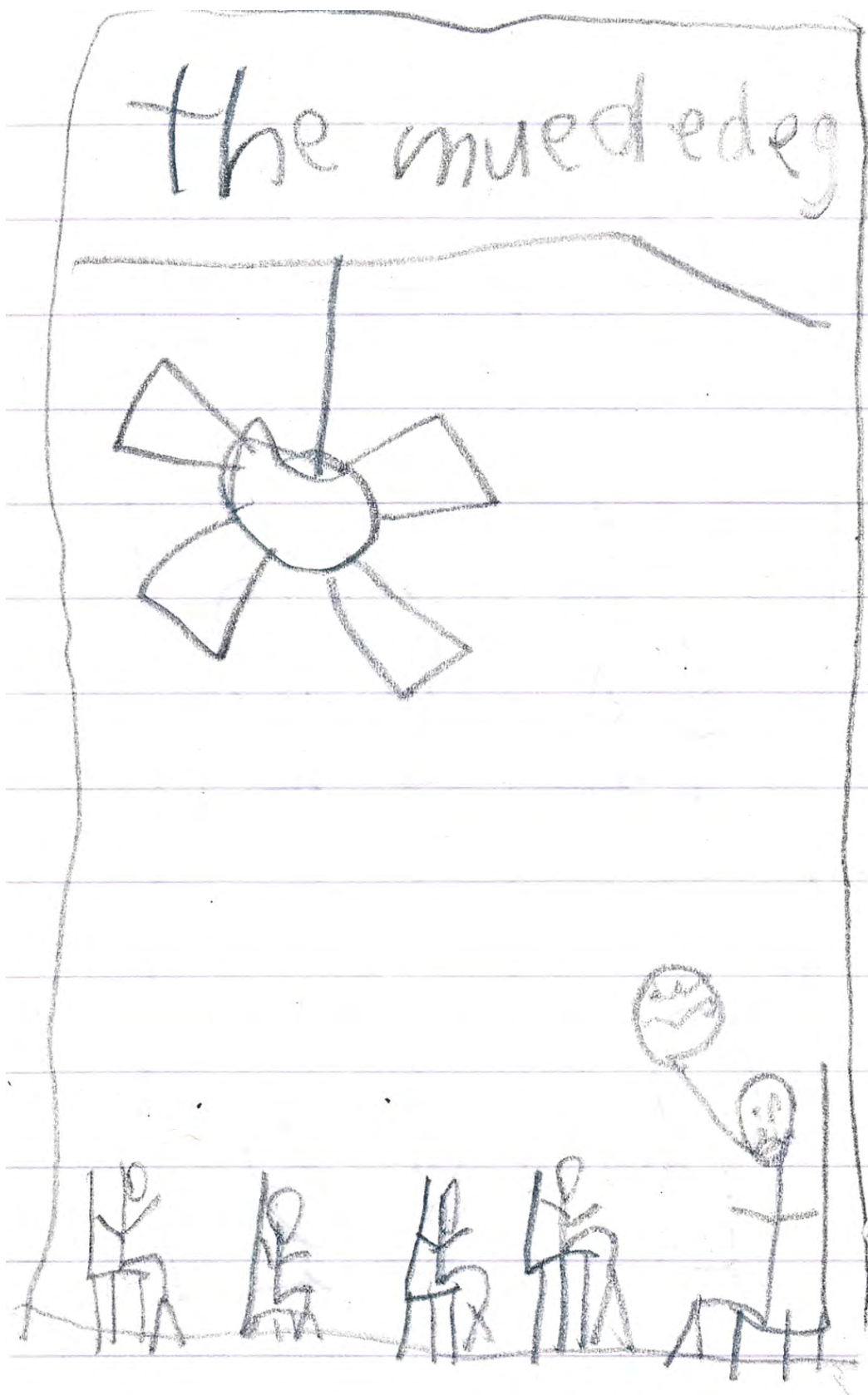
Naomi hugging Hope

Jesus Gave Me Strength

John David Clark, III, 2017



My Gator got stuck in the snow. I tried to push it out, but it was really hard and I couldn't do it. I kept on pushing, and I kept on pushing. And then all of a sudden, I started feeling something. And I started getting stronger and stronger, and I started pushing my Gator, and it came out of the snow. I'm very thankful I got it out of the snow or I would have had to go get my dad. I'm very thankful I didn't have to do that.



Drawing by Naomi Embry

“Sing, Anna, Sing”

Anna Drane, 1994



In the spring of 1994, on my sixth birthday, I sat in the orange-colored pews in the little building where we used to have prayer meetings. Instead of playing with toys on the floor with my friends while the adults prayed, which I typically did at that age, I was captivated as I watched a twenty-something-year-old man that I knew, Paul Curtsinger, seek earnestly for the holy Ghost. I was always fond of Paul; he was tall and strong, and I used to hang on his arms as if they were monkey bars. My sister and some of the other kids thought something was wrong with me because I was crying as I watched Paul. There was nothing wrong with me. It was more than just a fondness for a big brother figure that brought me to tears that day; it was Jesus touching me at that very young age. That same year in November, I, too, received the holy Ghost.

The night I received the holy Ghost, we were having a Thanksgiving get-together with the folks from Kentucky and North Carolina. They started playing music and praying. What I remember most clearly was being on the outskirts of a big crowd of young people in the middle of the room as they all sought the holy Ghost. My best friend’s mom gathered me and my friend together and knelt with us on the floor. She started speaking in tongues and praying for us. I don’t remember any resistance within me at all. Soon, I saw my friend start to speak in tongues. That provoked me to want it, too! Her mom, as she prayed with me, kept urging, “Sing, Anna, sing!” I don’t recall the exact moment I received the Spirit, but I do remember hopping up from the floor and heading over to Aunt Leatha’s open arms and big smile as I exclaimed to her, “I shouted!” I was one among thirteen kids and one adult that received the Spirit that night.

As my family drove home that night, I can recall very clearly “trying out” my new holy Ghost that was giving me these sweet new feelings. I quietly, almost silently, spoke in tongues the entire way home as the yellow street lights shown through the dark car.

A few years later when I was eleven years old, I was sitting on the couch at Aunt Betty and Uncle Earl’s house as she and her daughter, Amy, sang a song that she had recently rewritten from an old country song, which they renamed, “Jesus’ Hands.” The song was about Jesus and His hands as a father leading us, loving us, and correcting us. Something about the song really touched me. As they sang, I felt that I needed to get away from everyone and be alone. I went into a bedroom with the printed words of the song. I sat on the bed and sang the song quietly over and over again. Looking back on that, I remember it as a sweet and quiet experience between Jesus and an eleven-year-old me. This would not be the last time that Jesus used songs to touch me in this way, as he continues to do so today.



Michael & Anna Drane

Sweet Childhood Memories with Jesus

Lee Ann Burkhart, 1966



Many years ago, while sitting next to my best friend, Julie, in our first-grade classroom, I showed her a wart that had been growing on the palm of my hand. She told me that one time she had a wart, but she prayed to Jesus, and he took it away! Little Julie was not making a joke, or trying to impress me. Rather, she spoke as if this was nothing out of the ordinary for Jesus to answer her prayers. In her sincere six-year-old heart, there was no doubt that Jesus had done that for her, and I believed her.

Sitting there at my school desk, I silently prayed to Jesus to take away the wart on my hand. A few days later, I happened to look down at my hand and saw the wart was gone! There was only a small circle where it had been! I remember looking at my smooth palm and thinking, "Wow! Look what Jesus did!"

That sweet experience made such an impression on me. I learned that Jesus cared about me and that he would answer my prayer. Even though I had no idea then just how good Jesus really is, I see now that he put something in my heart that believed my best friend when she told me Jesus answered her prayer, and I believed he could do that for me, too. Yes, Jesus did that for me, and he will do the same for any sincere heart that believes him, no matter how young they may be.

A couple years after that experience, my family and I moved to Lexington, North Carolina, and we began attending services at the First Lutheran Church, where many of my relatives had attended since the church was built in the early 1900s. I remember seeing an old newspaper photo of my great-grandfather holding one of the shovels at that ground-breaking ceremony.

Mama sang in the choir there, so my brothers and sisters and I would sit with my daddy and my grandpa down in the pews. My strongest memory from those Sunday services was how very long they lasted! There was a lot of standing and sitting, and chanting and repeating long prayers. One of the regular rituals I always dreaded was when we had to "pass the peace". This strange ceremony required everyone to turn to their neighbor and say to one another while shaking hands, "peace be with you." That was such an awkward thing to say to someone, and I never understood the point.

However, mixed in with all of those rituals and ceremonies, there was one little bright spot during those services when we sang this sweet song that really touched me. The words were actually part of the 51st Psalm:

*Create in me a clean heart, oh God; and renew a right spirit within me.
Cast me not away from your presence; and take not your holy spirit from me.
Restore unto me the joy of your salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit.*

I remember standing there between my grandpa and my daddy, with eyes closed, singing that prayer to Jesus through my tears. I didn't understand all of the words, but I did know that I wanted to have a clean heart, and I did not ever want to be cast away from Jesus' presence. I sang that little song with my whole eight-year-old heart.

And Jesus did answer that prayer years later when he baptized me with the holy Ghost, creating the clean heart in me that I had prayed for as a little girl!

Around the same time that we moved to Lexington, I remember lying in my twin bed at night and talking to Jesus before I fell asleep. Some nights as I was talking to him, the sweetness I felt would be so strong that I would have to slip out of my bed and kneel down to finish praying. Many times, I would be overcome with tears.

Thinking back on those precious times, I imagine what Jesus might have been feeling as he watched this young girl kneeling beside her bed, loving him. One thing I know for sure is that Jesus was right there

with me, hearing every word and seeing every tear. How sweet it is to think about Jesus taking such complete care of us from the minute we were born!

If you are a young person reading this, I want you to know that Jesus cares about your young heart, and he is listening when you talk to him. Don't ever think that you are too young for Jesus to care about how you are feeling! You can talk to him anytime or anywhere. He is always listening. He loves you.



Lee Ann & son Ben

Childhood Memory

Tim Sellers, 1965



One of my special memories from childhood that I think of often, especially during the fall when the sun is shining on a clear, brisk day, happened when I must have been around six years old. I liked playing outdoors, and some days I would play until the sun went down. It was one of my favorite things to do. This particular Saturday morning, as I was playing with my G.I. Joe in the front yard, I remember lying on my back, looking up at the most beautiful sky ever, and thinking, “Jesus, this is the happiest day of my life!” I could hardly contain myself. As I closed my eyes, I could feel a gentle breeze passing over my face. At that moment, I took a deep breath, thinking that if I did that, I would never forget the fresh clean smell in the air. As I opened my eyes, staying very still and taking in the blue sky, I knew that God had made this day just for me. He was giving me those sweet feelings of happiness.

That day is still etched in my memory – the blue sky, the breeze, the smell, the deep feelings of thankfulness. What a good God we have.



I Remember as a Little Girl

Kathy Tuck, 1952



I remember as a little girl, my mom told me that I was born a month before her due date. I was a very sick baby. She brought me home from the hospital, and she was so scared that I was going to die. I was so sick I could not eat, and my mom tried nursing me and bottle-feeding, but I was too sick and too weak to eat. She had to feed me with a medicine dropper to get milk in me. She took me back to the doctor, and the doctor looked at my mom and said, “Why did you bring her here to me? She is almost dead.” So, mom picked me up and took me back home.

Well, my mom’s mother had the holy Ghost. She is my sweet grandmother that we all call “Big Mama”. I can remember this time in my childhood. My mother did not have the money to take any of her children to the doctor, so my “Big Mama” would come and lay hands on us and pray Jesus would touch us. So, my mom asked my “Big Mama” to come and pray for me. She came and prayed for me, and called the other saints to pray, too. Jesus touched me that day, and so, here I am now at sixty-five years old. I am so thankful Jesus let me live.





Drawing by Jacob Curtsinger

Laying the Foundation

Tom Traughber, 1958-1961



Because I have come to know that Jesus has been, and continues to be, in charge of every aspect of my life, I want to recognize and thank him for my childhood and how I was raised. My parents were created for me, just as their parents were created for them and so forth. The neighborhood I grew up in, the school I attended, the kids I played with were all hand-picked for my good (and for His glory). The morals and values that I was taught as a child would later serve as a foundation for living a life of holiness.

I must have been about six or seven years old when my parents took me along with my brothers and sisters to visit our cousins who were about the same ages as us. I remember finding a jar of pennies in a closet somewhere in the house. When no one was looking, I decided to fill my pockets with pennies. On the way home, I was riding in the back seat of our car, weighed down with copper in my pants pockets. Anxious to share my treasure, I began taking pennies out of my pocket while naïvely crying out, “Hey! Look what I found under the seat!” I don’t recall an immediate response from my parents, but after three or four times, their suspicion took over, and my gig was up.

After I admitted to taking the pennies, my dad drove the rest of the family home. My punishment involved returning the pennies to my cousins’ house and confessing what I had done. The drive back to my cousins’ house seemed like an eternity. Once we arrived, I remember standing at their door, most likely with my head hung low, confessing to my uncle, aunt, and cousins what I had done.

This event must have had an impact on my conscience. I would never make a good thief after that episode, or should I say, valuable lesson.

Case in point, later when I was about twelve years old, my buddies and I decided to try our hand at shoplifting at the neighborhood hardware store. After meandering around the store for a while, I found myself standing in front of a glass showcase filled with pocketknives. What stood out to me most among the shiny blades was a pointy frog gig.

I slowly lifted the glass cover and picked up the frog gig, pretending to examine it as if I was trying to decide whether to buy it. When I was sure that no one was watching me, I slipped it into my pant pocket and eased out the door where my buddies were waiting.

We had only gone a few blocks when my conscience began to bother me. I decided to return the frog gig to the hardware store, which could be a greater challenge than stealing it in the first place.

Once inside the store, I sheepishly made my way back to the knife case. Again, I slowly lifted the glass cover to return the item I had stolen. Reaching into my pocket, I grasped the frog gig and began to pull it out. To my dismay, it was stuck and would not come out! The barbs, perfectly engineered to penetrate its target without slipping off, were stuck in the fabric of my pants. After struggling for several minutes, I was finally able to free the frog gig from my pocket and return it to its rightful place.

It had to be Jesus that kept me from getting caught. Perhaps he knew that I had finally learned my lesson and would not engage in thievery again. Although there were other foolish things I did as a young man, I cannot recall taking anything ever again that did not belong to me.

My dad was a very quiet man who worked hard to support his nine children. Although he did not express himself emotionally too often, I knew he loved us by the way he treated us. He was very patient and soft-spoken. I never saw him fly off the handle, so to speak, by losing his temper.

My mother taught us to respect others and to be content with what we had. I heard her say once that she had two dresses, one she wore every day around the house and one she wore on Sundays to church.

I guess by today's standards we would be considered poor, but we did not know it. My parents made sure we had the basic necessities of life even if they went without. I can't recall one time either of my parents complaining about what they did not have.

A man came to our door once begging for something to eat. My mother would not let him in the house, but she fixed him a plate of food and said that he could sit on our porch and eat it. My mother could not bear watching someone in need. We learned to care for others and share what we had by her example.

She told me recently that when I was a young boy, I saw a man outside sifting through our garbage can. It happened to be on Thanksgiving. Feeling sorry for the old man, I asked my mother if I could take him one of our pumpkin pies since we had more than enough. She agreed. I must admit that I do not remember this event. Nevertheless, any feeling of pity that I may have had for the old man came partly from my mother's influence.

If I put my mind to it, I know I could think of many good examples of how my parents helped form the foundation of good morals and values that Jesus could build on later in my life.

I would be remiss if I did not mention the school I attended at a young age. From the 1st grade through the 8th grade, I attended a Catholic school. There, I learned to respect whoever was in charge. The nuns that ran the school demanded it. I shudder to think what would happen to anyone that "back-talked" their teacher. It's not like today's classrooms where the teachers cannot discipline a disruptive student out of fear of being sued or arrested for abuse.

The nuns would not hesitate to grab the back of one's collar and drag him or her out into the hallway. They were experts in helping one adjust his attitude. Apparently, they were not versed in modern child psychology and had no concern about damaging our delicate little psyches. On the contrary, they gave us exactly what we deserved.

The first time I can remember feeling "the fear of the Lord" was when I was in the 3rd grade. It happened one day during religion class. A nun was reading these scriptures from the book of Joel:

"And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the Lord!"

I guess one could argue that the fear I was feeling when I heard those words was just a normal reaction of a ten-year-old boy. Well, maybe, but years later, I found a book tucked away in a drawer at my jobsite. It was about the "end times" and no doubt quoted those same scriptures from the book of Joel. As I read through the prophecies of things to come, I experienced the same fear that I had felt many years earlier in that little 3rd grade classroom. Jesus was speaking to me then, and then years later as I read through that book.

What a blessing to know that Jesus designed the path that I would take throughout my life. He has been with me every step of the way. I praise him with all my heart!



Light Story

Sheila Puckett, 1957



When I was about six years old, I had a little experience that convinced me there really was a God. Late one afternoon, I walked outside of our house to the front yard to scout around. There was a small shrubby bush planted not far from the corner of the house, and I was standing just a short distance from that shrub. Very quickly and with no sound, a long, white streak (not bright or shiny at all) came down from the sky right over that shrub. I looked up and said, "You really are up there, you really are!" It scared me, and I ran as fast as I could back inside the house and closed the door. I didn't tell anyone about that, because I knew I was not supposed to be outside by myself that late in the day. I knew that God had seen me, and He had sent that light to scare me because I had disobeyed my mama. The God I had heard about in church services, Sunday School, and Vacation Bible School was real, and He sees everything.



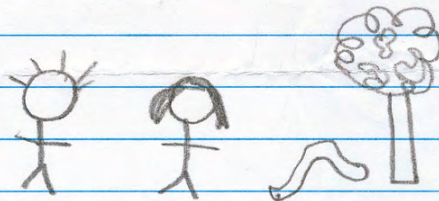
Daniel

1-28-14

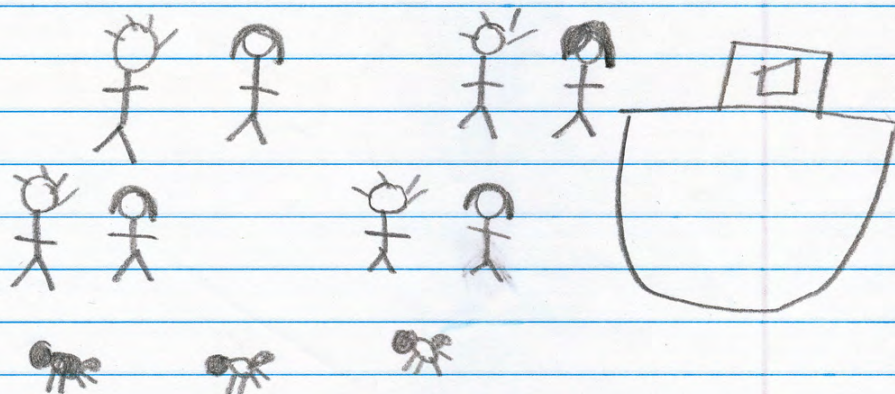
Creation



Fall of man



The Flood

*Drawing by Daniel Mills*

Conviction

Gary Savelli, 1961



When I was about six or seven years old, my younger sister and I would play together, and we would each get a small box and stand it on its end and make a small refrigerator out of it. Then we went to the corner store and bought some small candy and sunflower seeds and put our “food” inside our refrigerators. One day after playing, my sister left the room, and I “swiped” her sunflower seeds while she was gone. She was only about three or four years old and did not even notice the missing sunflower seeds, or perhaps I explained them away, I don’t recall. But I had stolen that little girl’s stuff, and that’s just what it was.

