

Day One: Wholehearted Salvation

Author: Brent Colley

The month of May, and the month of June, if all goes well, will be a month of Wholehearted Salvation. I want to give everyone the opportunity to share his or her salvation story. Your journey is an important story and needs to be heard! Next to God's story, your story may be the second greatest one ever told. I believe that by telling your story, you will strive to continue to serve God as well as inspire others to do the same.

Don't worry if you think your story is too boring (I hear this all the time). You may think it's not wild enough because you weren't a satanic cult leader who performed multiple sacrifices on farm animals. Relax...you have a story...wild or tame...it's your story...and it should be told.

When you finish writing your story today, continue to walk with God as He gives you new chances each day to learn from Him and add more chapters to the story of your life. I'm excited that your story will be told!

Email your story to me or to Mrs. Heather in the office. I can't wait to hear from you.

Your are loved,
Bro. Brent

Day Two: The Preacher's Son and the Bartender's Daughter

Author: Shelly Hollis

A preacher's son and a bartender's daughter...not a likely couple! But Jehovah Roi (God who sees) was setting His plan in motion. I was born in a small Illinois town to Dick and Shirley Seals, baby number five out of seven. Mom and Dad worked in night clubs in our small town. Gulfport probably had a population of about 500, but it had 7 bars! Dad was an awesome guitarist/vocalist with a band and my mother was a bartender. I remember many times helping Mom wash the ashtrays on Saturday or Sunday morning to get ready for another night at the Western Club!

All through my childhood, I remember "church" people offering to come by and pick me up for Sunday school and church. God worked through faithful people to bring little old me to His throne. All through the gospels, we read of how people "brought" paralytics, the blind, the demon-possessed, and the sick to Jesus because He was their only hope. Praise God that others "brought" me to Jesus, and I realized that He was my only hope as well.

Our family was always struggling financially and emotionally. Seven kids and my parents lived for many years in a SINGLE wide trailer right on the Mississippi River in Illinois. There is such a thing as too much family "togetherness!" Because my parents did not have a personal relationship with Christ for most of their lives, they lived with no hope and always had a defeated attitude. Anger and constant arguing filled our trailer most of the time. Thanks to the people who took me to church each week, I saw a totally different way to live. The "church people" had a real joy and peace, even among similar circumstances. I kept thinking to myself, "That is the

way I want to live!"

We moved to Alabama when I was 9 years old, and again, God placed people around me who took me to church every Sunday. I accepted Christ as a 12 year old at Union Chapel Missionary Baptist Church in the Henson Springs, AL, community during their annual revival. I think the whole church was praying for me and my mother. We were saved the same night, and later, we were baptized in a cow pond together! I will never forget the feeling of the squishy, muddy bottom of the pond and the warmth of the water as we identified ourselves with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection. It took longer for my dad, but he was saved about 10 years ago. Of course, I had my ups and downs trying to live the Christian life during my teen years. Yet, I had a moral compass in the person of the Holy Spirit who convicted me when I got off track. When I was 17, God brought a wonderful man into my life, Tim Hollis (a preacher's son). I knew I would marry him after our second date!

In the past couple of years, God has been tugging my heart more and more toward ministering to women through the teaching of the Word. Last year, I attended a training that allowed me to write a personal mission statement. My mission statement is the word SHINE and each letter represents something:

- S: Share the Gospel
- H: Hold People in High Esteem
- I: Impact People
- N: Never Settle
- E: Expect Great Things

I know this personal mission statement came from a combination of my life experiences and God's guidance. All through my childhood, even though I knew my family could not afford to send me to college, I didn't settle for "no." Jehovah Jireh (the God who Provides) made a way for me to attend. My calling into the teaching field allowed me to impact people and hold them in high esteem every day. Through teaching at UBC and keeping a Bible blog, I share the gospel. The bottom line is that I expect God to do great things each and every day!

Exodus 33:15 is a great bow to top off this testimony. God had told Moses that His presence would not continue with the Children of Israel because of their great sin. Moses began pleading with God and said these words: "If Your presence does not go with us, do not lead us up from here." As I look back at my life, I can see the presence of God all over it. It wasn't in the form of a cloud like it was for the Children of Israel wandering through the dessert, but His presence was just as real. He was shadowing me from the time I was born in a tiny town that had 7 bars, through the years in the single-wide trailer, until the day I was saved. His presence continues with me now, and like Moses, I do not want to go anywhere without His presence leading the way!

Day Three: Whiter Than Snow

Author: Tabatha McDowell

I grew up in rural Colbert County, and every year my sister and I cast off our shoes as soon as it was warm enough to stand being outside without them. We literally would spend all day, every day, all summer playing outside. We did so many things that by the end of summer our feet were tough. I remember when our road was first "black-topped" we would go out in the hottest part of the day when tar bubbles would come up on the

road and pop them with our bare feet! Needless to say, being outside so much, our feet were always dirty and grass-stained. There was just so much that could be scrubbed off in the bathtub. Any true country kid knows the best way to get grass stains off your feet is mud. After a good rain we would go to the garden and walk in the mud, squishing it between our toes. We would have mud caked up to our ankles. After we washed the mud off, our feet were clean and stain-free as if we had not walked outside at all.

