

MY LIFE STORY – Mark (January 2015)

My Life Before Jesus

By most standards, my life situation prior to and after my birth was insecure. My father was killed a few months before I was born and my mother was left with four children and compromised health. Within my first year my mother's tuberculosis returned and all of us children were sent to a foster home for a year. I am sure my siblings and the foster parents took good care of me but it contributed to me being an anxious and fearful child. Since there was seven years between myself and my closest sister I was young when the rest of my family graduated and moved out. That left my mum and I in a big old house in the country. During my mum's frequent illnesses I remember being nervous about the house catching fire or being robbed or other such disasters. Overall I was a good kid and did well in school but did not have many friends because of being overweight and under coordinated. I only attended church on special occasions but deep down I had a longing for spiritual security as well. Once I reached high school I found a group of friends which encouraged me to become more outgoing. God was pushed further into the background unless church was a way to impress young ladies. I developed a much more confident demeanour but the insecurities lurked below the surface and began to manifest themselves in anger and aggression. In college I started drinking and took martial arts which was a bad combination because it led to many antisocial destructive episodes. There were a few incidents where I scared myself while being totally intoxicated and could have lost my life or been seriously injured.

Gave My Life to Jesus

After university I travelled to India with a college friend whose parents really loved God and had prayed for and reached out to me during college years. It was a big adventure and I told my mum that I might not return but rather find a tropical paradise and a tropical beauty and settle down. While in India I became quite sick from the food and spent time recovering in the home of my friend's uncle and aunt who also really loved God. I also met a long term missionary to India who had a similar educational background in Zoology and we had good discussions to help me begin to deconstruct my evolutionary worldview. I realized something was happening in my life as I lost my desire for alcohol and I found myself no longer swearing which was quite startling and remarkable to me. I also realized that my anger and vandalism was a symptom of my rebellion against my Creator. I personally acknowledged the truth of Romans 3:23 which says, "For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." One night I went to an international gathering

where I finally understood and accepted that Jesus was truly God and He had died for me to guarantee my eternal security. John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world that He gave his only Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life". I embraced this truth and knelt beside my bed on the rooftop of my Indian home declaring that I wanted to give Jesus the control of my life. I experienced great joy and a sense of peace and purpose and finally felt eternally secure. Jesus said, as recorded in John 10:10 that He came to give life and to give it more abundantly. I certainly experienced that.

My Life After Jesus

Returning from India with a spiritual passion I immediately embarked on a plan whereby I could go overseas in the shortest time to be involved in Christian service. My life verse was fashioned after Mark 10:45 that says, even Jesus did not come to be served but to serve and give his life a ransom for many. I became a science teacher and in the process met my wife to be. I shared with her my conviction that I was headed for a life overseas, in all likelihood India. We were married, I gained two years of teaching experience and then we began making application for overseas service. Out of several options we felt directed to go to Kenya. Originally we agreed to a one year term then extended another year. I felt so fulfilled in my role of teacher, coach and dorm parent and when we returned to Canada it was only to gain more training for further service. In all we spent twenty years in Kenya involved in education, community development and service to orphans, widows and prisoners. Overall, my anxiety had been replaced by courage and confidence in God allowing me to go into maximum security prisons, slums and engage with almost anyone. There were situations however which caused anxious feelings to surface and these related to personal health, our children and future economic security or lack thereof. God has continued to bring challenging situations into our lives in order to refine my faith and develop greater trust in Him for every area of my life. Currently I am facing the prospect of open heart surgery and by and large have a sense of peace about it all. God also gave me a great desire to serve others, especially the disenfranchised which motivated us to found a home for AIDS orphans in Kenya and many other compassion projects. From the restlessness and lack of direction as a college student there is an incredible sense of calling to serve others. Likewise my antisocial nature and behaviour during college has been replaced by a great desire and joy in engaging with people from all cultures and socioeconomic backgrounds. Truly I see the evidence of His new creation in me spoken about in 2 Corinthians 5:17 which says, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ (Jesus), the **new creation** has come: The old has gone, the new is here!"