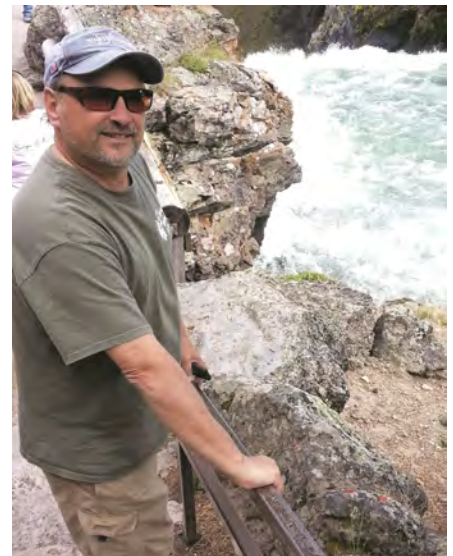
That night when I went to bed, I replayed the scene of me taking the sunflower seeds from her, and for some reason, I knew it was stealing and that it was wrong, especially to take them from a person who was unable to do anything about it. I felt “conviction”, and it got so strong that I started crying uncontrollably in my bed. I could hardly stop...and then I fell asleep.

In the morning, I went to the corner store, bought a pack of sunflower seeds with my own money, and replaced my sister’s sunflower seeds at least three times over! And when I did that, the bad feelings I had seemed to go away. I am thankful today for that conviction because many times, it kept me from taking advantage of people or abusing them.

As I got older, I learned those feelings again. In the neighborhood, I was among the “popular” boys, and we would play tag football in the street in front of our houses. A little boy named Johnny drove by on his new bicycle while we were playing football one afternoon. He was quite overweight and the butt of many of the boys’ jokes. I felt sorry for him. When we gathered around him, some of the boys began taunting him and making fun of his bike and verbally teasing him. A couple of the boys pushed him, as the scene started to get ugly. Someone told me to push him, too, but I did not want to. Finally, under pressure to be one of the “gang”, I pushed Johnny, and he stumbled off his bike. I can’t forget the look he gave me, as if to say, “You, too? I thought you were different.” It hurt inside, and I felt so bad for doing that.

That night in bed, I started crying and could not stop, just as I had done when I stole sunflower seeds from my sister. I did not know how to make it right, and it tormented me. I hoped somehow to run into him again so I could talk to him, but I don’t think I ever did, and I was not sure where he lived. I think his family moved sometime after that, so any hope of repentance was gone. I wonder where he is today. I would like to tell him I’m sorry, but I suppose I will never get that chance. It’s a regret that is mine to keep.

But the point is that the feelings of conviction that God put inside of me, even before I knew Him, through little experiences like this, oftentimes kept me from hurting people. In high school, I would often take opportunities to be kind to people who had no friends, or were misfortunate, or were mentally retarded, or some other thing. This followed me all through life, and the night that I received the holy Ghost as a young adult, that same “cry” came over me as I had my hands raised and was praying, and I cried out to God to forgive my sins and told Him I would do “anything”. His response was that He filled me with His Spirit, and my life was forever changed. I thank God for the conviction for sin that He put in me even as a very young child. It kept me from doing bad things to people.



A Vision

John D. Clark, Sr., 1954



I was probably two or three years old when the Lord gave me a vision one night. In the vision, everything was black except for a light that shined down from above on my father who was standing a little distance in front of me beside a toilet with the lid raised. He was facing me and there was a long line of people to his left that continued out into the darkness, out of my sight. I watched as, one by one, each person would come and kneel in front of my father but not facing him. They would kneel facing the toilet. When they knelt, he would lay his hands on their head, and out from their mouth would come a long bowel movement that would go into the toilet. Then, that person would stand up rejoicing in the Lord and go off to my father's right and out of sight.

I watched this happen, and I knew some of the people, but others I did not. One of the people I knew was a lady we called "Aunt N——". She, too, when her turn came, kneeled down as all the others had done. My father laid hands on her, and out came the bowel movement, and she went off rejoicing as all the others had done. But there was something different about this one because without words, the Lord let me know that no one related to her would ever come to the light, but that she would be the only one of her family that would be delivered.

That vision was given to me somewhere around 1954. Over fifty years later, I had never told this vision to anyone, but one evening I took Aunt N—— out to dinner and the vision came to my mind, and I decided to tell her about it. I was surprised at her reaction. I was expecting her to say something like "Oh no! What can I do?" Instead, she was very calm and said to me, "That's right." To this day, that has been the case, and I expect it will always be the case because that is what God told me.



Barbara & John (with granddaughters Martha & Julia Joy)

164

I Will Never Turn Back

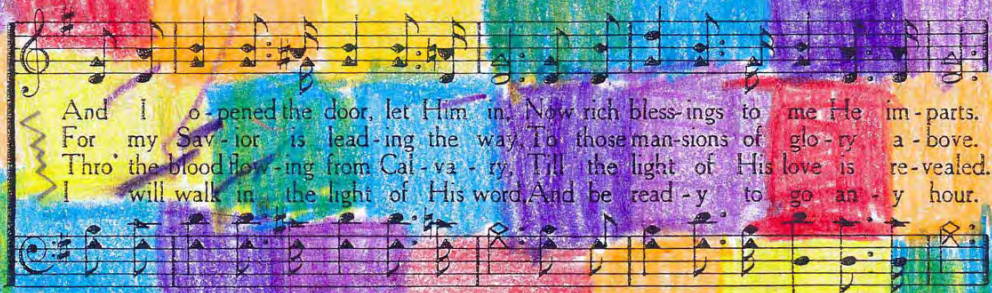
"My Sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me" (Jesus) - John 10: 27

This little hymn is free to all publishers who will use it for the glory of God and His Son, our

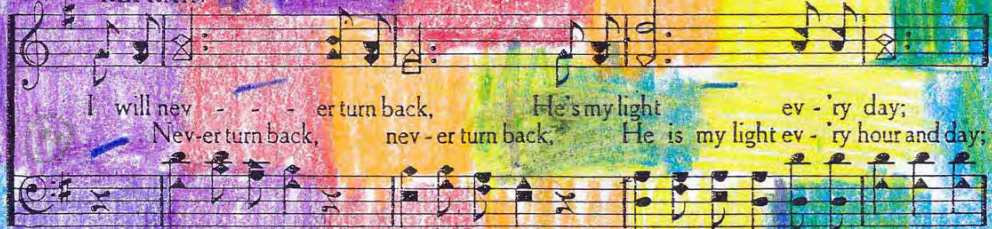
R. N. G. 4th. verse R. E. W.

Savior. - J. E. T. and R. N. G.

R. N. Grisham



REFRAIN



Drawing by Hope Mills

Jesus Loves Me

Hope Mills, 2013



In 1st grade, my classmates and I were doing the calendar. My teacher heard people talking. We had to move our clip down. That was bad. She thought that I was talking, but I was not. I had to move my clip down. I went home and told Mom. She said, “Well, put whatever your teacher did towards something that you got by with.” I told her that the day before in class, I wasn’t paying attention. My teacher asked me if I knew what she was talking about. I said, “Yes.” I told a story. That was what I got by with. That lets me know that Jesus loves me enough to not let me get by with doing wrong.

Playing with a Rake

Daniel Mills, 2013



One day we were at Meemaw and Granddaddy’s house. I was playing in the grass with a small green rake that was about six inches long. Mom said to be sure to put it up after I used it. When I was done with it, I went to play something else and forgot to put it up. Then it was time to go, and Mom asked me if I had put up the small rake. I said, “No”, and went to find it. I looked and looked but didn’t find it. I asked Jesus to help me find it because it was time to go. After that, I saw it in the grass. I learned that Jesus can help you, even when you make a mistake.

At the Ball Park

John D. Clark, Jr., 1992



I only have a vague idea of how old I was when this happened. When I was about seven, I was waiting for a friend who was at baseball practice. I was in foul-ball territory, playing in the dirt, when I heard the Spirit ask me if I wanted to sit up straight while I played in the dirt. If a ball came my way while I was bent over playing, it could hit me in the back of my head, the Spirit pointed out. I remember thinking exactly that – that if a ball came my way, it might hit me in the back of the head if I had my head down while playing in the dirt.

At first, I hesitated, but then I decided to sit up straight and play in the dirt. It wasn't but a few minutes later, that I heard the adults nearby start shouting. I didn't have time to find out why before a ball landed right in front of me where my head had been.

As a child, I didn't stop to consider that it was the Spirit speaking to me. Still, I never forgot that while I was playing there, those thoughts came into my mind. It was distinct from my own thoughts of playing in the dirt, and it saved me from a lot of hurt.



*John David Clark, Sr., John David Clark, Jr.,
& John David Clark III*



Drawing by Daniel Mills

Jesus Tickled My Feet

Billy Mellick, 1966

I was a very healthy and active seven-year-old 2nd grader, going to Camp Taylor Elementary School in Louisville, KY. Today, I can still remember the power of God that healed my feet. I had an unknown condition on my feet which had caused the bottom of my feet to crack, practically down to the bone. I remember walking to school in very much pain; I could only walk on the balls of my feet on my feet. When other children were around, I tried not to let on that I had any kind of trouble with my feet, and as you can guess, recess was the worst, emotionally and physically. With Mom, there was no missing school, and Monday through Friday (for weeks), I went through the same agonizing routine.

After school, I would take off my shoes and socks and try to cool down my feet. Often times, I would cry from the pain and lie on my bed until the hurting subsided. After the hurting stopped, I would have to peel away the sock fuzz that was stuck in each of the deep, inflamed cracks on both of my feet, which caused the pain to start all over again. As a little boy, I knew I had to have help, or I would be a cripple.

My mother was filled with the holy Ghost, and as a small child, I would daily see her speak in tongues, sing praises unto the Lord, and dance around the house in the Spirit of Holiness. Mom took me to the doctor's office on a few occasions to try to get some relief for my feet, but nothing the doctor did, from their treatments, ointments, or medication I had to swallow, brought any kind of comfort to my feet. The daily grind of going to school was taking its toll. It wasn't school I wanted out of (I enjoyed school), but it was the pain and hurting I had to go through at school from the condition I had on my feet. The doctors could do nothing for me, and week after week was going by with the doctor not really knowing how to treat this unknown condition on my feet.

At one point, the doctor told my mother to mix diluted bleach with water and soak my feet in this mixture, hoping it would kill any type of fungus that may be growing. The first time, I didn't know what would happen after she put my feet in the mixture, for I only wanted help. It was the rest of the times I hated to do this treatment because I knew the bleach, though diluted, would burn and make my feet throb from the pain I felt each time Mom would dunk my feet in the bowl. We both cried as we went through this! She cried because I cried. I love my mother.

After some weeks of pulling sock fuzz from the cracks of my feet, and soaking my feet in bleach water, and all along going to school, Mom had enough. She told me, "I've done all I can do, and the doctors are doing their best to help you, but nothing is helping; I'm gonna pray."

Mom started praying in tongues and laid her hands on my feet and asked Jesus to heal my feet. I felt a tingling in my feet. It felt as though someone was tickling my feet, though I saw Mom's hands on top of my feet. After Mom stopped praying, she told me, "Your feet are in God's hands now." Feeling that tickling in my feet created faith in my little body. You see, all I felt for weeks and weeks was pain and suffering.

About two weeks later, over the weekend, I took off my shoes and saw for the first time in a long time that the cracks on my feet were gone! I couldn't tell you when Jesus filled in the cracks (on my feet), but I knew it was him that did it. My mom tried everything the doctors told her to do, so I knew it wasn't the doctors who had healed me. Then, I remembered how my feet tingled when Mama prayed for them.

I ran into the kitchen and told Mama, "Jesus healed my feet!" She said, "Let me see." I took off my shoes and showed her, and Mom started to twirl under the power of God and speak in tongues. She was thanking Jesus for my healing. I could feel that tingling and tickling moving from my feet until it



reached my mouth. When it did, it made me smile. I went to school that following Monday with that same smile. I couldn't wait for recess to show off my new feet – not with taking off my shoes, but with all the little things I could not really do before, like running and kicking a ball. I have never had another flare-up from that condition, and when I get into spots where it seems hopeless for me, I remember when Jesus “tickled my feet”.

I Remember

Stuart Hiser, 1969



I remember as a young child, when I was around seven or eight years old, the first time I saw people move under the power of the holy Ghost. My grandfather lived on Jefferson Street in Louisville, KY, and he managed the apartment building where he lived. On the front of the building there was a storefront space that he rented out to whoever had the money to rent the space.

We used to go visit my grandfather and grandmother regularly, and sometimes my brother and sister and I would spend the weekend with them. We would play on the sidewalk in front of the building. One evening we went out to play in front of the storefront, and as we came through the hallway between the buildings, we heard someone playing music. I was intrigued as we came out to the sidewalk in front of the building; I could tell that the music was coming from the storefront space.

I made my way towards the front door, and the door was standing wide open. There wasn't much air conditioning back then, so people would leave their doors and windows open when it was warm outside. As I peeked in the door, I could see someone standing in the aisleway playing the tambourine and dancing around up front by an altar. I don't remember what they were playing, but something about it drew me in; I liked what I was feeling and seeing – it seemed normal to me. About the time I was going to sit down on the doorstep, my father came around the corner of the building and got us kids and told us to go back inside.

As we were walking back to my grandfather's apartment, my father said, "You all stay away from there – no telling what those people will do to you." I remember feeling puzzled by what he said because it felt good to me, like something I wanted to be a part of. So that was my first experience of seeing the power of God on His saints as a little child, and today, I know why what I saw and felt that day seemed so good to me.

Another good thing about where my grandfather lived was the building next door. It was a storefront restaurant, and the name of it was *Mellick's*, and the man who owned that restaurant had a grandson named Billy Mellick. We crossed paths a time or two when we both were young. God is so good, and now we both are so happy to be brothers in the Lord together.





Drawing by David Caldwell

Uncle Joe and Me

John D. Clark, Sr., 1959



Uncle Joe & John

Just before I started the 1st grade, my father returned from wherever he had been (I didn't know at the time) and took me to the side. When he had me alone in a room away from the rest of the family, he sat down and looked into my eyes, and he started to cry. He knew that my Uncle Joe was my favorite person in the world, and it hurt him to have to say to me, "Uncle Joe is going to die."

My father, my Aunt Leatha, and my Grandmother had been to the Veteran's Hospital in Durham, NC, to receive the doctor's report concerning Uncle Joe's recent operation. The doctor had told them that Uncle Joe would live no more than ninety days. At that time, he was forty-four years old.

After my father told me that Uncle Joe was going to die, I don't remember anything except that, somehow, I ended up in Aunt Leatha's lap crying my heart out, and she was holding me to her breast rocking me back and forth in the chair, crying her heart out, too. The only thing I remember her saying while we cried is, "Jesus will heal him. Jesus will heal him." And he did!

An angel visited Uncle Joe while he was in the hospital in a vision, and anointed him to be healed, and Uncle Joe lived cancer-free from 1959 until he died in 1996.



Barbara & John Clark, Sr.

My Childhood with Jesus

Barbara Myers Clark, 1959



Since I was raised in a good home but not a religious home, it has always amazed me how Jesus ever became my childhood friend! I talked to him like he was there with me, especially in my bed at night. My younger sister, Ellen, and I shared a bedroom with a narrow walkway between our two twin beds. Each night we would talk and laugh, but yet we did not want to interrupt each other while praying, so we came up with a sweet little code. If I was talking to Jesus and Ellen would start talking to me, then I would let out a little noise, “umpf”, so she would know to wait a while. And she would do the same with me. We used our praying code a lot!

When I was seven years old and sitting at my desk in the 2nd grade, a new thing happened to me. Talking to Jesus was already an everyday part of my life, but this day, he helped me with his healing power. This is how it happened. My classroom was on the second floor of our school, and we had no air conditioning during those times. It was a particularly hot day, and I started to feel sick at my seat while doing worksheets. As heat exhaustion set in, I was asking Jesus for help. About this time, my teacher announced that soon, we would go out on the playground. My heart sank because I felt I would collapse in the hot sun, and the thought of that scared me. Soon the teacher asked us to line up at the classroom door, and I was praying hard. As I obediently stood up, that’s when I felt the power of God! All of a sudden, refreshing, cooling tingles circled through my entire body and took away all the heat. I played and played outside, and even when I came back to the classroom, I never felt hot again that day. I already knew Jesus would listen, but when his power hit my little body, it changed me.

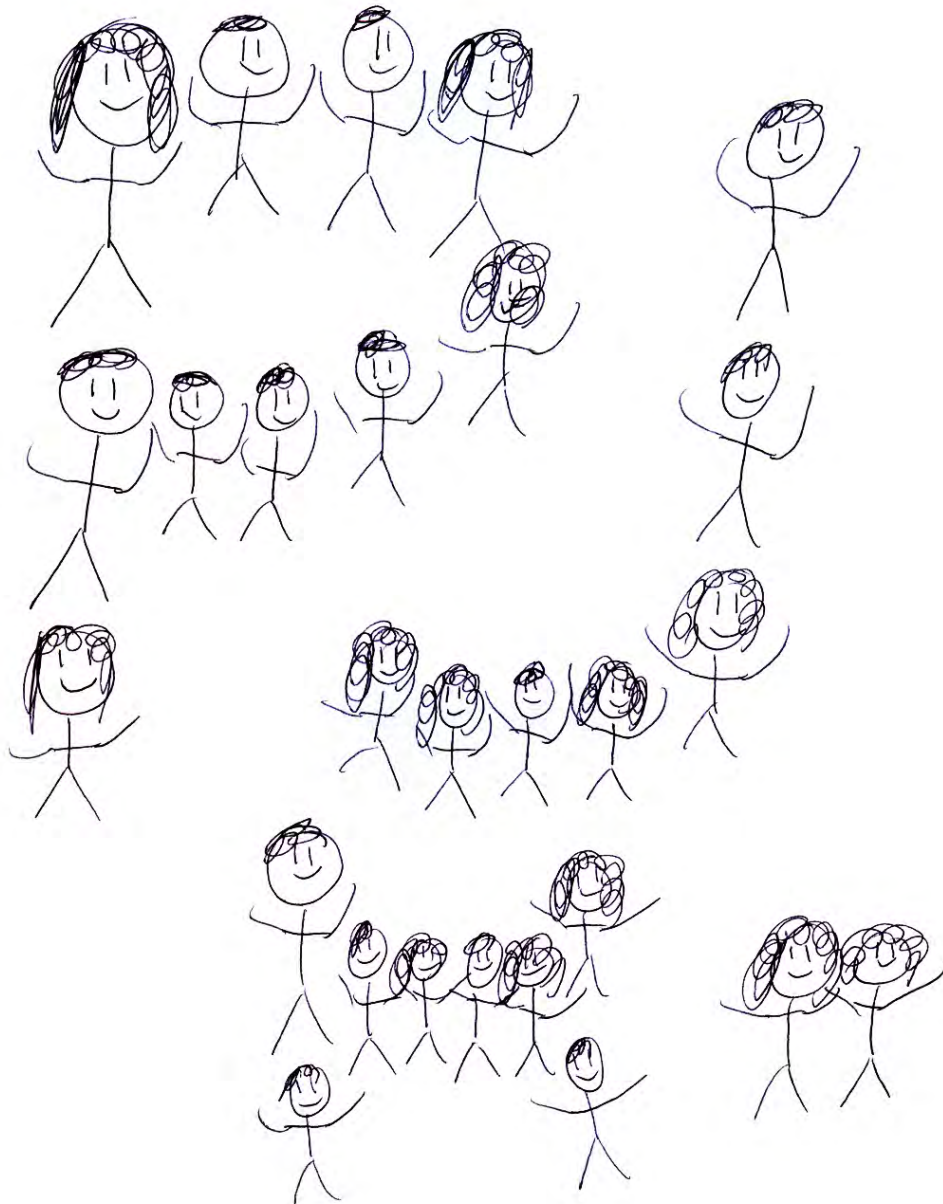
Childhood was mostly happy, and as I grew, the Lord was always there even though I went through the normal “who am I, what do I want” teenage years.

Lastly, I want to tell about the dream Jesus sent when I was about fifteen or so. In the dream, a few of my girlfriends and I entered an empty, huge, circular coliseum and began to wander through the top floor together. All around there was a hallway with many rooms attached. Each room we entered had a different temptation. One room was full of money and jewels; another room represented fame. There were many rooms and many life attractions. As we explored, I lost my friends one by one because they stayed in one room or the other, whichever one attracted them most. Finally, I found myself alone and entering the inner section of the stadium, which was like a bowl filled with rows and rows of empty seats with a flat court or stage at the bottom. Directly across this huge arena, there was a guy sitting alone about halfway down. Instantly, I knew I had to get to him, and then the dream shifted, and I was beside this guy, placing my head on his shoulder as he looked up and was praying. This is where I belonged!