That is what Jesus does for us! No matter how dirty we are, how much sin we have on us, or how much we "scrub" ourselves, we can never wash as clean as Jesus can. It makes me think of the song "Whiter Than Snow." The words of this hymn were written in 1872 by James Nicholson and taken from Psalm 51:7 "Remove my sin, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow." Just as Bro. Brent says, the best songs come straight from God's Word.

Lord Jesus, I long to be perfectly whole; I want thee forever to ransom my soul;
Break down ev'ry idol, cast out ev'ry foe; Now wash me and I shall be whiter than snow.

Lord Jesus thou knowest I patiently wait;
Come now and within me a new heart create;
To those who have sought thee, thou never saidst No:
Now wash me and I shall be whiter than snow.

Whiter than snow, yes, whiter than snow;
Now wash me and I shall be whiter than snow.

Day Four: God's Gift

Author: Jason Moore

"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God." (Ephesians 2:8).

Salvation is truly an incredible thing! There is so much involved in our salvation, and yet, we know so little about how salvation works. No one can explain how we can become a new creation in the midst of already being created. No one knows how we can receive a new heart while still possessing the one we have always had. No scholar can adequately describe how Christ takes up residence within us and indwells us the moment we believe. We can't even fathom the reality of what eternal life really is. So many questions swirl around our salvation and yet it is something that believers are most assured of.

What a glorious thought to know that we don't have to understand salvation in order to receive it. It is the gift that our loving Father offers us. God never states that we have to fully grasp the mechanics of His salvation; only that we place our faith and

trust in what He offers. God proved His own love toward us and gave the gift of His son Jesus Christ. The amazing thing is, I can no more explain the why of God's extravagant gift than I can the workings of salvation. I

only know that I have experienced His amazing grace! It is all wrapped up in Christ alone.

That is the reality of salvation we must comprehend. We do nothing to earn it and cannot achieve it on our own. Salvation belongs to God and only He can give it. Because it is His, only He can keep us saved. Just as we can do nothing to attain salvation, we can do nothing to lose it. If you are truly saved, you have been made new and are being conformed to the likeness of Christ. We may not be able to explain salvation, but we can know it and live it!

Day Five: My Story

Author: Cathey Cook

I don't remember going to Sunday school and church regularly until I was around 10 or 12 years old. We attended Macedonia Missionary Baptist Church then. Prior to that, when I had gone, I went to a Freewill Baptist Church that was close to our house. At that time, I found the Missionary Baptist Church no different in doctrine than the Freewill. When I was 12, I had an emotional experience and went forward in church one day. I was crying and maybe under conviction, and went forward when the invitation was given. A group of people gathered around me, knelt and prayed, then got up and said I was saved. No one sat down and explained to me the plan of salvation or counseled with me in any way. I was baptized, joined the church and became the church pianist.

One year, when I was 17, we were without a pastor. I had heard a preacher, who was the associational missionary for the Southern Baptist of Wayne County, preach at a nearby church and was very impressed with him. I later called him and asked if he pastored churches. You see, it was the custom of our church for the deacons to ask the congregation if anyone knew of someone who they wanted to hear preach, in view of a call. I thought I would find out if this person, Wayne Allen, would come to our church to preach. He explained to me his position in the Association and I relayed this information to a deacon in our church. They contacted him and he began to come to "fill in" for us, although we were not affiliated with the Association in any way. He was a wonderful speaker - big guy who really didn't need a PA system (that was

good, because our little country church didn't have one).

This preacher was different. He was the first preacher I had been around who really seemed happy. I grew up with the idea that preachers just didn't laugh; they were always so solemn. I also grew up with the idea that being a Christian is a list of do's and don'ts. From this preacher, I first heard eternal security taught. It was also the first time that I heard the plan of salvation taught clearly. He explained it simply: You can have a bowl of fruit sitting on the table. You can know with your head that the apples come from Washington State, the bananas from Florida, and the pineapple from Hawaii, and that you can eat them, but until you reach out and take them for yourself they are not really yours. He proceeded to explain how salvation is a gift. We can know all about it with our head, but until you make that move to place your faith and trust in Christ, salvation is not yours. That opened my eyes to simple faith in Christ; just ask Him and he will save you. So, one night while kneeling in my closet I did just that. I asked Christ to come into my heart and save me. And I KNOW He did. The peace and joy I felt was real.

After that, I struggled for a short while about making my decision public, because, you see, I was the church pianist and active in the youth group. Everybody thought I was saved. What would they say if I came forward in church and asked to be baptized? But, that is exactly what I did one night during a revival. That same preacher who had presented the gospel so clearly baptized me in a pond at a deacon's house.

I remember after that being so calm when simple things came up that I feared might take my life, like a thunderstorm. Whereas, before I had worried that I might die and not go to heaven. I had a lot of growing to do. I still didn't understand eternal security completely. Most all of my family members, who were in church, were in a Freewill Baptist Church and still are. But, I did grow as I regularly attended Sunday school and church services. I remember the first time I heard a message about tithing. By the looks of the offering, I don't think anyone in our church tithed at that time. But, when I heard a message about Christian responsibility in tithing, I began to save a tithe each week. It was a joy to stick \$5.50 in a little envelope (a tithe from my week's pay) to save for the offering each week. As I grew, learned and worked, the Lord blessed my life with a wonderful Christian husband, two daughters who love the Lord and now a son-in-law and three precious grandchildren. I can't imagine a life without the Lord. I am so thankful for His mercy to us. I feel so sorry for those who do not have this joy, this assurance and this peace.