



GOD'S REVIVALIST

March 2024

and Bible Advocate

out of
darkness
into **light**

Conversion Stories



thinking out loud

CONVERSION

Greetings! I trust you will appreciate this special issue on “conversion stories.” I have personally enjoyed reading all of the submissions. Two additional articles by Dr. Mark Bird (“The Wesleyan Understanding of Conversion,” p.5) and Dr. Allan Brown (“Conversion: The Great Change,” p.19) provide our readers with a theological framework to aid in deeper levels of understanding of very personal conversion experiences.

Fifty years ago in March, I was gloriously saved. I will talk more about that in an upcoming issue, but let me point out that the story of my conversion will not exactly match yours. We each bring to that moment of surrender the idiosyncrasies of our personal experiences.

I recall a hippie family showing up at the church my father was pastoring in the 1970s. They had been relaxing on the front lawn of the home of our organist. She greeted them and invited them to go with her to church. They accepted and came just as they were—all barefoot, and wearing bibbed overalls—mother, father, and child, as I recall. At the end of the service, they went to the altar and were saved. They were present the following Wednesday service, and during “testimony time” the father obviously picked up the gist of what was happening and felt a need to participate. He rose to his feet and said, “I just want to thank God for allowing the flowers to bloom this spring.” As he sat down, a few timidly-offered “amens” were given. He had come to conversion with a different set of sensibilities than our average parishioner. He didn’t have years of exposure to sermons, Sunday school, vacation Bible school, etc. But he was saved!

We all can benefit from the theological understanding of conversion as presented by Mark Bird and Allan Brown, but how each of us actually experiences conversion varies. Some “pray through” in minutes, while others may struggle for days. Surrender for some is tied to very specific issues. For others, the surrender is more general, with specific items left to be addressed later. People enjoy hearing conversion stories involving unusual or strange circumstances. I have heard it said, “My conversion was pretty normal.” Not so! All conversions are a glorious, supernatural experience wrought in the heart of a repentant sinner!

We hope you enjoy the testimonies in this issue. We will include additional conversion stories in future issues. —KF

CONTENTS

MARCH 2024
Volume 136 No.2

FEATURES

The Wesleyan Understanding Of Conversion by Mark Bird	5
Finding Jesus In The Footsteps Of My Father by Joe Emert	8
A Greater Scholarship by Jack Bimber	10
The Start Of An Amazing Journey by Sherilyn Marshall	16
Plucked From The Grasp Of The Enemy by Valorie Quesenberry	17

DEPARTMENTS

The President's Page	3
Letters To The Editor	9
News From The Hilltop	12
Revivalist Family	12
Revivalist Pulpit	19
World Pulse	21
Student Focus	21
Alumni News	22
Thoughts For The Quiet Hour	23

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the president's page



I HAVE SETTLED THE QUESTION FOREVER

by Dr. Rodney S. Loper, President

No amount of proper parenting can deal with the sin principle. Only God through his abundant grace and mercy can address this dreadful condition of mankind. It was no different in my case.

If going to church services, revivals, and camp meetings were enough to convert a person, I would have been saved before I was born. That is to say that from my earliest existence my parents were committed to church, revival, and camp meeting attendance. I thank God for the dedication of both my parents and those who were committed to planning and promoting these events. I believe that all their efforts were a means of God's prevenient grace in my life.

I was a rough-and-tumble boy, always looking for someone to wrestle or fight. In fact, one of my earliest memories of school is of fighting. My older brothers would initiate an altercation and then announce that their younger brother would be finishing the scuffle. Many days I would leave the school grounds to fight someone they had provoked. It was bad enough that the principal called my parents to inform them of my unacceptable behavior. Even worse, when the bell rang at 3:15 p.m. the next day, my father, who had taken off work for the afternoon, was waiting for me at the front door of the school. He held my hand all the way to the car—it felt like 100 miles. Imagine the big first-grade bully having to have his hand held while leaving school!

I share this because, rather than curbing this type of behavior, it drove it inward. This drive remained a part of my life though junior high and most of high school. While fighting continued unabated, the greater fight was a spiritual battle. I would seek

God at revivals and other special services, but, soon after, I would go back to my old way of living. As I got older, this old way of living grew more and more decadent. Keep in mind, I was in church almost every time the doors opened, but, behind everyone's back, I did what I wanted to do. It was during this time that I began to drink alcohol, smoke, and experiment with marijuana. Don't think for a moment that all the church activity was wasted. I firmly believe that these things kept me within the church orbit and eventually made it easier to find God.

I found work at an auto body shop in my hometown. This atmosphere was not a helpful influence in my life at all. In fact, it was the opposite. I don't think I will forget setting my Coke can on the toolbox and stepping into a paint booth to paint. When I came out, my fellow workers had filled my half-empty drink with alcohol. I was hooked. Drinking, smoking, pornography, and such became a daily part of my life—except on the weekend—I was at church. It was a well-hidden secret. My parents, my girlfriend at the time, and my siblings didn't know. I was a young person, raised in church, but full of sin.