The dream was so real that I wrote it down as soon as I awoke. The original copy has been lost, but I still remember the last words I wrote to describe my feelings in the dream. The words I wrote were, “peace peace peace”. I still remember writing that word three times. Now, over forty years have passed. Later, I did meet and marry that man who loved the Lord. And it is true, there is no peace quite like this that Jesus gives – the peace of living the life I know I was meant to live, with my friend Jesus with me through the happy and sad times. As I write this, tears come to my eyes. I am full of gratefulness and love.



To: Pastor John
I love! From Samantha



Drawing by Samantha Caldwell

Correction and Encouragement

Jason Embry, 1984



As a young boy, I always remember talking to Jesus like he was a close friend. He felt like a constant companion that I would talk to and ask questions. Though I often didn't get a direct response, I knew in my heart that he was listening to what I had to say and there was always a sense of relief in knowing that things would work out after I talked to him. However, sometimes as we grow up, we need a little more than this to keep us on the right track and to encourage us along the way. There are two specific events that I remember standing out as a young child and knowing they were experiences sent directly for me from Jesus. These experiences, no doubt, helped me in childhood but have also strengthened my faith as an adult.

Though I am not sure exactly when the experience happened, I would assume that I was in early elementary school. I can remember that I was having a hard time, though I am not sure about what. There was a heaviness that I can distinctly remember carrying around. The day passed, and my family went out to dinner. I do not know what restaurant, but we had pizza that night. After finishing eating, my parents and the other grownups sat around the table talking. This restaurant had arcade games along the wall, so I walked over to them to play. The scene is still etched in my mind. I had pulled over a stool to reach the controller and started to play. As I was playing, two grown men came up behind me that I had never met. Normally, I think it would have scared me, but this felt different. They started to encourage me in playing the game, but there was something more. When the game ended, I was able to look over my shoulders. I looked to the right, and there was a man with his jacket on looking back at me. I looked to the left, and the other man was there. He looked at me and said, "You are doing a good job, Jason." At this point, I knew he wasn't just talking about the game I was playing. They said some other encouraging things as they walked out, but I can't recall what else was said. I watched as the man on the left of me walked out the door, followed by the man on my right. How did they know my name? Who were these men? How did they know I was hurting and needed encouragement? How is it that the burden left as the men exited the building? This experience has always reminded me of Hebrews 13:2, "...for thereby some have entertained angels unawares."

While many times, Jesus uses encouragement to get our attention, sending a correction our way can have just as meaningful an impact. A little later in elementary school, I had just that kind of experience. As a part of my daily routine, I caught the school bus every morning and rode it home every afternoon. Like anything else, the company you keep can have an effect on you. The buses in the city carry good kids and bad kids, but one thing is certain: the only adult was at the front of the bus, and he couldn't monitor a full busload of kids. I am not sure if I selected it, or if it was the order of how the bus stops, but somehow, I ended up in the back of the bus. I had unfortunately started picking up some bad habits and was too young to really know how to deal with them. Jesus knows just what to send our way when we need it, and I am thankful he sent an answer my way.

One night I had a dream that made a change to the way I was conducting myself. In the dream, I was standing in the middle of my pastor's living room. He lived in what we called a shotgun house. If you were in the back of the house, you could see straight through the house all the way to the end because the house was narrow, and each doorway went to the next room. I was in the middle of the house, and the bedroom was through the first door. Now, as a child, I don't ever remember being told those rooms were off limits, but I knew that was not where I belonged. There was authority around the saints that I grew up with that instilled order, and in the dream, I could feel it just as I would when I was awake. In the dream, something was pushing me toward the room, but I remember being uneasy. I stepped up into the room, and there was a big man in the bed. He had very large features and was really too big for the bed that was

in the room. I found myself standing beside the bed, and he looked down at me. I wish I could remember exactly what he said, but in essence, he had two things to tell me. First, he told me to be good. It was not just a general good; it was a deep good, good to those around me, including my parents and those who were around me on a day-to-day basis. Second, he told me to cut out what I had been caught up in on the school bus. I stood there in awe of the booming voice that came down toward me. I woke up from the dream and knew instantly the man in the bed was God, and it was a real warning. It was what I needed at the time to do what was right, and I have always been thankful for when He sent this sweet correction.

As children, we need help knowing which way we should go. Many times, this comes from our parents. Other times, it can come from a teacher or a friend. However, it is good to know that when you need something as a child, Jesus can step in and help with a situation that may go unnoticed. I hope and pray he sends the same type of help to my children as they are growing up. It aids with the immediate need, and it has a lasting effect that builds faith in that God cares enough about you to step in personally. We serve a living God who knows what we are going through.



Jason & daughter Naomi

My First Home Prayer Meeting

Amanda French, 1986



In January 1986, when I was eight years old, I attended my first home prayer meeting with my family. It was in Pastor John's living room, and the kids sat on the steps going up to the kids' bedrooms. John David, Jr., was not even a year old yet, Rebekah was three years old, and Token was six years old.

At some point during the meeting, the saints started praying, and Pastor John and his daddy, Preacher Clark, were laying hands on people. I'd never seen this before, but I felt something. My dad was sitting up close to where they were praying, so I walked over to him and sat on his lap. He leaned down as I said, "I want to go up there" (to get prayed for). I remember him asking me what I said because everyone was praying so lively he couldn't hear me the first time. At this point, I was so overwhelmed with what I felt that I couldn't repeat it. I slid down off his lap, with tears in my eyes, and went up to the middle of the circle and threw my hands up; that's what everyone else was doing. When Pastor John laid hands on me, and the saints started praying for me, I felt this

overwhelming feeling of love. I loved what I was feeling as tears rolled down my cheeks. I remember wanting what the people there had, and I later found out it was the holy Ghost!

In another weeknight meeting close to that time, I was sitting in a chair since there weren't as many people, and the kids didn't need to sit on the steps. I don't remember what was being said, but I remember crying with the feelings. Pastor John walked over and laid hands on me, and the feelings were so strong I came out of my chair and was kneeling on the floor seeking God.

When I was nine years old, Pastor John, Barbara, Preacher Clark, Ellen Payne, Lou Finch, and some others were taking a trip to Kentucky, and I remember getting to go. I stayed with Ellen and another young lady. One night in a meeting, the power of God fell on Barbara and Ellen, and they danced together. I remember how sweet it was seeing them together, and I started telling the Lord I wanted to dance like that under the power of God.

Some time passed, and I was loving the feelings in Jesus. I remember one meeting clapping my hands and singing with my whole heart. At that time, there were kids coming that did not really enjoy the meetings, and they started making fun of me for praising God. I didn't have a lot of friends, so it really hurt. I wanted to have friends, and I didn't want to be made fun of. So, I stopped seeking the holy Ghost sometime around nine years old. Years passed. When I was fourteen years old, a group of saints were at Uncle Earl and Aunt Betty's house. All the kids were playing in another room. As we got ready to go home, I went up and hugged my dad. When I did, he said something, and the power of God fell. People started praying for all us young teenagers, and we started pouring out our hearts! I remember telling the Lord, "I've loved you since I was a little girl!" Then some of the teenagers started receiving the holy Ghost. I remember praying near Aunt Betty's couch. At one point, I reminded the Lord that I was seeking him years ago, and others were receiving the holy Ghost before me. Very gently in the spirit, I felt, "Concentrate on me; this is between me and you." It was such a tender reminder from the Lord not to compare myself to others or what was going on around me. That



night, February 9, 1991, I received the holy Ghost at the age of fourteen years old, with six other young people in the crowd. One year later, we started testifying about being one year old in the holy Ghost, and it hit Uncle Earl. It was his holy Ghost birthday, too – but of course, he'd received it years earlier on February 9, 1964. Then, Uncle Earl told us his testimony of an experience where Jesus told him, "I'll give you children," and WE were his children in the Lord!

Jesus Shapes a Young Life

Cris Mills, 1978



Jesus did something very special for me when I was eight years old. My family had moved to a new town because my daddy had received a promotion. We had been in this town for about four months when my dad and mom went on a business trip for a long weekend. My grandmother came and stayed at our house to look after my older brother and me.

One evening, right at dusk, my brother and I decided to play on the stilts and a pogo stick that we had received for Christmas just a few months earlier. We had only played a short time when my pogo stick slipped from under me. I landed face first on the concrete floor of our carport. I had immediate pain in my nose and mouth, and I was bleeding. My brother scooped me up and ran with me inside to Grandma. She sat me down in the bathroom and began cleaning my bloody little face. My mouth and nose were throbbing. After holding a cold rag on my face for a while, I looked in the mirror. My nose seemed to be alright, but my two front teeth, the big permanent ones, were both chipped pretty badly.

Grandma calmed me and gave me some Tylenol. The throbbing in my mouth did not stop. We had no dentist in our new town yet. My grandmother did not know anyone there, and she did not want to worry my parents on their trip. Now, I knew that she had some kind of special relationship with Jesus. I had heard stories of her going to tent meetings and being “slain in the Spirit”. When she didn’t know what else to do, she knelt down in front of me and talked to Jesus. I had faith in her faith. If she prayed for me, I believed Jesus would help me. And he did!

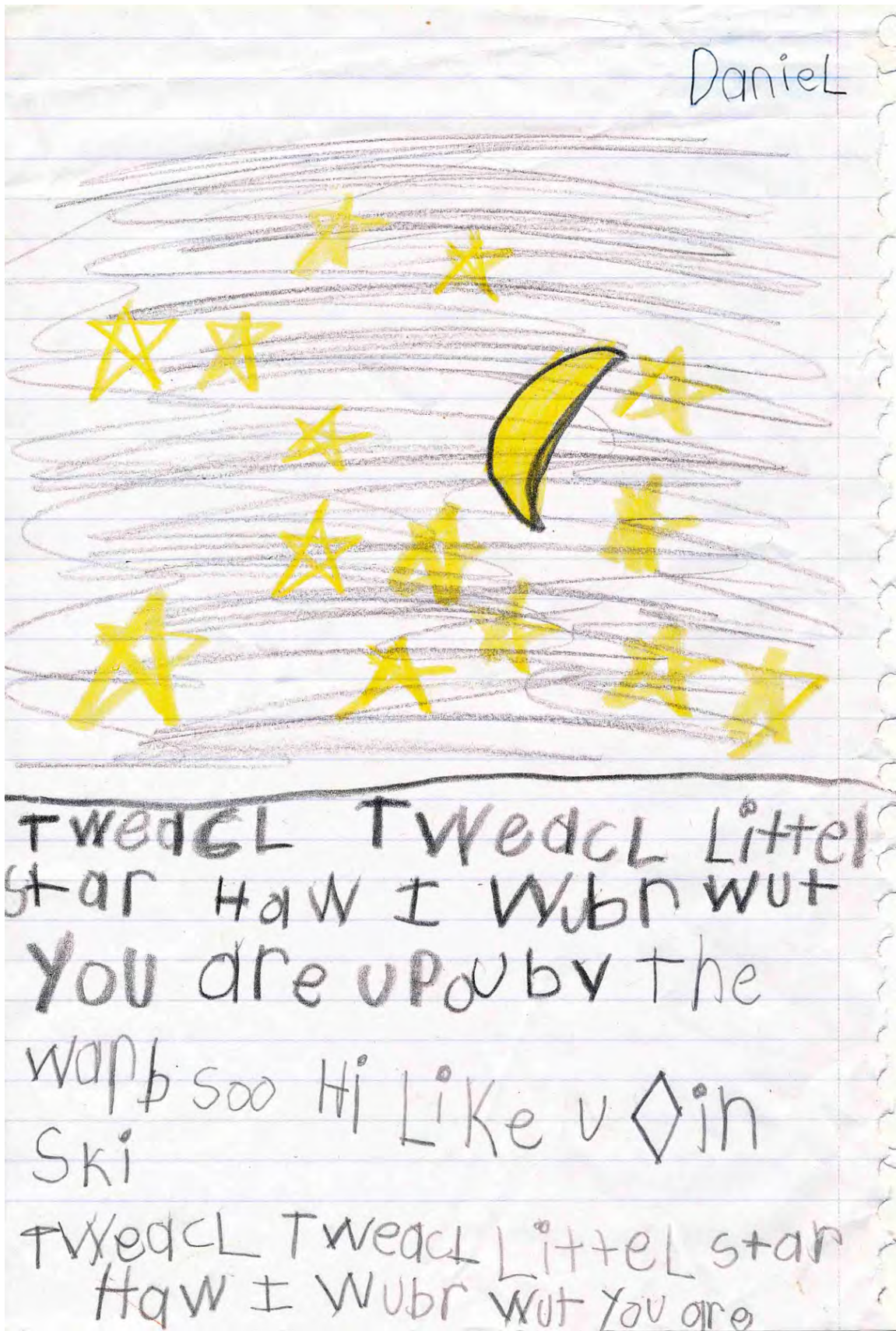


This accident happened on a Friday evening. I played all day Saturday and Sunday with no more pain! We had a surprise for Mama and Daddy when they got home. On Monday, Mama found a dentist to take care of me. He did a root-canal that day, because one of the teeth had been broken into the nerve.

What makes this story even more special is that when I got older, I decided to get into the dental profession, first as an assistant, then as a hygienist. When I learned about traumatic injuries involving the nerves of teeth, I learned that I should have been in pain until that root-canal was performed, but Jesus healed my pain! When I was older, I learned that my grandmother had the holy Ghost with the evidence of speaking in tongues. I’m very thankful for Jesus giving me that experience with her. Also, I feel like Jesus used that accident to put a special feeling in my heart toward dentistry, and that is where I met my husband, a dentist. Jesus was preparing a godly wife for my husband, one that could be a help in all areas of his office and home, back when I was very young. What a sweet life!



Haskell & Cris Mills



Drawing by Daniel Mills

A Childhood Testimony

Natalie Embry, 1973



As a child growing up, my parents were not together, and I only lived with my mother a few times over the years. So sometimes, I would live with my Aunt Evelyn, and for a short while, I attended a Baptist church. That probably was the first time that I heard about Jesus. They told me I needed to get baptized in water, so I did. I thought I would feel something from Jesus, but I didn't. I just remember feeling like I wanted to get dried off and put some dry clothes on.

My mother came and moved me to a new place on the other side of town, where I met a girl at school. She and I became good friends, and then I met her parents and siblings. We later asked her parents if I could come to live with them. They said yes, and my mother agreed. I was around eleven years old then. I loved living with this family because they were a family with a mom, dad, and a house. They didn't live for Jesus, but in their family, they had relatives who had the holy Ghost. On occasion, they would tell stories of God's healing power and how their relatives trusted in Jesus for their help and needs. When they would tell these stories, my heart would leap inside because I knew that the Jesus they were talking about was the one I had always prayed to when I was so sad about not having a good family of my own. I knew that Jesus was the one who always took care of me and kept me safe. While living with this family, I started having more of a desire to know Jesus. I wanted the holy Ghost that I heard them talking about. So, I started attending a prayer meeting where their mother's cousin was going. I loved hearing their testimonies of how they knew God and how they received the holy Ghost. So, I started seeking God the best way I knew how. I just prayed to him the way I had always done and told him my whole heart and that I wanted his Spirit. By this time, I was around twelve or thirteen years old in 1973.

I met another girl at school, and her mother had a home prayer meeting. She invited me to go, so I did. I was still seeking the holy Ghost, and their prayer meeting was different from where I was attending, but I was hungry. So, I started praying, and Jesus took me somewhere, and the next thing I knew, I was coming back in layers, and I heard someone speaking in tongues, and I realized it was me. I said to myself, "I got the holy Ghost." I felt so clean. I remember going outside and seeing that the trees were just beautiful. I felt for the first time in my life there was hope for me. Jesus had touched me in a way that I didn't think was possible.

I went back to school, and I was telling different ones that I got the holy Ghost. Someone told me it wasn't Jesus I got; it was the devil. Being so young, I had never read the Bible, and I started wondering if they were right. So, one night, I went back to my prayer meetings where I had been going. I was praying and telling Jesus about it, and I said, "Jesus, if I got the real holy Ghost, will you let someone ask me to pray for them?" (Now remember, I was only around twelve or thirteen and very small for my age.) And as soon as I asked Jesus that, a woman about forty years old tapped me on the shoulder and said, "Will you pray for me?" Without any thought, I laid my hands on her. Jesus showed me a vision of a ball of fire that was rolling and had



Natalie & husband Junior (with grandkids: Julia, Naomi, & Isaac)

the most beautiful colors. It hit me on the top of my head and started rolling through my body, and it felt very warm. And Jesus spoke and said, "I have baptized you with the holy Ghost and fire." Then the ball of fire shot right out of my feet. I knew then that I had received the real holy Ghost.

Praying for Forgiveness

Betty Pittman, 1957



Another one of my most touching memories of my childhood was early on, probably around eight. My year older sister and I had been playing around the house, and there was something, can't remember now, that we wanted to do and needed our mother's permission. Whatever it was, she said no. As we walked outside, my sister and I looked at each other and must have made some childish remark. Whatever it was, it pricked our hearts so badly that we went to one of our outside buildings. There in that building, we held hands and prayed and asked God to forgive us for that comment and for even thinking of anything negative about our mother. I can see us now, holding hands and crying, saying to Jesus that we didn't want anything to happen to our mother because we loved her so much and to please forgive us of that comment. It was a very sweet moment between us that day.

When I think about it now, the thought hits me that our mother never heard that comment but how bad we felt for even saying anything negative about her or even thinking anything negative about her. Our consciences were so tender and innocent that Jesus pricked our hearts and gave us his tender feelings of right and wrong thoughts and sayings to have.

We never told our mother about any of this after we grew up. In fact, only recently did I think about it from so many years ago. It still touches me today. I wonder how many children today feel such thoughts and have that tenderness, that at the very thought of a wrong remark, conviction hits their hearts. If you do, you are blessed, so go with those precious feelings because they are from Jesus. It will save you many heartaches and lead you to a happy life in Jesus if you follow them.



Betty & Earl Pittman

The Last Days of God's Goodness

Jenny Holstein, 1982



Jenny & younger brother Bob

When I was a young girl, most of my summers were spent outside in the local swimming pool, or under the hose. One particular day, when I was about eight or nine years old, I was playing with the garden hose. I think my brother and I had been playing and having a water-fight. As I was playing with the hose, I felt the presence of the Lord come near; things felt very serious and very clear. I felt the Lord impressing upon me that He was taking His goodness from the earth and that I was seeing the very last days of God's goodness on the earth. It felt like He was going away. Now, as an adult, I would say He was "withdrawing Himself". It was just a moment, and that is all that happened; I went on playing.

That brief moment felt very serious, and I felt very sad that God's goodness was going to be taken away from the earth. And now, many years later, it's very clear that is just what is happening: His goodness is being removed, and the world is growing darker and more chaotic.



“There Is One Faith” (Eph. 4:4–6)

Suzi Traugher, 1957



As my mother tucked me into bed one night (I must have been eight to ten years old), I began to tell her about something that my teacher, an Ursuline nun, had been discussing in my classes at Saint Leonard, the Catholic school where I was a student for eight years. “I can’t understand the Trinity, Momma,” I cried, with tears and frustration. She must have consoled me enough because the concern was not significant until years later when I was once again in a discussion about the Trinity. As a very shy freshman at Sacred Heart Academy, my religion class observed as my teacher drew diagrams, circles, and arrows on the chalkboard to explain the Trinity doctrine to a room of fourteen-year-old girls. “There are three persons, but one godhead; three in one, a triune God,” she reiterated the old story. “How could that be? I just don’t get it,” I pondered.

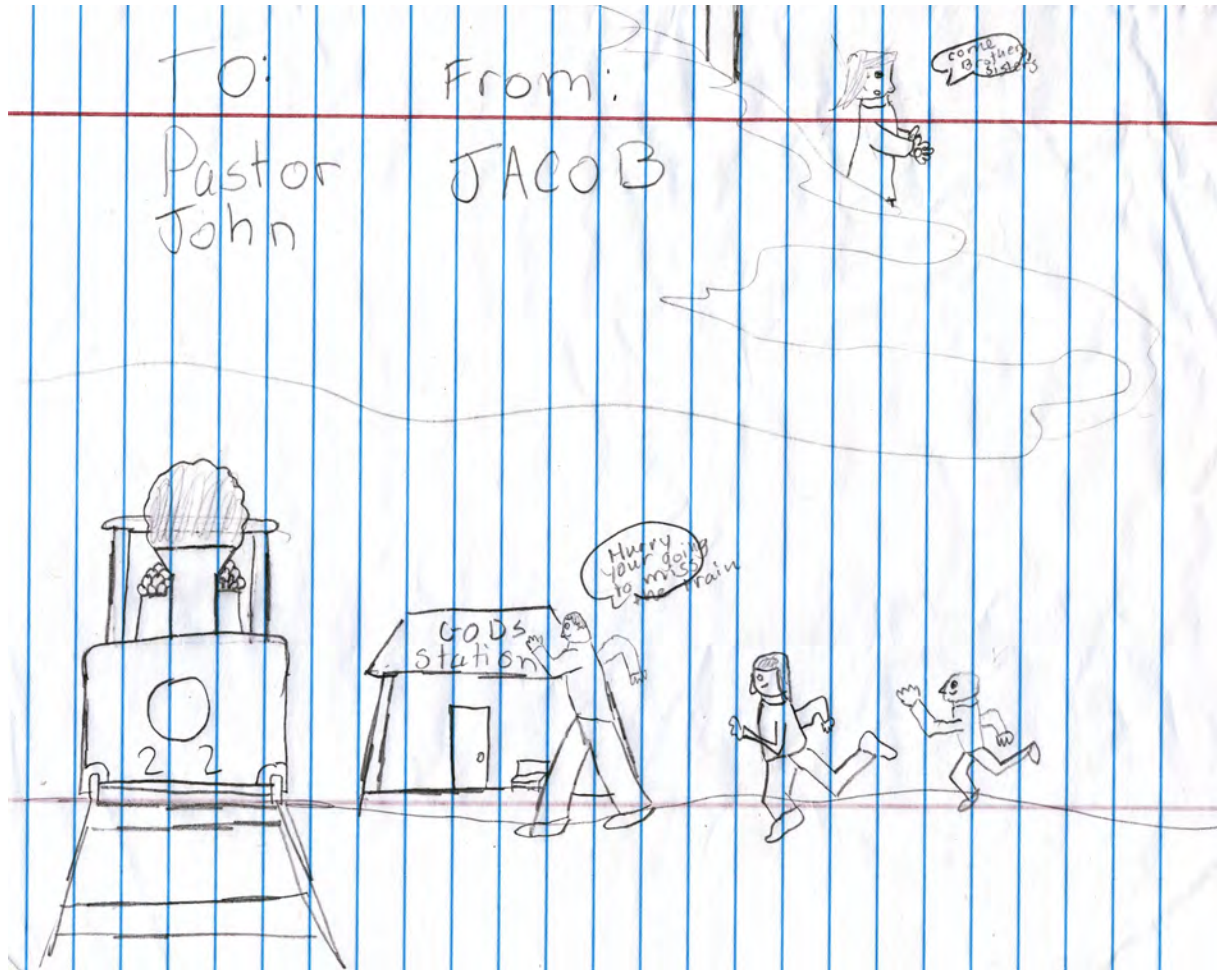
I did not understand the teaching, and despite all her efforts, I was confused but was not frustrated this time. She encouraged us to “take it on faith” if we did not fully understand this vitally important doctrine. This next part is notable, and I clearly remember the feelings involved.

A strong desire to know the truth prompted me to briefly overcome the shyness that accompanied me through most of my teenage years. When I heard myself awkwardly asking my teacher a question, some of the students turned in their seats to stare at me. I spoke up, “Not everyone has the faith to believe this, do they?” “That is correct,” she replied. With that precious answer from Jesus to my young heart, I was content and relieved that I was one of those who just did not have the faith.

As time passed, I began to realize the significance of these and other experiences, and how Jesus had kept my heart from receiving such false and unloving doctrine about him, his Father, and the sweet holy Spirit that indwells them both.



Tom & Suzi Traugher



Drawing by Jacob Curtsinger

A Good Memory

Bess Sellers, 1971



One of my favorite memories from when I was a young girl happened in 1971 when I was almost nine years old.

Each June, my father would drive my mother and me to the beach to spend two weeks with my mother's sister. Dad wasn't a beach person, but he knew we really loved time with Aunt Cindy and going to Morehead City, NC. That was always our special summer treat before having to come home to work in tobacco.

My aunt always made plans for fun places for me to go and neat people for me to meet during our vacations to her town. This particular trip, my aunt had arranged for me to spend a weekend with a little girl whose name was Frances, and her family. Frances was about nine years old, too.

I remember Frances and her family as being very kind and having a happy house. We got along well and had a lot in common. I went with her and her family to church on that Sunday morning. Her church felt different from my Baptist church, but I was not sure why. As their service went on, I heard people speaking words that I didn't understand. I remember looking up from my Bible to see folks speaking, and I remember liking the feeling of being there with them. I didn't know until I was older, college-aged, that what I was hearing and feeling was God's Spirit falling on His children.

After we got back to her house and had our lunch, her mom decided to take us to the beach for the afternoon. I can still remember how beautiful the day was and how happy I felt. Her mom sat on the shore and watched us as we played with a beach ball in the water. The tide was out as we waded through waist deep water to get to the sand bar which was a little way from shore, and once we got to the sand bar, the water was ankle deep. For a long time, we had a great time together laughing and playing. In fact, we had so much fun together that we lost track of time and didn't realize the water had crept up to our thighs!

Frances and I looked on shore and saw her mother and a life guard standing at the edge of the water motioning for us to swim back to shore. We were a little afraid, but we did not panic. As we started swimming, we realized the current was much stronger than it had been when we first swam out. We kept telling each other not to quit and that we could make it. I had never been in a situation like that before where I could be in danger of drowning, and we made ourselves keep heading towards the shore. The life guard and Frances' mother were our cheer leaders, and as we got closer to them, we could hear them telling us exactly what to do and encouraging us.

After what seemed like hours, we finally collapsed on the shore together. We were very tired but so very relieved. Frances' mother was hugging us and telling us we had done well to make it back to shore. We eventually got our things together and headed back to Frances' house. After supper, it was time for me to go back to my aunt's house. Frances and I had had an exciting weekend together.

I have often thought about my experiences from 1971 with Frances and her family, and after I was baptized with the holy Ghost in 1985, it struck me that Jesus had put me in a safe place that weekend, all those years ago, with a family that loved Jesus and his Spirit. Looking back on it, even though I didn't really know Jesus, it is sweet to realize that I felt peace around people who were speaking in tongues and loving his Spirit. And I feel sure that when Frances and I were struggling to reach the shore that Sunday afternoon, her mother must have been praying for us that Jesus would watch over us. It is wonderful to look back and see how Jesus was watching over my life as a little girl.



Piano Story

Sheila Puckett, 1960



When I was nine years old and in the 4th grade at Aycock School, I had a best friend named Teresa. She took piano lessons from our principal's wife, Mrs. Newell. They lived in the teacherage right next to the school. So, one day I walked over to Mrs. Newell's little music room with Teresa to watch her during her music lesson. I sat down on the piano bench beside her and listened to her play "My Hope Is Built", and watching her little hands was so pretty. When she got to the chorus, "On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand; All other ground is sinking sand; All other ground is sinking sand," the way she played those few little notes, making that sound, was so pretty. Something about that touched me in some little way.

I remember going home and telling Mama and Daddy that I wanted to take piano lessons, and I wanted a piano. Mama said, "Sheila, nobody in our family plays piano," and I said, "I don't care. I want to play, and I want a piano." So, they bought me an old piano from an old man named Mr. Collins. It sounded like a honky-tonk piano, and that is what we called it many times. It was a high-back piano that he had cut down and added a pretty mirror across the top. Mrs. Newell was my piano teacher for about six years, and oh, my, those piano recitals were the beginnings of my nervous stomach. Mama made my fancy dress, and Mrs. Newell wanted those piano pieces (as she called them) perfect. We had to play solos and duets, sometimes two pianos, with four people, two on each stool. But the music was outstanding.

All through the years when I would have any kind of problem, that piano was a companion and comfort to me, kinda like a friend, during my good times and bad times, happy times and sad times. Mostly, I played hymns, and felt tears come into my eyes so often, even before I received the holy Ghost. Sometimes I would whisper to the Lord, "You were so sweet to let me have little feelings at nine years old when I first heard Teresa play 'My Hope Is Built'." That is such a dear memory to me.



*Music Recital Dress made by my Mama
in June, 1966*



Sheila 2014

Pure Love

Danielle Crum, 2005



When I was nine years old, my brother moved out of our house. He was getting ready to turn eighteen and decided he wanted to have his own life and do things his way. Joey and I were very close; I looked up to him as a role model and as someone who could do no wrong. When he chose to leave, I didn't really understand what was going on. I thought it would only last for the weekend, and he was just going to go to his dad's house. Little did I know, it wasn't going to happen like that. It really hurt me that someone I loved and looked up to suddenly turned their back on me.

As the years passed, I began to realize the full context of the story, and it wasn't just confusion anymore. He had gotten himself into some pretty bad situations, hanging out with the wrong crowd, letting this world suck him in. It was like an aching pain in my heart that was always there. Yet, at times, this pain would flare up and be unbearable to the point I would just be numb. I didn't know what to think anymore. How could someone you trust just leave like that? I felt betrayed. At times, I felt so hurt, I would cry myself to sleep. I tried to be a happy-go-lucky kid and not let the pain I felt show. I would keep the pain in, and at night, I would pour my heart out to Jesus. He was the only one who knew how I really felt. Those nights I cried myself to sleep, I knew the only relief that I would get was from Jesus; only he could lift the burden I felt so deeply. One particular night – I remember it to this day – I was lying in bed talking to Jesus about everything that had happened and how I felt. As I was lying there, it felt as if someone was giving me a hug. There wasn't anyone physically there, but I know that it was Jesus letting me feel him and him letting me know that no matter what, everything was going to be okay. It was the perfect scenario for me as a little girl. At that age, a hug could fix just about anything, and that's what Jesus did; he gave me a hug just like a daddy would give his little girl.

As I step back and recollect everything that had happened, I realize that Jesus was protecting me the whole time. As I mentioned, my brother and I were very close; however, I could see how we hadn't been spending as much time together as we usually did. It was as if Jesus was slowly pulling me away because he knew what was ahead. He was protecting my heart so that when my brother did leave, it wouldn't feel as much of a shock. When my brother willingly chose to leave our house, I was being protected from things I didn't even know existed. The situations my brother had gotten himself into could have been dangerous to me as well as my family. Every time I feel that pain start to flare up, I remember that night in my bed when I felt Jesus giving me a hug. I can know in my heart that everything is going to be ok. It has been okay, and we've made it through it. It's been almost ten years since I've talked to or even seen my brother, and that hurt is still there sometimes. You may feel that pain and hurt, but only for a little while and then Jesus takes it away.

Sometimes, I wondered how life could go on without my brother; my mind would ponder on all the things he would miss out on in our lives, and us in his, birthdays, graduations, and just growing up together. I felt like there was a void in my heart, a hole that my brother was supposed to fill. But Jesus will put someone else in your life that's like a brother to you, someone who will help fill that void. No one can ever replace my brother. But Jesus has given me others who have acted more like a brother to me than my real brother ever has. And, unfortunately, some of them have moved on. Yet, again, Jesus has continued to fill that void. Who does that? Who can take that pain away and give you comfort deep down where you think no one can reach? Only Jesus can. It's real! I am so thankful to have had the experience at such a young age. Yes, it still hurts, and I miss my brother, but I wouldn't change it for anything. It was a real experience. It was an experience that allowed me to cry out to Jesus. I got to really feel the comfort and peace that only he can give. I learned that he is in control of our lives. He protects us when we don't even know we need protecting. I found that no matter how low we may feel, even if it feels like there's no hope, Jesus can comfort us with a real, pure love. It is a love that no human can give.

Also, with this experience, it taught me more of who I was. I started to understand more of who I wanted to be as a person and what type of life I wanted to live. I didn't want to be one of those kids that stayed out on weekends and party. They are wasting precious time in this life. I didn't want to surround myself with people that chose that lifestyle, either, but if it wasn't for Jesus saving me from that, it could be me. It's a sobering feeling to think where we would be without God and the mercy He has. I began wanting to obey my parents, listen to them, and not be absorbed with this world. I've seen firsthand someone who didn't listen to his parents when they tried to help. But, he chose this world and is still out there in it. My brother chose what he wanted, and God let him have it. I know that that's not what I want.

A few years after my brother left, I was talking with a friend of mine, Rebekah, about the situation. I always felt that I couldn't leave my family and go out into this world and do that to my parents, after seeing all of the hurt they experienced with my brother. She told me that it was good to want to obey my parents and honor them, but at the same time, I couldn't make choices in my life based only on not wanting to hurt someone's feelings. It goes beyond that. I had to make decisions based on pleasing God, no matter what. It's His plan that matters; listening to God and obeying Him is what's going to lead to a happy life. He is in control and wants the best for us. I found that out, lying in my bed crying out to Him, when He gave me a hug and let me know that everything was going to be okay.

I have to put aside any ideas, dreams, or desires that I have for myself and let God's vision for me be the only thing that matters. If He is our "A" plan, then the rest of our lives will fall into place, and with that comes so much relief. It is a relief to not have to have a plan for every single thing in our life. If we just follow Jesus, then we will be exactly where we need to be and do exactly what we need to be doing. This experience has made me very thankful for Jesus and all that he has done and continues to do for me. Jesus is good, and I don't want to take what he has given to me for granted. Choose Jesus no matter what the circumstances are, and do his will; with that, you'll have everything you've ever wanted!



Little (Big) Prayer

Betty Pittman, 1959



Betty, Earl, & daughter Amy

When I remember back as a child – I must have been close to ten years old – I can see myself, now, as then, walking down the old dirt path that ran through our little farmland. The dirt was a fine sand, fluffy-like powder, and when your feet would hit it, a little puff of sand would fly above your feet and between your toes. I loved to walk down that path every so often. My little thoughts would race through my mind – thoughts about my family and Jesus, and I would often sing songs I had heard over the radio, hymns especially, telling about Jesus. As I would sing them, I can remember crying because they were telling about the return of Jesus or songs about my mother and father. I was very close to my mother.

One day while walking, I had the sweetest little prayer come over me. I prayed, “Lord, when I grow up, I want a husband that loves you like I do.” Now, I can always remember having a tender heart towards Jesus since I was very young, and my prayer, too,

was to grow up and serve him. To my little mind, that was just a simple, little prayer of a ten-year-old, but not to God.

Years went by, and we moved to a little town called Battleboro, which was outside the county where I grew up. It was during the Christmas break, and I was maybe twelve or thirteen at the time. I was very scared to start a new school, but when the time had come to go back to school, I knew that I had to go. The school bus picked us up first, so I got on and sat in the front seat by the door. Then, the bus continued its route into town and picked up a few more students. As it approached the railroad tracks, it made a right turn and then stopped. The door opened, and I saw this hand reach up to grab the bar to pull himself into the bus. Then, this bright blue-eyed fellow with the prettiest smile and glowing face popped up into the bus. I didn’t know him; in fact, I had never seen him before, but when I saw him, a very innocent thought hit my heart, and I said, “That’s the boy I would like to marry.” Now, you have to understand that this was a pure, innocent thought, not like some kids of today, who have been thrown into maturity well before their time.

Several years passed, and as I would see him from time to time around our little town, a little tender feeling would hit my heart, but we never met or talked to each other, nor would I sit around home daydreaming about him or even thinking about him. I just went about my normal routine.

One day as my mom and I were at home, I heard a knock at the front door. When I opened it, a young man stood there who knew my sister and was hoping to talk to her about him receiving the Pentecostal experience that they had talked about earlier. She had gone to college and was not at home, but we invited him in and he started talking to us about his experience with great joy. While he was talking, my heart just leaped within because he was telling about this holy Ghost that could take away your sins and give you the joy and strength to live right and serve Jesus with that joy and peace. I was excited because *that* was what I had been praying about for years. Before he left, he asked us if we wanted to go to one of his little prayer meetings in the country at his grandmother’s home. I said, “Yes”, right away, and my mother gave me permission to go.

I started attending these sweet little prayer meetings, feeling the power of God, and fellowship with the saints there. It was so tender to my heart. About a year or so after, I received the holy Ghost with the evidence of speaking in tongues, and I have never been the same since. My life is full and rich and sweet. It’s richer now than when I started.

I was seventeen when I received the holy Ghost, and at eighteen, I married this young man, Earl, who came to our house that day and talked with me about the holy Ghost. He is the same boy that was on the

school bus. What was so sweet was, it was years later, while telling someone how we met, that I remembered the prayer that I prayed at ten years old on the school bus when I saw Earl that day. God is so good! He caused me to forget that prayer and those feelings on the school bus so He could be the One to work out His plans for me and not me trying to work out any plans that I may have had. We have one daughter, Amy, and now, a son-in-law, Vince, whom we love as our own. And God has added to us many children in the Lord that are so dear to us.

You need not think that God is not listening to you when you pray. Your prayers are never too small for Him to hear them. He hears and cares. God already had in His mind what He wanted for me, and I just had to catch up with His plans. Waiting on God is the sweetest and safest way to live. He is always watching.



Amy & Vince Boveia, Betty & Earl Pittman

Two Angels

John D. Clark, Sr., 1963



My parents never owned a car while I was growing up and so, I walked to school almost every day of my life. One sunny day when I was in elementary school, I was walking along College Street in Henderson, NC, when I began to think an arrogant thought. I asked myself, “Why do we children have to show respect to adults? Shouldn’t they have to earn our respect?” As soon as I had spoken that to myself, I looked up, and coming toward me were two very large men. They were very close to me, and they stopped right in front of me. I remember looking up into their craggy faces, and one of them asked me, “Do you know where we could find the South Henderson Cotton Mill?” I turned and pointed back down College Street in the direction of my house and told him to go that way and turn left at a certain place, and he would find it. He thanked me, and they went on their way. As soon as I started on my way to school again, I realized that the arrogant feelings I had been feeling were gone, and I knew, even as young as I was, that God had used those two men to change something in me. At that place on College Street in Henderson,

one can see a long way in both directions, but when I turned to look at the men to whom I had just spoken, they were gone. So, I went on my way to school, somehow understanding that God had sent two angels to keep me from going down a wrong path.



Looking both directions on College Street



Drawing by Jacob Curtsinger

My Path Takes a Turn

Jimmy Tolle, 1964



One Saturday afternoon, my best friend, Al, and I went downtown to the barber college for haircuts. It was a typical summer day, very hot and steamy. After we got our haircuts and were on our way home, we talked about what to do next. Maybe we could go to the stockyards or hobo town.

But as we were walking down the street, we saw this man standing in a doorway. The door was wide open, and he was bidding people to come inside. The building was the old Shellmar picture show. As we got to the man, he said, "You boys, you want to come inside?" We just looked at one another. "You mean us, Sir?" "Yeah, you two, come on inside and sit down. We're getting ready to start right now."

Well, we were open for just about anything, so we went in. I could hear people tuning up some instruments as soon as we got inside. Al and I looked at one another like, "What's going on?" I thought, "Maybe it's a band or something," as we walked down the aisle. I felt kind of different. About halfway down, we stopped at an empty row. I sat in the very first seat. Al passed in front of me and sat down right beside me.

There were a lot of people on the stage, at least seven or eight. Out where we were sitting, there were about fifteen or twenty people. They were still tuning up. Al and I were kind of laughing, but something felt real strange and bewildering in my heart.

The man who had asked us in, passed by on his way to the stage. Everyone stopped what they were doing.

"I want everyone in here to pray," the man said, "and seek God right now for what He's going to do for us today."

It was like an alarm went off inside me. My heart started racing. It was pounding like a tom-tom. I could see my shirt jerking in rhythm with every beat of my heart. An overwhelming fear came over me like I had never felt before in my life.

I looked to my right. Al looked just like I felt – white as a sheet and shaking all over. I knew we were in the wrong place for sure!

The man spoke again. "Let's get down on our knees and pray." The people started praying out loud, "Oh God, help us, help us today." "Heal us. Be with us today." Then they started speaking in some language I had never heard before in my life.

I was sweating like crazy, my heart was pounding, and my mouth was dry as popcorn. I looked over at Al and whispered to him, "I'm going to run for it as soon as I count to three."

"One, two, . . ." But before I got to three, a very sweet, frail-looking old lady went down on her knees in the aisle right beside me. I couldn't get past her without knocking her over. When I said "two", Al had anticipated me saying "three" and jumped to his feet. Then, he sat right back down. "What are you doing?" he said. "I thought you were going to run for it." "I was, but, I – I can't knock this old lady down," I whispered back.

This little old lady was just sobbing, crying so pitiful and saying, "Oh, Lord God, help these two young boys." As she was praying, she put her hand on my left knee. "God bless their lives. Help them; show them the way to serve You, God." I never felt fear like this before in my life. There were people walking up and down everywhere with their hands raised up in the air, praying very loudly. Some were on their knees speaking in this strange language I had never heard before in my life.

The very first chance I had, I jumped up and ran for the door. Out of the corner of my eye, I got a glimpse of Al. He hesitated for an instant and then shot up right behind me. Just after we ran out the door,

the man that had asked us in came to the door looking for us. On the way home, Al and I talked some about what had happened.

I can never remember us talking about it again. Somehow, though, I felt different. Something had happened. I found myself thinking about that day from time to time over the next three or four years. I couldn't shake the memory of that little old lady kneeling down beside me, praying for me, crying her heart out. It was so real.

By the time I was thirteen, I liked a girl named Debbie who lived close to my house. One evening as we were sitting on her front porch, Debbie's aunt and several other ladies were gathering in the front room of the house. As they arrived and greeted one another, I could see the happiness they were feeling. The joy and excitement were all over their faces. "What are they doing?" I asked Debbie. "They're going to have a prayer meeting."

Suddenly, I became more interested in what was going on inside the house than on the porch. I tried to be discreet, but my eyes and ears were pinned on what was going on inside. We could just barely hear them talking and exchanging stories.

Then, all at once, something happened. Everything changed; even outside on the porch I could feel it. I had only felt like this one time before in my whole life. I didn't feel quite as afraid as I did that time with Al. It might have been because I was outside and could run if I had to. This was the most real feeling in my life.

As Debbie and I sat there, I kept looking through the window, trying not to stare too much. The women were praying, laying their hands on one another, and speaking in some kind of language I had only heard once before. They went on for a long time praising God and thanking Him for His power.

There was no question in my heart about the realness of what they were doing. Then, I could see this power they were praying for plunge into the room. It looked like a fog or a haze, and when it settled down in the room, overwhelming joy moved over everyone. They couldn't sit still in their seats.

I watched this happen several times that evening. I was convinced these ladies would not, could not, have acted as they did unless they felt some kind of power. I was struck by how real everything I was seeing and feeling was to me.

My life was a wreck at that time. I just about never went to school. Some of the boys I'd fallen in with had already been sent to reform school. Later, many of my friends would wind up in prison for most of their lives. Some would be on death row for killing people in a robbery. Still others would be paralyzed or killed in fights.

At that time, I didn't realize how my life would be affected by the events of that evening prayer meeting. Seeing and feeling the power of God that day was a turning point in my life. What I felt in my heart from God would begin to change my life from the path I had been going down.



Ten Dollars and a Ten-Year-Old

Billy Mellick, 1969



I asked my brother and sister a few years ago, “What were the happiest times during our childhood together?” Not to my surprise, each one of us had the same answer – it was during the years from 1968 to 1974, when my parents took us to Pentecostal meetings together as a family. My mother had received the baptism of the holy Ghost with the evidence of speaking in other tongues, and the Lord had given my dad the best job he ever had (a Department of Transportation Supervisor) and also, the Lord had supplied the first house that my dad purchased in Camp Taylor, in Louisville, KY. These were blessed years.

When I was ten years old, my father and mother had taken in some relatives to live with us while they were recovering from hard times. There was my aunt and uncle, with their two girls, and my second cousin, with her husband and three kids. One family lived upstairs in our house, we lived in the center on the main floor (Dad, Mom, and us three kids), and the other family lived in the basement . . . there was only one restroom among the fourteen people in the house.

My father went to work daily with the D.O.T. job that God provided, and the other two men in the house were working and saving their monies to eventually get a place of their own. During one of these days, Momma gave me some money to go to Benders grocery store to buy a pound of bologna and a loaf of bread for all of our lunches that day. The bread was thirty-three cents a loaf and the bologna was sixty-nine cents a pound. Momma said, “That is all of the money we have until your dad gets paid this Friday. Make sure you bring me back my change and do not buy anything else.” This was the Wednesday before Dad’s payday.

I walked slowly the quarter mile to the store and placed my order for the pound of bologna that Mom asked me to buy. Mom told me to get it “thin-sliced”, so it will go further to feed everyone. As I picked up the Bunny (brand) bread, I discovered at the cash register that I did not have the ten dollars that my mother had given me to pay for them. I felt so bad! We wouldn’t have anything to eat for lunch today. I walked home slowly and was retracing my steps, looking for the money that I had lost.

I returned back home and told Momma that I had lost the money. Momma said, “Oh Billy – that is all of the money to my name until your dad gets paid.” It was an overcast day, and there was a drizzle kind of rain coming down. Momma told everyone in the house to help me look in the yard to find the ten dollars. Everyone who was home, all of the kids and the mothers, were walking around in the tall grass to look for what I had lost. People were everywhere looking straight down as we walked the yard.

I felt so bad, that I might have cost everyone their lunch for that day. I remembered the time my mother prayed in the holy Ghost and spoke in tongues while she prayed for my feet when I was seven years old, and my feet were healed. So, I started praying, though it would be many years before I received the wonderful gift of the Spirit. I prayed as I was walking and looking down, “Jesus, I remember you were the one who heard my mother when she prayed to you and you healed my feet. I feel so bad that I lost the money.” I stopped walking while I closed my eyes, looked up into the sky while the rain was getting my face wet, and prayed again, “Jesus, can you please help me find the money so everyone can eat today?” It was a sincere prayer from a sincere ten-year-old. I stopped praying at that moment and looked down with my eyes still closed. When I opened my eyes, I saw something sticking out from under my left sneaker. When I picked my foot up I saw the ten dollars that must have fallen from my pocket earlier. I felt so much joy in my heart and a very warm feeling came over this little boy. I picked up the money and waved it high over my head and showed everyone what I had found. I said in my heart at this time with a huge smile on my face, “Jesus, you heard me like you heard my mother.”

I didn't wait for permission, but I immediately ran as fast as my little legs could move the quarter mile to Benders and purchased the bologna that was already packaged for us and the bread. I said to the cashier with another smile, "Change, please." I ran the quarter mile back home where we all had a bologna sandwich and a glass of Kool-Aid for lunch.

To this day, I still remember like it was yesterday how God heard a little boy's prayer on that rainy, cold day in the yard. Those things that God does creates faith in your heart and lets you believe that when you are sincere, God hears and God answers according to His will.

And oh . . . the happiest years of my life are now the ones that Jesus is giving me today.



The Mother, the Daughter

Jenny Holstein, 1986



When I was growing up in Australia, I always believed in God. My mother did, too, and although she knew very little about God, she taught me the little bit she did know. She encouraged my faith in God. Although we didn't attend church, I always knew I could talk to Mum about the things of God.

There came a time when I was a girl of about ten or eleven when I began to have thoughts that I wanted to do something to be right with God. So, I spoke to my Mum about going to church because I thought that was what you are supposed to do if you wanted to be right with God. My Mum wanted to go, too. So we decided to go to church. We chose the local Catholic church, simply because we liked the old priest there, Father Bob, though he was no longer the priest there at that time.

So, off we went to the Catholic church in our town, Gloucester, NSW. To me, this outing was a mother-daughter outing because we did not go out much otherwise. We got to the church and because we were a little bit late, we scurried in a side entry and tried to be as quiet as possible. We sat down, and the service was already underway. I remember I sat there and wondered what would happen and what I was supposed to do – we had no idea what we were supposed to do.

Before long, I began to have a vision as I was sitting there on the pew. The vision was about the priests of the church. In the vision, I could see many priests there, all dressed up in fine vestures with tall funny hats, performing ceremonies with “sanctified” containers and objects and such. The priests were not the same priests in the church exactly, but they were the same kind. I could tell in the vision that the Lord was very angry with those priests. He hated what they were doing, and they did not belong to God. They were *impostors* – that was very clear to me – those “priests” were impostors, and they just were not of God, but were impostors. They were false. God was very wroth with them, and He hated what they were doing. Also, it was clear God was going to destroy them. It was a very fearful thing.

I awoke out of the vision because my mother was nudging me awake, and I noticed I had been making sounds with my mouth and tongue, which I gather she was concerned was disruptive to everyone. I wondered what was happening. It seemed to me that a similar thing happened to my mother, though she did not tell me anything about it.

Finally, the service was over, and we began to leave. As we left the church and were walking down the steps and onto the footpath, the Lord spoke and said, “THAT is the Mother” (the church we were just in). Then, as we walked a small distance down the street, in full view, just one hundred meters (or thereabouts) down the road, was the local Baptist church. The Lord spoke again, referring to the Baptist church, and said, “And THAT is the daughter.” I wondered what that meant, and both my mother and I decided we did not want to go to church again anytime soon.

As we were walking to where our car was parked, I felt strongly in my heart that the answer was somewhere in the book of Revelation. I now know that the Lord was showing me as a young girl that the Christian church, both Catholic and Protestant, is the whore of Babylon spoken of in Revelation 17.



Jenny & her mother

The Night I Received the Holy Ghost

Cathy Bartow, 1982



On January 4, 1982, I was ten and went to a home prayer meeting with my parents. I was planning to sit through the meeting, but I was talked into going in the back room by a girl a year older than me, to read the Bible. For a while, we went back and forth reading chapters while the meeting took place in the other room. I heard them start to pray for people in the meeting, but I wanted to finish the chapter I was reading before going in there to get prayed for. When I finished reading, I walked into the meeting room, but everyone just sat down, and it looked like everyone finished praying. There was someone there that we all called Uncle Joe who asked me, "Do you want to get prayed for?" and I said, "I sure do!" Everyone got up and started praying for me, and tears started flowing down my cheeks. I am not certain how long I was there before I was face to face with the pastor's wife, Martha Clark. She knelt down in front of me, eye to eye, and she was speaking in tongues and holding me by the shoulders. Moments later, a still small voice said, "Speak back to her in tongues," and I did, and I received the holy Ghost that night.





Drawing by Samuel Caldwell

A Lesson in Rome

Amy French, 2012



I wasn't expecting the feelings I felt as I stepped inside the gigantic doors of St. Peter's Basilica in Vatican City, Rome. St. Peter's Basilica is among the largest and most famous Roman Catholic churches in the world and considered by many Christians to be one of the holiest sites on earth. This is because it is believed to be the burial site of Jesus' disciple, Peter, whom they refer to as the first Pope. I had not been inside of a Catholic church in many years, and as I crossed the threshold, I felt a heaviness in my spirit. When I was a young girl, I often attended services at St. Mary's Church with my dad and stepmother, where they went to church before Jesus led them to a home prayer meeting in Louisville, KY. The sights, sounds, and traditions of the Catholic religion were not unfamiliar to me.

When I was in the 5th and 6th grades, I went to St. Mary's elementary school. It was during my 5th grade year at St. Mary's that I made my "First Holy Communion", which is a tradition within the Catholic church for children around the age of seven or eight. However, since I was older when I started at the Catholic school, it was not until I was ten years old that I completed the preparatory requirements. After that time, I was permitted to participate in receiving the "Holy Eucharist" (which is eating of the consecrated bread and drinking the consecrated wine) during Mass.

As a young girl, I did everything I was taught to do in order to serve the Lord. I made my confessions to the Priest, acted as a Server during Mass, and obeyed the customs and traditions of the Catholic Church. Every Holy Rosary (or 'sacred' Catholic prayer) I prayed was sincere and from my heart. Each night before bed, I "religiously" prayed the "Our Father" and then asked God to bless all whom I loved and all the people and animals in the world. Then, I would end my prayer by saying, "P.S. I love you." Although I was sincerely doing all those things, I always wondered within myself, why? Why was it that I had to pray to Mary or any of the other Saints? Why couldn't I just pray to God?

As I grew up, I rarely attended any church and was no longer in Catholicism. Then, when I was in my early thirties, I started attending a small Christian church. I went through a ten-week-long discipleship course in order to become a member of the church. It was during this course that the pastor taught us how to pray out loud, give a testimony, and how to have Christian fellowship with other Christians. At the conclusion of the course, we had to say the Sinner's Prayer together, yet I absolutely could not say it. All along, I continued to have questioning thoughts about communion and water baptism, and I did not want to join committees or go witnessing door to door trying to increase membership. I felt like I did not yet have a testimony, and I knew I was unhappy in the church and unhappy inside myself. I felt that asking others to attend a church I was unhappy with would make me a hypocrite. So, I did not do it. I remember saying, "I don't feel like I'm a good Christian." I know now that Jesus was putting those questions in my heart as a young girl and as an older adult. I was questioning what I was seeing and feeling within Christianity, and I only wanted what was real. A short while later, Jesus gave me the desires of my heart, which were to serve him with something real. In a home prayer meeting outside of Christianity, Jesus gave me the holy Ghost with my dad and stepmother close by. He gave me something real!

While in Rome, Jesus taught me a lesson. St. Peter's Basilica was filled with hundreds of people walking around mesmerized by the church's grand appearance. The marbled floors and columns throughout the church, along with the exquisite ornaments and statues, were a display of the power and authority the Roman Catholic Church once held during the 16th century. From an artistic and historical standpoint, the Basilica is magnificent, but as I watched the people being fooled and giving reverence to deceased Popes and Saints, I felt sad. I wanted to hand them all gospel tracts so they could know the truth, and I wanted to tell them this stuff was not real; it was all a pious deception. My friend Token and I stood

near one man who was crying and praying, and we contemplated how we could stuff a ‘Going to Jesus’ business card into his backpack without him knowing it and mistaking us for pickpockets.

We were only in the Basilica for a short time before we felt so overwhelmed with grief that we just had to get out of there. We quickly headed for the exit. Once outside, we had to make our way through the crowds of people. Just before we reached the stairway leading down into St. Peter’s Square, a group of young teenagers pushed their way past us holding hands and weeping. Within myself I thought, “What’s the big deal, (don’t you young people see that all this just is not real)?!” Token and I and our husbands just wanted to get out of there.

The next morning after visiting the Basilica, we had our day planned to visit Ostia Antica. While I was getting ready, I was listening to some music on my phone. “Because They Trust in Him” started playing. I tuned into the words as Pastor John and Donna Nelson sang:

*Because they trust in Him
He will give their heart’s desire
He will heal and lift them higher
Just because they trust in Him*

*Trust in the Lord, do good
Depart from every sin
Delight yourself in God
Commit your ways to Him*

As I listened to the words of the song, Jesus took me on a quick journey through my life. In my mind, I saw myself as a young girl, holding my blue-beaded Rosary, praying, but wondering why I had to pray to Mary. Then, I saw myself in my thirties, sitting at the dinner table with the Christian minister as he asked us to repeat the Sinner’s Prayer and accept Jesus into our hearts, and feeling it all just did not seem right. Next, I saw myself in the prayer meeting at Gary Savelli’s house, overwhelmed with joy unspeakable as I spoke in tongues when Jesus gave me the holy Ghost. Then, my thought came back to the present as I was looking at myself in that hotel room in Rome. I was living a simple, holy life, happy in Jesus. He had given me the desires of my heart. Then, I saw a vision of those weeping teenagers from the day before as we were leaving St. Peter’s Basilica, and I heard, “If any one of those girls are sincere in seeking after me, and they are mine, I can give them the desires of their heart, too.” I knew then that I had a wrong thought toward those teenagers the day before because at one time, I was one of them. And without Jesus touching me, I could still be one of those girls, crying and weeping in an outward ceremony. But Jesus showed me how real he is and that he sees our hearts. I’m thankful for the happy, holy life Jesus has given me. He truly has given me the desires of my heart – to serve him acceptably and to know the realness of God.



A Childhood Vision

Sarah Callaghan, 2012



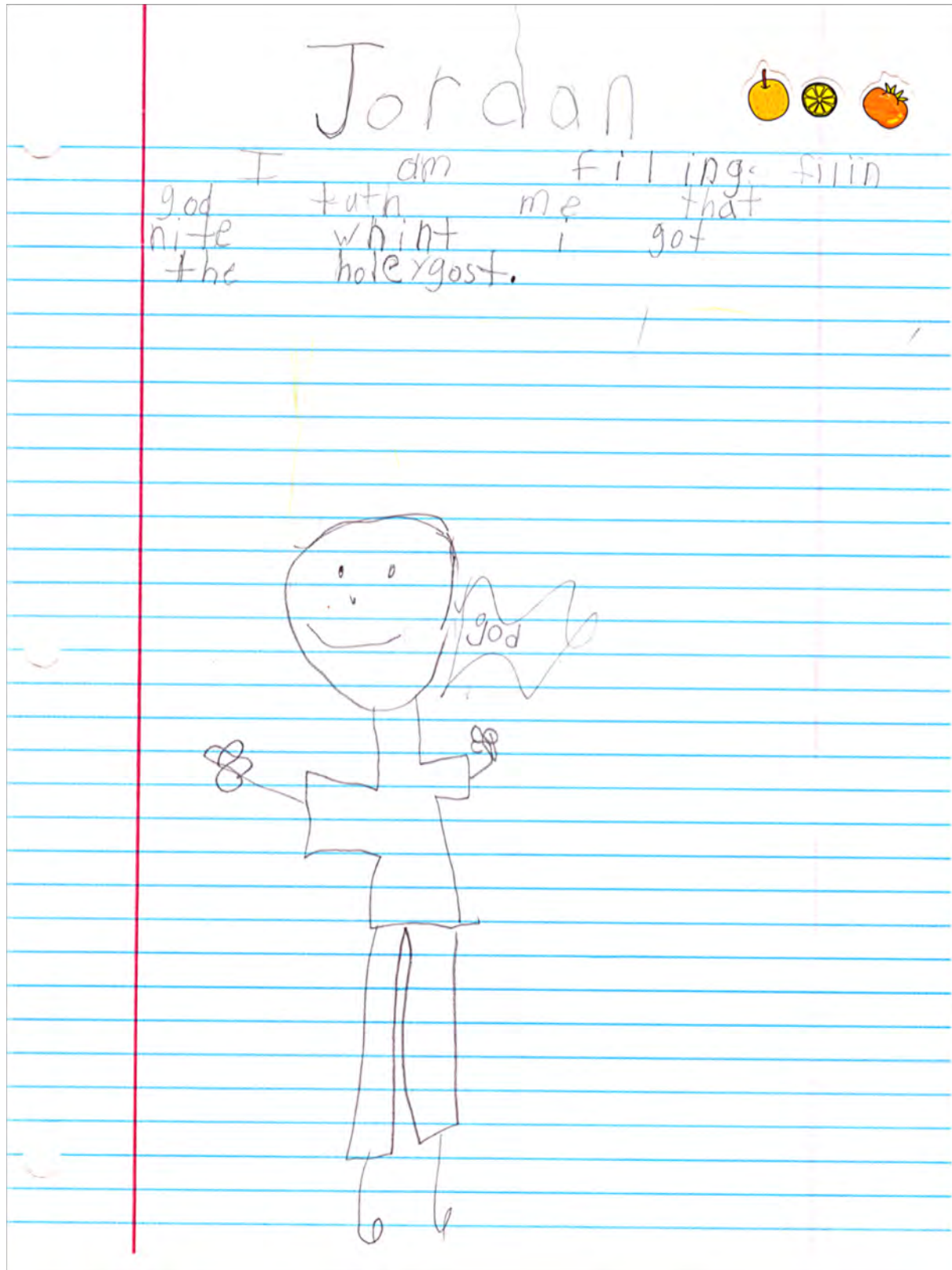
In the summer of 2012, one night I woke up and felt repentant because I didn't want to be separated from my parents in the end. I started crying, and my dad came in, and I started telling him things I had done wrong. Soon, my mom came in, and when she found out what it was all about, she started praying. Dad was saying something, and I was just sitting there staring at a blank wall. Dad's voice faded out, and I had what I would call a vision. I saw a circular room with a throne in the middle. Surrounding the throne were dozens of babies. Some were crying, some were just sitting there. One, I knew, was me. There was a man on the throne, and I was two rows away from him. I knew he was Jesus. I was crying. He reached and picked me up, and when he wrapped his arm around the baby (me), I, for real, felt his robed arm around my shoulders. Then, the vision ended, but the feeling stayed a little longer than the vision. When I went back to sleep, I felt lighter!

The Scarf

Sarah Callaghan, 2014



Some time ago, I decided to make a scarf for my guitar teacher, Uncle Gary. I started knitting with some yarn; however, it felt a little coarse (rough). Then one night, Momma said, "I wish you had something expensive and soft instead." Well, a couple of weeks before that, I had bought several soft expensive yarns for a different purpose. That purpose got canceled, and I had red, blue, and white sitting there. The red was the color Momma was thinking of, but I ended up using the blue. When I took it to Uncle Gary, he said that he was needing a scarf and did not have one. Aunt Song had asked him earlier that day whether or not he had one. I love how God and Jesus set things up.



Drawing by Jordan Ayscue

Fear of the Unknown . . . Gone!

Jordan Ayscue, 2014



Around October of 2014, the doctors found out I had scoliosis. After I found out, I got really scared. I cried just about every time I just had the thought of having scoliosis and what might happen. One night, I got ready and went to the meeting just like I did every time we went. When I got there, Uncle Earl started talking about healings, and I got so touched by it that I started crying. Aunt Token spotted me crying in my seat and signaled me to come sit beside her, so I did. When I sat down, she told me that it was okay for me to go up to Pastor John and ask him to pray for me, right in the middle of the meeting. So, a couple minutes later, I got up, went over to where Pastor John was sitting, and asked him to pray for me. Then he laid hands on me, and the saints all got up and laid hands on me. I cried as everyone prayed, and I knew Jesus was going to take care of me. Later that night, I didn't have as much fear as I used to about having scoliosis. The next time I went back to the doctor, I found out I had a Chiari, which is where the brain slips into the spinal cord area, and

I was a little worried, but I knew God would take care of me. Also, it made me feel better when I found out that my Aunt Token had one, too. Since that night that Jesus healed me, I have never again had much fear about having scoliosis or a Chiari.

Reading the Bible

Sheila Puckett, 1962



When I was about eleven years old, we had a preacher at the Methodist church where we were attending that was very interested in young people. He would often help with Vacation Bible School and made the Bible stories sound so interesting. Nearing the end of one of our classes, he asked if we all wanted to promise God that we would read a chapter in our Bible every day. So, I raised my hand that I would do this, and I did for many years. During my reading at home in my bedroom, I quickly found out that I loved the New Testament, but I did not have much interest in the Old Testament, except for Psalms and Proverbs. I really did love reading those two books. The New Testament stories were some of my favorites, too. David and Paul were definitely my favorites.

One night in particular, I remember reading Ephesians 4. I asked my mama how could there be one faith because we had been to the Baptist church and now we were in the Methodist church, and I had a friend in school that was in the Holiness church. So how could that be because it just didn't make any sense and it wasn't what the Bible said, either.

If I had not made that promise to read my Bible, I doubt I would have done it on my own. So, I have been thankful for someone being in my life that encouraged me to do that.

Loving to read my Bible at a young age, and believing it to be true, proved to be a tremendous help to me in the years that followed. There were many difficult trials that came, but I had already started learning that God is a very present help in time of trouble. God was keeping me in His care all along the way. Of course, it was years later that I really came to understand that.



Love of Music

Rob Nelson, 1977-2017



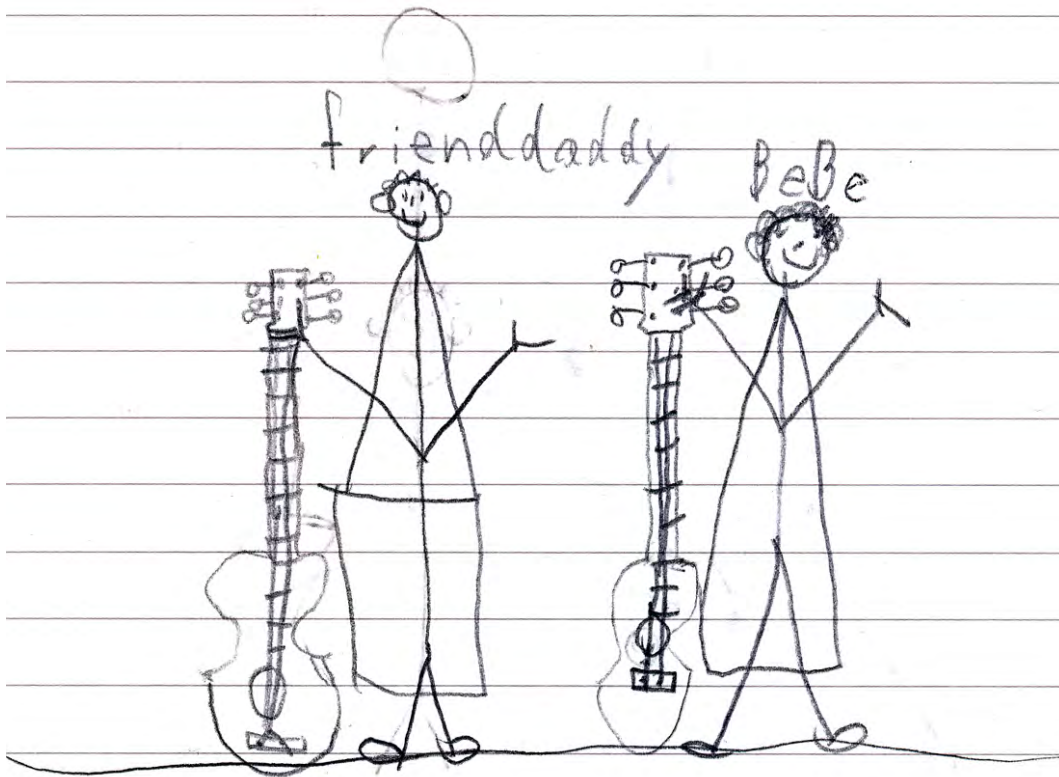
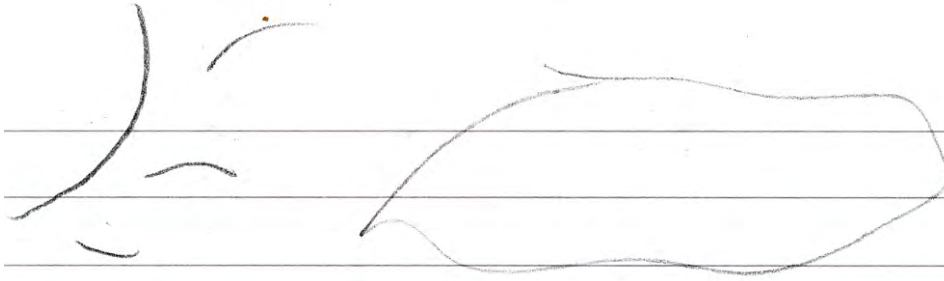
One of my very good memories of growing up as a young boy in Thomasville, NC, is that my mom would have gospel music playing on our record player in the living room at times. She loved the music. I loved gospel music a lot also. Unfortunately, my dad had a very bad temper and rheumatoid arthritis to go with it, so when he was home, we could not play the music as often as we wanted. When my dad was not home, my mom would turn the music up really loud, and it would play all through the house. She would cry and sing with the music, and the music brought us relief while my dad was away.

My mom, brother and I attended a Baptist church during those years. When I was old enough to get my driver's license (1977), I wanted to spend as much time at the church as possible. I had a key to the church because I was there often (when not at school, playing baseball, working, etc.) doing landscaping, mowing, and just hanging out there. I did not know much of anything about religion, but just being there, in and around the building, allowed me to get away from my dad and get some rest. I started buying pre-recorded instrumental cassettes of Dallas Holm and other gospel musicians because I wanted to sing, and I did not know how to play any instruments. I would turn on the sound system, put in my instrumental cassettes and sing to Jesus, all alone in the building. During many of those times, I would start crying and feel cold chills running all over me.

Fast forward to 1998, and Jesus touched me and gave me a chance to repent and really live. He gave me the holy Ghost in March of 1999. Then one day, brother Billy Mellick brought his small Korg recording machine from Kentucky to Pastor John's house in North Carolina, to record some songs. I liked the looks of the



music recording unit that he brought, but I did not want to get too close to the machine during recording because I wanted to be free to sing and clap and not be tied down to learning/helping with the machine. But those were my thoughts. Jesus had a different plan! During the live recording session in Pastor John's office that day, Jesus started giving me the desire to learn all that I could about recording our very special music. Now, I get to work on recording and mixing music as many hours of each day as I want to! Jesus gave me the love for music when I was a young person, and I am very thankful.



from Naomi
To frienddaddy

Healing Knee Testimony

Amy Boveia, 1982



When I was a young girl, we used to have kids in the neighborhood come over and play ball in our backyard. One day, while playing one of those games, my mom hit a pop fly ball. It was coming straight toward me. I just knew I was going to catch it. I bent down, put my hand (with my mitt on) right between my knees. I was looking up, and here comes the ball, and then, I heard a loud pop! I misjudged the ball, and it hit me right on the knee! It hurt so badly. I hobbled over to the steps of our back porch while they finished out the game. By the time the game was over, my knee had swollen up so big my mom said we needed to go to the hospital.

At the hospital, they did an x-ray and discovered that my kneecap was chipped. The doctor said they were going to have to draw the fluid off my knee and put a cast on it. I had only been to the hospital one other time in my life, and that was when I had my tonsils removed in the 2nd grade. I was pretty scared because they said that drawing the fluid from my knee was going to be painful. And when they started the process, it was! Very. After they finished that process, they put the soft cast on my

knee and sent me home. But one of the things the doctor said as we were leaving was that if the swelling had not gone down in a week or so, they would have to draw more fluid off and set the cast again.

I don't remember much about that week, but as the time drew near for me to return, the feeling of not wanting to have the fluid drawn from my knee again grew stronger. Just a little background about my childhood: I grew up around holiness and people who believed in healing. That was a normal part of my life in our home, so, whenever I was sick, I knew that if I prayed to Jesus, he would touch me. I had even experienced this before when I was sick with a cold or had a fever. Our pastor, George C. Clark, or "Brother Clark" as we called him, would pray for me, and I would get better. So, I asked him to pray for me so my knee would be healed, and he did. He came over one night and prayed for my knee. Now that he is no longer with us, I am thankful to have those sweet memories.

Later in the week, I noticed that my cast started moving up and down on my leg. So much so, it was a little uncomfortable. My mom and I were very curious to see what was going on because we were thinking, "Did God heal my knee?" So, my mom decided that we would take the cast off! I will never forget me sitting on the table and my mom and I working on taking off my cast. It was funny, really, but probably not the best idea to try this at home. But, we got it off, and when we did, the swelling had gone down, but not completely. We then got a little worried that maybe my knee was not well. So, my mom called our family doctor, and he told us to make an appointment with an orthopedic doctor. So, we called and made an appointment with him. Now for me, that meant having that leftover fluid drawn off my knee, and that was scary. I really didn't want to go through that again, so, inside, I was really praying that that wouldn't have to happen.

One night, my Aunt Martha, who was Brother Clark's wife, came over, so excited. (They lived next door to us.) She had something to tell me. She was watching Pat Roberson on the 700 Club, and she said that Pat Roberson was doing his prayer time, and at the end of his show, he said that there was "a little girl named Amy who is twelve years old, and has hurt her knee, and is very worried about it. Tell her it is going to be okay." When I heard that, I just remember thinking, "Really?!" and I asked my mom, "Do you think that could be me?" I believed that it was and that Jesus was really going to heal my knee.

The swelling continued to go down, and we were anxious to hear what the doctor had to say about my knee, whether I would have any permanent damage or complications. It was just a few days after having that experience from Jesus that I had an appointment with the orthopedic doctor. When I saw him, he said

that my knee was okay, and I had nothing to worry about. Jesus did just what he said! He healed my knee! I was so happy!

To this day, I have never had another problem with that knee. I have heard that sometimes when you have an injury, and the weather is cold or damp, that your injury will ache or act up. I have never had an ache in that knee since that touch from Jesus. It is such a sweet memory for me as a young girl, about twelve years old, praying to Jesus and asking him to heal me, and he did! Not only did he touch me, but he told someone who didn't even know me that he was going to heal me, and then, they said it on television – in detail, my situation! Then, my aunt heard it and came and told me about it! What a precious memory. I'm so thankful for that touch.



Vince & Amy Boveia

The First Time

Vince Boveia, 1983



During my childhood, my Mom made sure that my sister and I attended church and Sunday school regularly and were involved with church camps and other church activities. But when I think back on those years of being involved in those things, I can remember nothing about learning anything with regards to church doctrine, ceremonies, etc. I really feel like that was Jesus protecting me, by not allowing me to get too attached to any of those things, or even to realize that they were going on at all.

During the times when there were extracurricular activities at the church, we kids would pretty much have free reign of the church building, and I loved to use those times to explore the big old building. One of the places that was open was the church kitchen. I can remember going into the kitchen and finding large cans of Hi-C juice and bags of little crunchy cracker bits – the same ones that the adults would get to eat and drink during the church services. I would sometimes take a break from playing and exploring and grab a handful of the little crackers and pour myself a

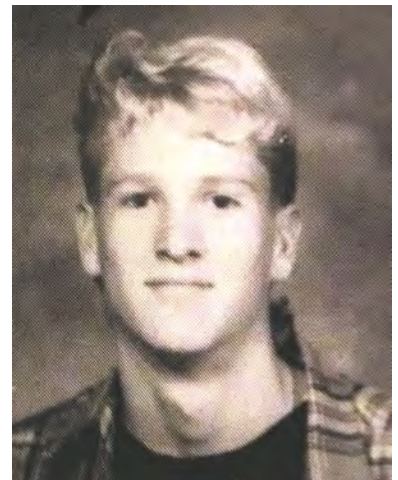
cup of the juice.

When I turned twelve years old, I was told that I was old enough to be baptized. I had no idea what this meant or what it was for. All I knew was that it was something I was supposed to do to become a member of the church (I thought of it more like becoming like an adult) and that it would mean I would get to eat the little crackers and drink the little cups of juice during the church services, just like an adult.

When it came time for the baptism ceremony, it was an event held in a small side chapel in the church building, with just me, my parents, and the minister who were present. I had to go into a small room in the back of the chapel and take all of my clothes off and put on some funny-looking white robes. (I think I had a bathing suit on underneath.) I then came out and met the minister in a room with a large bathtub that looked like a hot tub with steps leading down into it. The minister led me down into the water, read some things from a Bible or some other book, said some prayers, and dunked me completely under the water. I remember leaving out of there feeling embarrassed, confused, and just glad to have it over with. I was rewarded with my own brand new red Bible with my name printed on the inside and signed by the Minister (I still have this Bible); and, I could now eat the little crackers and drink the Hi-C during church – but I was pretty disappointed that they only let you have one little cracker and one tiny little cup of juice. Overall, the experience was pretty disappointing, and I didn't understand (until many years later) what that whole ritual was about. Even though I didn't know him, I feel that Jesus had me in a "bubble", not letting me ever really see or understand those kinds of things that were going on around me during those years in church.

The second experience was when I was about seventeen years old. At this time in my life, I had become a rebellious, cynical, and sarcastic teenager. I started hanging around the wrong group of kids and started listening to punk rock and heavy metal music, and I started doing things that I shouldn't have been doing. I was angry at the world, and I had it in my head that I wanted to be a rebel, to be "bad", so to speak.

One night, I was hanging out with some friends after a punk rock concert. A couple of the guys I used to hang around with started talking about robbing a convenience store. I had done some bad things with these guys before, but what they were talking about doing was taking things to a whole different level. They were talking about robbing a store! Wanting to show that I fit in with the crowd, I told them I was coming with them.

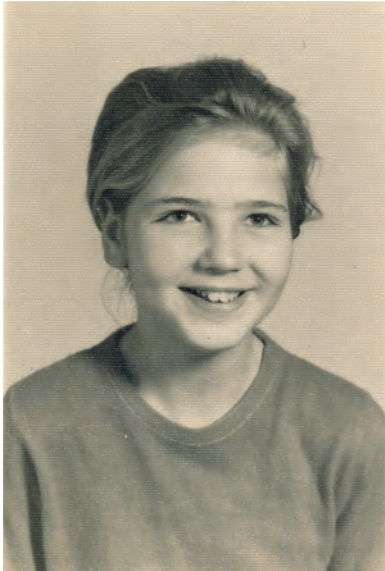


When I said this, one of the guys (the worst one of the bunch who already had a criminal record and had a really rotten attitude) looked at me with sort of a surprised look on his face and said, “You don’t seem like someone who would do something like this.” The way he said it really struck me, and I immediately had a change of heart. Instead of committing a crime with them that night, I went off to do something else while they left to do their unlawful deed. Looking back on that event, I know it was Jesus putting it in that young man’s heart to say those words to me, to keep me from doing something I would regret for the rest of my life.



When I Was Twelve Years Old

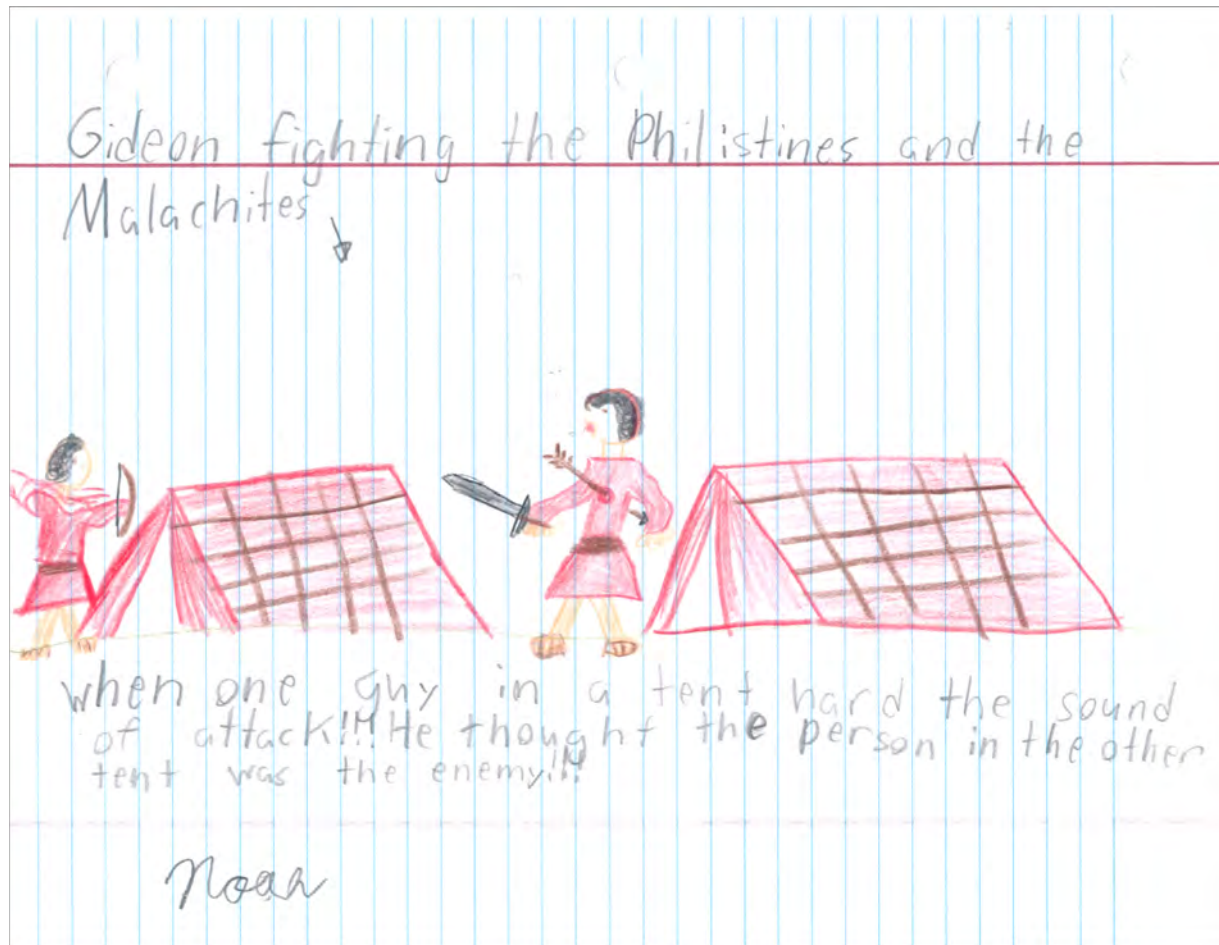
Kathy Tuck, 1964



I can remember the time I was around twelve years old. I lived with my grandparents, and my granddaddy had a workshop in the back yard. Somehow, the shop caught on fire. My “Big Mama” (my grandmother) was in a wheelchair by then, and someone went and told my mom that her mama’s house was on fire. (It actually was my granddaddy’s shop in the back yard.) My mom took off running on the gravel road because she thought my Big Mama was in danger, and she fell right on her head. It was busted open, and it was bleeding. When she realized that the house was not on fire, she ran to Big Mama, and she started praying for my mom. Immediately, her head closed up! My mom never had to go to a doctor. Jesus healed my mom’s head, and she never even had a scar. I remember this very well because I was there and saw the whole thing. It made such an impression on me and has encouraged me all through the years to know that Jesus was real and he could heal.

Also, I would like to say, I was brought up around old saints in my neighborhood. Old saints are people who prayed and had the holy Ghost. To me, to see some of those older saints come to my Big Mama’s house and tell how heavy their hearts were, and then, before you knew what was going on, they would be on the floor, crying out to Jesus, really touched me. I mean, when they prayed, they got in touch with Jesus, and it was not a five-minute prayer, either. They did not get up until they felt some relief or they got an answer from Jesus. To me, they were what you call “prayer warriors”. I will never forget them because they were part of my life when I was young, and seeing their faith in Jesus is part of the reason why I am here today.





Drawing by Noah Curtsinger

A Special Touch

Sister Willie Walker, 1944



Clockwise from top left: Sister Willie & her siblings Edward, Bobby, Earl, & Geraldine

I was about twelve years old. There were just a handful of holy people in the community where I grew up, and they had cottage meetings on Monday nights. It was right down the street, so I decided to go to the cottage meeting. They were just singing and testifying! I remember I was sitting in a straight chair, and the power of God hit me, and I spun! It just spun me all around, completely around in that chair! I don't know how my legs got around and all, but they did. I don't know, but I guess that touch was just something there to build upon. Every now and again, the Lord brings that back to my remembrance. I think I was about twelve years old, and I've never forgotten that touch that I got from God.



Singing to Jesus

Donna Nelson, 1975



I have always loved singing. I remember how one time when I was about twelve years old, I was on a bus, traveling with a youth choir to go sing. Our choir leader had one song in particular that she would sing as a solo, and I just loved that song, so much so that I had memorized every word of it. On one particular day of the trip, everyone was so tired that all the kids and adults were sleeping on the bus as we traveled along to our next stop. I was lying under the simple bench seat, trying to go to sleep, and the road noise was very loud. I started singing my favorite song at that time, "Whatever It Takes". I sang and sang it. I love remembering that sweet time as a young girl, singing to Jesus.

Another time, I was mowing the grass and singing. My sisters and I would divide up the mowing each week, and this particular week, I had the front yard to mow. As I mowed, I loved to sing. And this particular day, I was singing the same song, "Whatever It Takes". I was in my own world, singing with my whole heart to Jesus. I didn't mind the mowing part at all. What I loved was just walking back and forth, mowing row after row, singing and singing with my whole heart. I am so thankful Jesus gave me the desire and sweet feelings to want to sing to him when I was just a young girl. Here are some of the words to that song I sang forty years ago:

Whatever It Takes

by Lanny Wolfe

*There's a voice calling me
from an old rugged tree
And it whispers, Draw closer to Me
Leave this world far behind
There are new heights to climb
and a new life in Me you will find.*

*For whatever it takes
To draw closer to You, Lord
That's what I'll be willing to do
For whatever it takes
To be more like You
That's what I'll be willing to do*

*I'll trade sunshine for rain
Comfort for pain
That's what I'll be willing to do
For whatever it takes, for my will to break
That's what I'll be willing to do.*



Donna Nelson singing with John Clark, Sr.

A New Language

Jenny Holstein, 1990



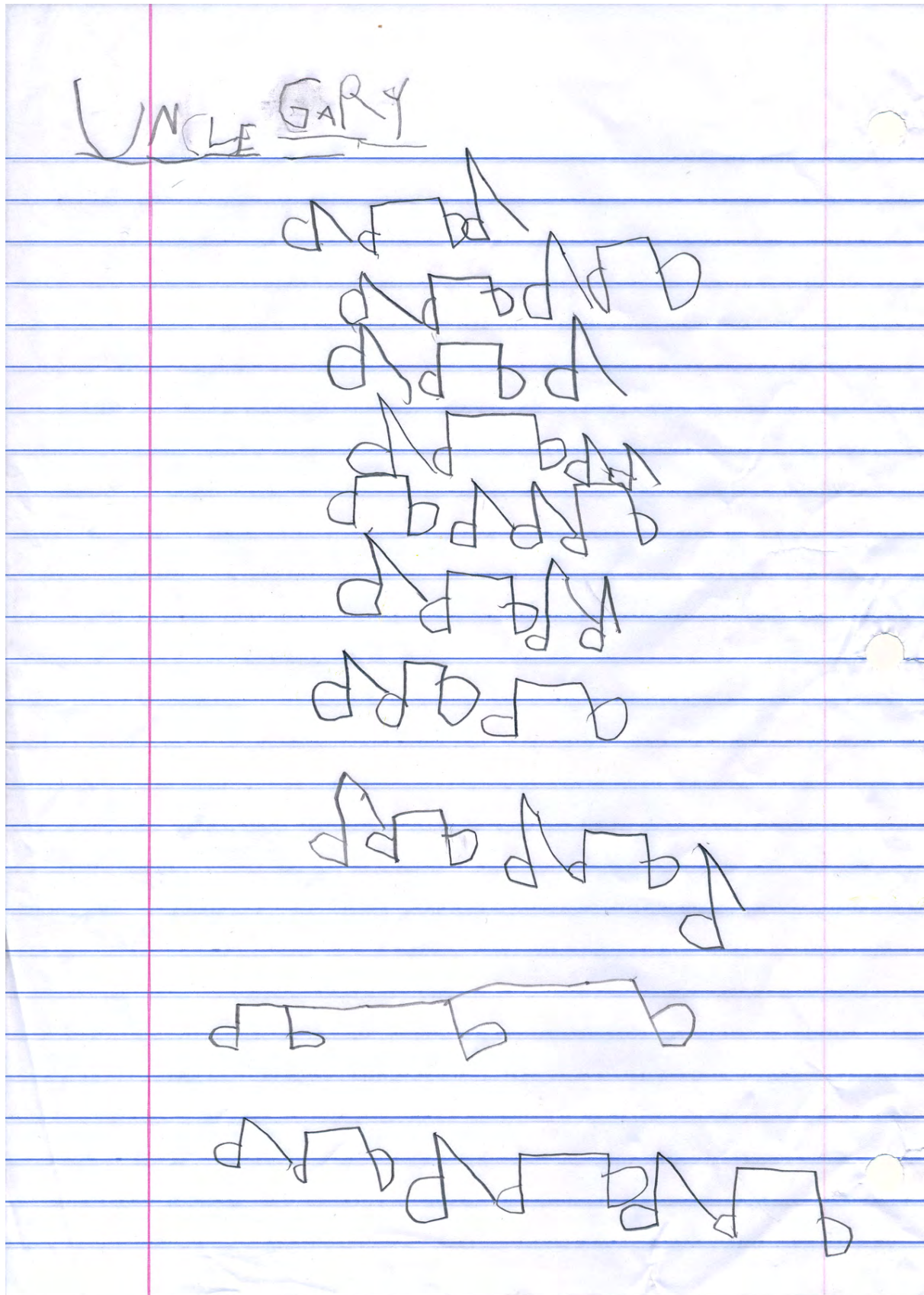
Like most teenage girls, I was very self-conscious. When I was about fourteen years old, our family went camping by a river with some of our cousins. My cousin, Christina, was just a couple of years older than me, and she was there. Christina was athletic, smart, and beautiful. She had a friend with her, and I was kind of trying to hang around with them, but I was being excluded – they had developed a special language, called the “Lullaby Language” that they had learned, where you add certain syllables to words to disguise those words. They were using their language to talk to each other, and I felt left out as they spoke and laughed with each other.

After a while of trying to hang out with them, I felt very sad because I was left out. I remember I sat down on the river bank feeling very sad and rejected. The Lord saw my hurt and spoke to my heart and said, “I am going to teach you a new language.” Immediately, I pondered over what He said. I knew instinctively that the language God was speaking about was not French, Italian or any language learned by humans. I knew it was from God, from heaven, and that it involved the mouth and the tongue. At that time, I had absolutely no understanding of speaking in tongues; in fact, I had never heard of it before, nor seen anyone do it or move under the power of God. Even the terms “Pentecostal” or “charismatic” were totally foreign to me. But God was going to give that heavenly language to me, and He did just that sometime later.

No one should doubt that God can reach anyone, anywhere in the world, regardless of their knowledge or their background! God is very good!



Jenny with friend Michelle



God Put Music in My Heart

Gary Savelli, 1967



One day in junior high school, I believe in the 8th grade, I attended our weekly assembly in the school auditorium. At the end of the assembly, they had a small group of students play music who had formed a little band with electric guitars, a bass, and a drummer. I was amazed at the sound – that it could sound like the records we listened to at home, yet it was live and in person. I did not know anything about God at that time, but looking back, I can see now that this was when the Lord planted the seed in my heart to love music. I wanted to be able to have a part in people feeling something, as I had felt that day in the school auditorium. But I had no idea how that desire of my heart would be fulfilled later on in my life.

From that point on, I committed my time and energy to learning to play guitar. I mean A LOT of my time. On weekends, I would sometimes play all day on a Saturday, or spend the day looking at music books in the library. I took no lessons; we had no YouTube or other means, and I didn't know of anyone else who played guitar that I could learn from. So, it was basically me and a record player, trying to imitate what I was hearing. Because I had no formal training, and because of skill limitations, I did not develop into what I would call an outstanding player, so I tried to make myself valuable to band members I was playing with in other ways, such as writing out the chords to songs for them. I knew that would save them the time and trouble. I had listened to so many songs in so many musical styles while trying to learn how to play that I was competent to do that. It had developed my ear for chords, and I had figured out how a song works. My arranging work made the players I knew better musicians. I started to write songs for the group I was in that would feature the abilities of different ones, so the audience could hear what I was hearing and appreciate their gifts. At the time, I had no clue what God had in store for me. But it's all about HIM, and this was how He was preparing me, though I knew nothing about what was to come.

After a life of continuous disappointment in the music world as a teen and young adult, playing in many places as a full-time musician, that life came to an end abruptly. That was also about the time when Jesus started to touch my life, and eventually, I received the holy Ghost baptism, and a new chapter and a new life began.

It seemed to me that all God had to do was transfer over what He had been doing with me in music. I had new feelings, and now, new music to play. But it was music with a purpose. It was so much better; there was no comparison. I loved to express my love for Jesus through music. It easily touched people's hearts because people have feelings, and music draws those feelings out. It touched me to see someone have an experience with God from a song we played, and so, I looked for those opportunities that the Spirit was in.

The diligence I had given to what I loved as a young boy (that is, music) made me ready when it was God's time. When we do something with our whole heart as a young person, God can use it.

One thing about music that has been a part of me since I first started playing an instrument was using what I knew to make someone else better. Whether that means teaching someone else, or arranging a song for them, or writing songs that other people can play and sing, if it makes THEM better, I love it. I actually think I get more satisfaction watching someone else sing or play and be blessed than doing it myself. I love to see people connect in the things of Jesus, and to see them built up.

Over the course of forty years, I have written many songs, and I have been blessed many times to see God's people feeling and experiencing that music. When the Spirit touches people through my music, I am still amazed because I know only God can do that. I tried in the world, and I couldn't do much of anything. But everything is different when it's in Jesus' hands. I am thankful today for Jesus putting a love for music in my heart as a youth, before I even knew him or wanted him.

“Eye has not seen, ear has not heard, neither has it entered into the heart of man the things that God has prepared for them that love Him.” THAT is a good God.



The Hand of the Lord Was upon Me

Tom Traughber, 1965

*So the Spirit lifted me up, and took me away. . . .
The hand of the Lord was strongly upon me. (Ezekiel 3:14)*



In early spring of 1965, at the age of fourteen, my best friend, Jim, and I, along with our buddy, Guy, were messing around in a lumber mill yard close to the neighborhood where we lived. We had no concern at the time that we were trespassing on private property or that there were ample opportunities for us to easily get hurt. On the contrary, for three young teenage boys seeking adventure, this was the ideal place to find it, so we thought.

Gaining access to the mill yard was an adventure in itself. One only needed to know where the dirt path was located next to an old factory that led past a cemetery and then down a small hill to the railroad tracks. It was only a short walk on the tracks before coming to another small hill which led into the mill yard. There was no fence to climb that I can recall or even a security guard barring our entrance.

The mill yard was filled with rows of large logs neatly stacked on top of each other several feet high in the shape of pyramids. Many times, we would climb to the top and jump from one stack to the next.

On this particular day, it was getting late, towards evening. The three of us had taken our place standing next to each other on a large stack of logs. As darkness was soon to fill the sky, bat-like birds began to swarm over our heads. We began to toss sticks up in the air which caused the birds to dive toward the sticks like small attack planes. This was not an unusual occurrence. We did this on several occasions.

After a while, our friend, Guy, decided to tackle another feat as my best friend and I continued tossing sticks in the air at the birds. Guy had found a board, most likely a 2"x4", and began trying to lift one of the logs by wedging the board between two logs and prying up. He made several attempts to no avail but was determined that he could do it.

The three of us stood next to each other when, suddenly, I had a thought to jump across to the next stack of logs. Shortly after I landed on the adjacent pile, I heard a noise. I quickly turned around and saw that the pile of logs where my friends were standing was beginning to roll. As the logs tumbled forward, I saw Guy tumbling head over heels with them. In a matter of seconds, this young fifteen-year-old boy had been crushed to death.

When the logs stopped rolling, the only visible part of Guy's body was his foot. He was completely covered up by the massive pile of logs. Miraculously, my best friend, Jim, who had been



Tom & Suzi Traughber

standing next to Guy when the logs began to shift, was not harmed. I am not sure if he jumped before the logs began rolling or not.

It was neither luck nor coincidence that I escaped from getting hurt or killed. The thought I had, to jump to another pile of logs just moments before, came from Jesus. Perhaps an angel was sent to whisper the thought to me. I don't know. What I do know for certain is that "The hand of the Lord was upon me," and my best friend that day.

Many years went by before I realized that it was Jesus that spared my life. My friend Jim and I eventually went our separate ways. I ran into him about ten years or so after Guy's death. Somehow, he had heard that I was serving the Lord and that my life had changed. Sadly, he made a sarcastic remark about my new life with Jesus as if he was disgusted with me. It hurt to see that he had not changed. This person whom I had grown up with was now rejecting me because of what Jesus had done for my life. I pray that someday he will come to realize that Jesus had a purpose for saving his life that day, as well as mine.

Glory to God!

Growing up in Holiness

Ashley Clark, 1999



I grew up in holiness. I never knew anything but that. I think my parents would have described me as a good girl and expected no less than that from me my entire childhood. They didn't realize that as I was getting older, so were my friends. My school friends did not have the same upbringing as me, nor the same morals. At the age of fourteen, Jesus decided he would try my young heart.

Starting in the fall of my freshman year, all of the students were trying to figure out the group of friends they wanted to belong to and the type of person they wanted to be. The group I had chosen was better than most. The kids came from fairly good families and had more morals than the average teenagers.

Every fall the school held a dance. We had all decided to go and see what it was all about. I was raised very sheltered and was ready to get out, so I talked my parents into letting me go with my friends. My closest friend was going to stay with me that night, and we were given strict instructions by my mother to be waiting for her outside of the gym (where the dance took place) at 11:00 p.m.

I went in trying to be "cool" and just like everyone else, but I wasn't. As the music started, I quickly realized this truth. I was shocked and uncomfortable with the music, the dancing, and the talk going on. Instead of choosing to call my mom to come get me, I stayed. I didn't want to be called a goody-goody, like I always had been. In fact, I not only didn't call my mother, but when 11:00 p.m. came around, I didn't come out to meet her. I never did that; I was never one to disobey like that, ever. I had a healthy fear of my parents and just never crossed the line, until then. My mom came in looking for me. She was upset, extremely upset. The next day I was in for a big talking to. I don't remember much from the conversation other than this one line, "Ashley, I can't trust you, now." I was devastated. I was the good girl, the one who never made trouble.

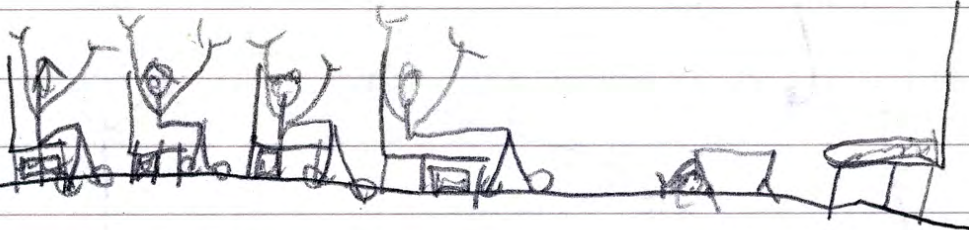
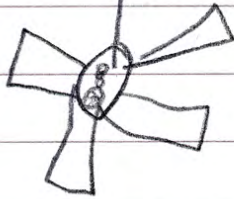
It broke my heart, and I took it to Jesus. That day, I made a huge decision for a fourteen-year-old. I broke off connections in my heart that were pulling me towards the world. I sought for Jesus to help me. I had just two friends, Jesus showed me through a series of events, that were the only ones at school that would respect me and the decisions I would have to make. They did and still do.

It wasn't just that night that I'd done wrong. I had let my heart slip while in middle school. All of those little things added up. I thought no one knew. Jesus did. He had seen me dabbling with fire and decided to crank up the heat to let me see what kind of heart I had. I am thankful I got the lesson while I was young. It saved me from a mountain of heartache! He's a good God.

I am now thirty-two years old. I have been through many a fiery trial. But I made my decision that day. Even in the times that I've been unsteady in my faith, Jesus has shown me that He has and will always be my anchor.



Praising God
The medeng



To frienddaddy
from Naomi

Jesus Watched over Me

Jonathan Sellers, 2013



In the summer of 2013, I was riding my dirt bike down the side of the road. Earlier in the day, I had seen a Sheriff patrolling where I was driving. So, I wanted to be very careful about riding next to the road. I ended up going home farther in the ditch than I usually had in the past. I was not sure what was ahead in the ditch, so I went slower than I normally would go. As it turned out, there was a very large hole, about nine inches wide and eight inches deep, that I didn't see. I was going slow enough so that I wasn't hurt badly. My front tire went into the hole, and I flew over the handle bars and landed on my wrist, and the dirt bike landed on my knee/upper leg. I was able to push the bike off me and get it out of the hole. I'm very thankful for how Jesus kept me safe that day. One part that is burned in my mind is when I first started to go over the handle bars, all I could say was, "Help, Jesus!" After I got out and was okay, I got down right there and prayed and thanked him for keeping me safe. I wasn't hurt badly throughout the whole thing.

My Desire To Play Guitar

Darren Prater, 1973



When I was fifteen years old, I started having the desire to learn to play the guitar. My older sister got a guitar for Christmas that year. She didn't play it very much because the strings were hard to press down. She would let me play it since she didn't play it very much.

Someone I knew showed me how to play a couple of basic chords, and I practiced them until I could play them well. After that, I went to the library to see if they had any books on playing guitar. They had one, but it was checked out. I had to wait until it was returned before I could check it out. That seemed like a long time to me, but really, it was only a week or so.

I learned all of the chords that I could out of that book. There weren't a whole lot because it was a book for beginners. As time went on, I learned more chords from songbooks. I listened to records and cassette tapes and learned every song that I liked. Playing guitar was my favorite thing to do when I had free time. A lot of the time, I would play until my fingers hurt. At that time, I didn't know that God already had a plan for

me and for the talent He had given me.

A year later, for my sixteenth birthday, my parents bought me a much nicer guitar to play on. I was thrilled about it, and it made me want to play even more. As I got better at playing, I started to play for other people more. I would take it with me to the Christian coffee house in town. Its purpose was to give young people, and anyone, really, a place to go to listen to music, sing songs, play games, have Bible studies, and just talk with others. Some people there even had the holy Ghost. There were a few people I knew that would go there with their guitars, banjos, and whatever else they played, and I enjoyed playing and singing with them.

In my senior year of high school, I played guitar for the musical play, "Godspell". I also played and sang with some friends of mine at a charity dinner for the school district to raise money for things the school needed. At any given time during the evening, we were playing and singing for about two hundred people. I know the Lord had His hand in that so I would lose my fear of singing in front of a big crowd of people. I also played and sang at the senior talent show at school, with my friends and by myself, in front of everyone I went to high school with. I thought that it would be hard because I was standing up in front of the whole school, my biggest audience yet. After the first song, I was pretty comfortable through the rest of the show, which I had a big part in. After doing that talent show, it seemed like it was easier for me to talk to people and to make friends. A lot of people started liking me because of my guitar playing and singing, and it made me want to play guitar and sing even more.

As I grew older, I started playing around in different places, including some nightclubs, cafés, and other places where they had open mic nights. Sometimes, I would get up and play with the band at the places I would go, or sing while they would take a break. I wrote quite a few worldly songs back then, and people seemed to like to hear them. I think what I liked most about singing is that I could make people feel things when I sang. I saw grown men with tears in their eyes sometimes. When I realized that my talent could make people feel things, I decided that I wanted to sing for a living. The only problem was that something always seemed to get in the way of me ever going professional and writing songs and singing for a living. I didn't realize at the time that the "something" was really a "someone" – Jesus.

One day, a few years later, I decided that I didn't want to sing worldly songs anymore. The songs didn't have any meaning to me, and I had lost my desire to sing, so I quit. At some point after that, I started going back to church. I thought I might sing Christian music. I tried going to a few churches, looking for one I liked or felt like I fit into, but they all felt the same – just dead and boring to me. I thought that something was wrong with me not liking church, so I just stopped going and quit playing

music altogether. Most Christian music that I had heard was just entertainment anyway, and that is what I was trying to stay away from. The thing that I had loved so much in the past was tucked away for a few years, but not forgotten, at least not by Jesus. He had everything under control, even when I had given up on it.

Sometimes after that, I would take my guitar out just to play a little, and the Lord gave me a few songs in those times. “Just Know” is one of those songs, and “The Light That Leads Me Home” is another. At times, I would take my guitar out and sing those songs just for the comfort they would give me. I knew God was out there, but I just didn’t know where out there.

I started playing again in 1996, and that was the year that I met my wife, Julie. I would play for her some, and she didn’t seem to mind it too much. After we were married, she wanted me to go out and buy a new guitar because the one I was playing was an old hand-me-down from my brother. My guitar had been stolen several years earlier, and I just didn’t bother to replace it. I was pretty happy about having a new guitar, so I started playing more. For a short time after we started going to church together, I thought again about singing Christian music, and maybe writing some songs. That was short-lived, though. We stopped going to church after a few months. Just like before, the churches we went to were just not feeling right to us. A short time later, when I found brother Gary’s website, Isaiah58.com, and started reading about the truth, I realized that I couldn’t sing or write Christian songs. Even if I didn’t understand the truth completely, I knew that something was wrong with Christianity in general. I put my guitar away again, only pulling it out occasionally.

On our first visit to North Carolina to meet Pastor John and everyone else here, I didn’t say anything about being able to play guitar and sing. On our second visit, though, after everyone found out I could play guitar, I did play and sing. When that happened, I felt like I really wanted to start doing that again. Something inside of me was wanting to do what I had always wanted to do – play music and sing! After that visit, I started having some good feelings, and Jesus started giving me more songs to write.

One day, back home in Washington, while driving in my little truck, I heard a country song on the radio. It was a nice song, whatever it was, and I remember saying out loud that I could do that. I could write a song like that and sing it and make money doing that. I heard the Spirit speak to me and say, “I saved you from that.” I know that what the Spirit told me that day was true. If I had become a famous singer and had everything I wanted, I probably would not have wanted God and would have wasted a wonderful talent and wasted my life. When I look back, I can see some of the things the Lord used to keep me from what I had wanted earlier on in my life. I am thankful He was looking out for me when I wasn’t even looking out for myself. I can see how Jesus was directing my life from when I was a child to get me here to where I am today. This really is a wonderful life, and I couldn’t think of a better place to be, or a better bunch of people to sing songs for.



Julie & Darren Prater

Saving My Life

Leah Weber, 2000-2002

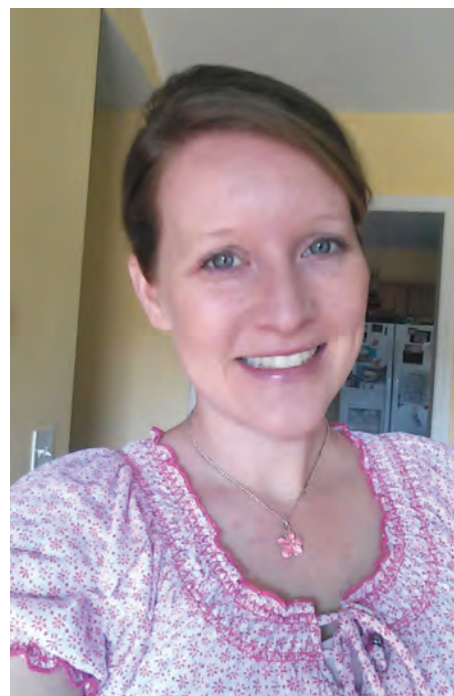


When I was fifteen years old, my parents found the truth through Brother Gary Savelli's Isaiah 58 website, and were soon to communicate with Pastor John Clark. At this time in my life, I had not grown up with any religious background. I went to churches occasionally with a friend of my grandma, but I really didn't know anything about God. However, something in my heart was triggered by any bits of information, teaching CD's, music CD's, or conversations that my parents would introduce. The day after my sixteenth birthday, I traveled to North Carolina with them to visit Pastor John and the family of God who gathered together there. The minute I met everyone, I fell in love. A few days into the trip, it felt like home, people felt like my family, and I knew that was where I wanted to be. There was a strong connection that I didn't know about at the time, and I knew they had something I wanted. I watched my step-mother receive the holy Ghost, and at that moment, my heart was changed.

When we flew back home to Washington State, my life changed as well. Habits started changing, desires started changing, how I spoke started changing, and I wanted to go back to North Carolina. Jesus was helping me know through that time that I didn't belong where I was, and I had the hope that someday it would change.

Months later, in November, we traveled back to North Carolina for a visit during the Thanksgiving holiday. It was a few days later that I received the holy Ghost, after telling Jesus how much I wanted what everyone there had. I wanted to know him and love him, and I was tired of my old life . . . as short as it had been at that time.

A month later, Jesus moved us to North Carolina to be near God's sweet people and start a new life together. I am very thankful that Jesus chose to put those feelings for him in my heart. I am thankful that he chose me! I was a teenage girl going down wrong roads, with wrong feelings, not wanting them but not knowing how to avoid them. Jesus is my hero!



Christian Communion

Sheila Puckett, 1967



I had just turned sixteen years old and often drove myself to the Methodist church on Saturday afternoons so I could practice the organ. There were certain Sundays the regular organist would have me play for the Sunday services. Many times, I would walk in the front door of the church and feel afraid to be there by myself. The old building often would make strange noises, and I tried to be very alert as I walked down the aisle towards the organ. Often, it would be cold inside, and I would practice with my coat on. I loved the feelings of playing those old hymns. Sometimes, I would have warm feelings, other times, chills, but most of all, tears.

Many Saturday afternoons when I walked in that front door alone, I would see the communion table covered with a big white cloth. Most every time my thoughts were, "Oh no, communion tomorrow. I don't like that. Oh no, communion." But then, immediately, I would start apologizing – "Oh Lord, I am so sorry for thinking that. Please, please forgive me. I am so sorry."

That scene was spooky to me. It looked as if a dead body could very easily be under that white sheet. It was odd shaped and raised quite a bit to cover all those perfectly sliced, tiny squares of bread and those round trays which held all those tiny glasses of grape juice. Therefore, when I walked past that part of the sanctuary, I kinda eyed all that with such an eerie feeling. Even while practicing the organ and having good feelings while playing the hymns, that scene still bothered me.

On Sundays when all the people were there, things did not feel so creepy, but I never liked the bread and grape juice. I was taught by the regular organist that I should constantly play hymns the entire time the people were participating in the communion service. My playing from song to song should flow smoothly with as little interruption as possible. So, I used paper clips to put on each song that I was going to play, and I only picked out the ones that I could comfortably play. Then right after all were served, the assistant would bring me my serving, and I only stopped playing the organ a couple of seconds to eat and drink. The tiny piece of bread seemed to get bigger the more I chewed, and my hands shook while trying to drink the grape juice. The organ was placed to the left of the pulpit area, and I was up higher than the congregation. Since they had all finished and were just waiting, it always seemed like all eyes were on me, sitting up there, as I tried to quickly finish and get back to playing. That was never a pleasant time for me.

So, years later when I found out what real communion was and what this ceremony really was, it made me a very happy young person. Finally, I would never have to do that again, and my feelings at the age of sixteen were right all along, right on track! Thank the Lord for right feelings and for letting me know the truth about communion! This kind of life is what real communion is.



He Rescued Me!

Donna Nelson, 1979



When I was a teenager, maybe sixteen or seventeen years old, I had a very real dream from the Lord that I have never forgotten.

In the dream, there was a long hallway. There were no windows, and the hallway was completely packed with people all going in one direction. Nobody in the hallway knew where we were heading, but we were all going the same way, all moving along together. As I walked forward, I saw the people just in front of me walk right off the end of the hall and fall downward into flames far below. At that point, though, there was nothing I could do to change course. Everyone in that hall was pushing forward, not knowing where we were all headed. As I went off the end of the hallway and had just started to fall, a huge hand appeared right under me and saved me from falling into the fire.

Oh my! I still remember the alarm and the soberness I felt when I awoke. That dream was so real – it was more real than what I woke up to. I know now that Jesus has rescued me. He has saved my life, and I owe him everything! I had no idea as a young girl what Jesus was doing, but looking back, I see where He had set his love on me, and He did just like He did in the dream. *He rescued me!* It makes me think of these words to the old hymn I sing sometimes:

*What a matchless Savior I have found at last.
In his blessed keeping He will hold me fast.
He has died to save me, blotted out my past.
O His love is more than any tongue can tell!*





Drawing by Noah Curtsinger

My College Days Visits with My Grandmother

Donna Nelson, 1981



Grandmother Rudd & Donna

All through my childhood, my family would go see my Grandmother Rudd for Saturday lunch. While we were there, we girls would mow her lawn for her, and she would have a cake or pie baked for us. When we were through working and eating, my mother would wash and roll my grandmother's hair for her. That would happen most every Saturday up until I was in high school. When I became a teenager, I filled my Saturdays with other things and didn't go see my grandmother as much during that time. As a day student, sometimes I went to visit my grandmother by myself. Her home was just down the road from the college. I liked to be around her. She was by herself in her small well-kept home, and I enjoyed stopping by to see her during the week. I remember one day, I was sitting on her couch, and she was walking back and forth in her little hallway in the center of her small house. She was looking up toward the ceiling with tears flowing down her cheeks, her arms raised, and she was talking about Jesus. I remember wondering if she could see Jesus right through the ceiling!

I never have forgotten that time of being with my grandmother that day and knowing that she was seeing and feeling something very real about Jesus. Although I had never even heard of holiness or speaking in tongues at that time, I am very thankful that I was there with her while she was feeling such wonderful feelings from Jesus. What a wonderful memory I have now of my time with her.



Donna & Rob Nelson

How the Holy Ghost Led Me

Earl Pittman, 1964



As a young high school student, I remember going to the library because I liked looking at the books with pictures, such as *Look Magazine* and *Life Magazine*. One particular day, a book on the Bible was on the table. I started reading the stories in a simple form with lots of pictures of the prophets working miracles, the story of David killing the giant, and of Samson's great strength. I wondered in my heart if this God was for real, for I had no knowledge of God or that He even existed at this time in my life.

During this time, my sister had experienced the death of a child – that's when the questions of "why" came. It all seemed overbearing. The only relief I found was crying out to God, and that brought a sense of hope. Little did I know that these events were changing my life, for God was listening and starting to draw me to Him. From those moments forward, a search for God was in progress, yet I didn't know the hand guiding me.

In my mind, I thought the proper thing to do was join a church. Didn't all who searched for God join a church? So, I did join a church. Many of my high school friends were members of the Baptist church, so I started attending. I was scared, but I thought, "It must be the right thing to do." They knew God, I hoped.

After being in attendance several Sundays, the pastor met me at the door. He knew something was happening to me. He popped the question, "Do you want to be saved?" The time had come. "Yes", was my reply. We went to a room where he read me some scriptures about believing in Jesus and you would have everlasting life. As he read, I was trembling. Then, the pastor told me I had to confess Christ openly before the congregation. This was tough for me, and standing before people frightened me. Yet, for Jesus, I would do it.

The following Sunday, I went to the altar, and my mother went to the altar, too. We were introduced to the church members and shook hands with the congregation. Next, we were told that, at a later date, we would be baptized in water. A sense of relief was in the air; expectations were high.

I remember the night I was baptized. A friend of mine was in the line also. He went first, then me. I was expecting a touch from God, yet it didn't come. Maybe I didn't do it right, so, I asked my friend what he felt. He just shook his head. That puzzled me, but we did what we thought was right before God.

The following months were spent being involved with church activities – choir practice, plays, attending regularly, and communion services – whatever you felt the Lord would be pleased with you to do for the church. During the following days, my hunger for God grew. My friends and I would talk about God. We were sincere about serving the Lord. During revivals, we sang from our hearts, and people would get under conviction. Every time someone would go to the altar, I felt like I needed to return. "What is going on inside me?" I would wonder. I had confessed my sins. They told me I was saved. I needed something, but what? I still had questions. God was soon to show me.

A young lady who had a Pentecostal background started to attend the Baptist church. After having some conversations with her, she invited me to a Pentecostal worship service. I had never heard of the holy Ghost with speaking in other tongues. It was a new experience for me. However, God had made an appointment for me.

After arriving at the Pentecostal church, the worship service started. It was different – praising God out loud, the whole congregation praying at the same time, excitement in the air, the old people were lively, and there was speaking in tongues. All of these things were new to me. On the other hand, it was a real witness of God. I could sense it was right, but there was a battle. I had claimed to be saved, and something was telling me I didn't need to go to the altar; I was already born again, but God helped me

overcome that thought, and I went to the altar. After praying a few minutes, which seemed like a long time, I asked if I could pray in a back room. They kindly showed me an area for souls seeking the holy Ghost baptism. I started calling on God the best I knew. Shortly thereafter, a young man came through the door, praising God, with several church members with him. They stopped long enough to pray for me. I could hear repeating words of “hold on” or “let go”, but I wasn’t getting anywhere. I guess they sensed to move on.

I had too many questions in my mind, so I asked a lady nearby to answer some of my questions. The first thing that came out of my mouth was, “Do you have to have the holy Ghost with speaking in other tongues?” To my surprise, she responded, “No, too many people are going on emotion.” When she had finished, the holiness pastor came in. He peeked through the door with a smile on his face and said, “Look at the smile on your face. You got saved tonight.” I was one confused young man, for I had seen the life-giving power on people, felt and heard the holy Ghost witness, yet I had been told I didn’t need what was evident. God saved me from that error because I didn’t stop there! God will use all things to lead you to Him.

After going to the Pentecostal service, I went to my pastor at the Baptist church. We discussed the scriptures on speaking in tongues, and his response didn’t satisfy me even though he was kind in trying to explain the scriptures. Later, he came to my job. He had found a scripture to show me the light on not speaking in tongues. He said, “Paul was caught up to heaven where he heard words unlawful to utter.” (Remember, I was young in understanding the ways of God; however, the Lord was my help.) I replied, “Paul said, ‘He that speaks in tongues giveth thanks well,’ and, ‘forbid not to speak in tongues.’” At that moment, a customer came into the store. I turned to wait on him, and afterward, when I turned back to the pastor, he was gone.

Following this event, the road was clearer to follow, and God would brighten the path even more. My mother was in need of physical healing because the doctors found cancer in her colon. There was no time for fruitless hope. Mother needed real help, and help was on the way. My aunts were in contact with me concerning my mother. They were nurses and had inside direction for the best assistance, plus God was very much a part of their lives. Mother knew this because she had been reared in a holiness home, and her mother was full of the holy Ghost. Grandmother’s and the saints’ prayers had been answered for us. Still, mother hadn’t let the whole story about God out to me.

I was a senior in high school, and graduation was near. My aunts came to the ceremonies, and later that night, we talked about God. That was the best gift anyone could give me. My Aunt Leatha invited me to a tent meeting where people were being prayed over for their healing, and it was a chance to meet with God’s people, so I went. I also went with my grandmother to a local gathering of saints in her community. There was wonderful music, and this is where I learned my first song, “Somebody Touched Me”, that I sang at a later date. I continued going to the tent meetings, and each time, I learned a different lesson. All the people I had met intended to help me, and I thank God for each event, but something was still missing. I would soon discover gold – not physical, but spiritual treasure!

Mother was seeking healing from God and started to tell me more about the Pentecostal way. By this time, my aunts were making regular contact with us. They invited her to a healing service at the Church of God, and I also attended. Mother did receive a touch from God that night, but for me, something was missing. That something was near.

Mother had an appointment with the doctors; little did I know, I did too. While mother was getting medical advice, I was given spiritual direction. My Aunt Martha had given us an invitation to her home, and she was married to G. C. Clark, pastor of The Pioneer Tract Society. Brother Clark was sensitive to the leading of the Spirit of God, and somehow, he knew the spiritual condition I was debating. The questions started coming from me about the holy Ghost baptism. That was wonderful to him. He loved the questions! This was the answer I had been waiting to hear! The words were fulfilling my longing! There was peace and healing! For the first time, I was confronted with the truth! So simple was his explanation of the new birth, even I could understand. Brother Clark could sense my hunger and soon laid his hands on me. A new door had been opened. I didn’t receive the holy Ghost that day, but I could feel the call of God stronger.

Mother and I had a good conversation after our visit and decided we needed to be in the home prayer meetings at Grandmother's house. As I think back, the first thing that comes to mind is the love you could feel in those early meetings. We needed it, and God would send showers of blessings upon us. It took that for me. I was backwards among people; however, I was constantly encouraged by the saints. Their testimonies were soul stirring – singing from the heart, preaching from experience, quoting scriptures, and just everyday living. We continued attending the worship services for several months. We were learning the order of God, and He was training us on the yielding to the Spirit of God. I had an example of yielding to the Spirit in my mother who would roll the floor under the power of God. That was what I needed because it made me jealous (in a good way) of my mother. I had never seen such events. Here it is, right in front of me! My mother was humbling herself to the holy Ghost. It was exciting, but what about me? Would I roll the floor to receive the holy Ghost, or receive it in the back room the way my aunt received the Spirit? How about the way Brother Clark received the holy Ghost, in a Baptist home? God had His time.

Months passed. I tried anything I thought would please God. In the world, you would *do something*, maybe try harder – all this I did, but to no avail. So, I went to Brother Clark expecting some deep answer. His words were on target. I didn't realize the full weight of the answer. Brother Clark told me, "When you have done all, just stand." That was something I wasn't very good at doing. I liked to keep busy with some work or deed. However, I managed to stand still. The next Sunday meeting, I was calmer. I felt more relaxed. It worked! When time for prayer came, the holy Ghost fell so gently, and his yoke was easy. I was surprised! On February 9, 1964, the holy Ghost came so gently, and my burden was light. I went home excited.

During that coming week, I found myself praying and hearing the holy Ghost stammer through my lips. Wonderful!! God had washed my sins away and forgiven me. The burden of sin was lifted, and the answer had come. The journey of holiness had begun. God had given life to another hungry soul.



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