One day I was driving down the highway when I felt like God stepped into my car and asked me to preach. Keep in mind that I was not saved. I was not even trying to do right. I likely had been smoking and drinking ear-

lier that very day. But when I felt like God spoke to me, I had enough spiritual discernment to know that I was at a crucial point in my life. I have replayed that moment over and over. There was no coercion, no demands, no condemnation. It was just a clear realization that I had a choice. I could keep going down the road I was on, or I could answer "the call" to preach.

I am sad to say that I didn't repent of my sins and turn from my wicked ways in that moment. However, over the next several months I continued to feel the drawing of the Holy Spirit towards God and the ministry. Interestingly enough, I started to "clean up" my life. I quit drinking. I quit smoking. I quit doing many of the things my buddies were doing.

On a Friday night of a winter youth revival, Mark Cravens preached out of Luke 15 about the prodigal son coming home. At the end of the message, I went to the altar and confessed my sins, repented of them, and placed my faith in Jesus. Praise God I have never been the same. Old things passed away! Old became new! Darkness became light! I was truly a new creature in Christ Jesus!

There have been battles, temptations, and trials along the journey, but I have made up my mind that I am following Jesus. The old gospel song says it well: "I have settled the question forever, hallelujah!" ■

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to do.**



GOD'S BIBLE SCHOOL & COLLEGE

ALUMNI RECEPTION DINNER

IHC 2024 GATLINBURG

Wednesday, April 10 | Ballroom A | 4:00–5:30



The Wesleyan Understanding of Conversion

by Mark Bird

John Wesley's conversion story is famous. After a discouraging missionary trip to America, Wesley lamented, "I went to Georgia to convert the Indians, but who shall convert me?" His answer finally came months later, on May 24, 1738, when in a meeting house on Aldersgate Street in London, his heart was "strangely warmed," and he received assurance that he was a child of God! Wesley's experience at Aldersgate was powerful; however, his conversion didn't start that day. Instead, it began at a prior stage of repentance, or even earlier.

Meaning of Conversion

British Methodist Adam Clarke said that conversion is "the turning or total change of a sinner from his sins to God.... It properly means the effect produced by the first influence of the grace and light of God upon the heart, by which an idolater embraces the true God, a Jew the doctrine of Christ, and a sinner turns from his sins and seeks the salvation of his soul in every means of grace."¹ Clarke didn't include regeneration or assurance in his definition of conversion, but the concept of conversion seems more complete if it includes the new birth and its accompanying graces. After all, even though John Wesley was seeking God "in every means of

MARCH 2024

For Wesley, conversion encompasses faith, justification, regeneration, and the witness of the Spirit. Genuine conversion must include inward renewal as well as pardon.



According to Wesley, if religion (or holiness) were a house, repentance would be the porch, and faith would be the door.

grace," he apparently didn't feel converted until his Aldersgate experience.

In Wesley's commentary on Acts 3:19, he explained that the meaning of the command "Be converted" is "Be turned from sin and Satan unto God." He said that the current usage of "conversion" refers to the "entire change from vice to holiness," even though the Bible may not ever use it exactly in that sense.

E. Stanley Jones, an early twentieth-century Methodist missionary and theologian, also defined conversion more broadly. He said that conversion is "the penitent, receptive response to the divine saving initiative in Christ, resulting in a change, gradual or sudden, by which one passes from the kingdom of self to the Kingdom of God and becomes a part of a living fellowship, the Church."²

Wesley scholar Henry Knight identified several errors people make in interpreting John Wesley's understanding of conversion. Two of these mistakes are (1) equating conversion with regeneration and (2) equating conversion with justification, an even greater error. Rather, for Wesley, conversion encompasses faith, justification, regeneration, and the witness of the Spirit. Genuine conversion must include inward renewal as well as pardon.³

The rest of this article will briefly discuss the aspects of the order of salvation most closely associated with conversion, defined more broadly.

Repentance

Repentance follows prevenient grace in the Wesleyan order of salvation. When someone responds to prevenient (going-before) grace, God gives him more grace—the grace of repentance (2 Tim. 2:25, 2 Cor. 7:10). This is also called "convicting grace." Repentance begins with the recognition of one's own sinfulness, guilt, and helplessness. This self-knowledge should lead to godly sorrow. The person who repents is so sorry for his sins that he determines to forsake them. Repentance can be summarized in three words:

- *Conviction*—realizing that you are a sinner deserving punishment and unable to save yourself.
- *Contrition*—being genuinely sorry for your sins.

- *Resolution*—resolving fully to turn from sin and obey God.

This prepares one's heart for saving faith.

Saving Faith

According to Wesley, if religion (or holiness) were a house, repentance would be the porch, and faith would be the door. Wesley defined Christian faith as "not only an assent to the whole gospel of Christ, but also a full reliance on the blood of Christ; a trust in the merits of His life, death, and resurrection; a recumbency [or resting] upon Him as our atonement and our life, as given for us, and living in us."⁴ Wesley emphasized the personal nature of faith as Martin Luther did before him. Regarding Galatians 2:20b: "...I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me," Luther had taught: "Read the words 'me' and 'for me' with great emphasis. Print this 'me' with capital letters in your heart, and do not ever doubt that you belong to the number of those who are meant by this 'me.' Christ did not only love Peter and Paul. The same love He felt for them He feels for us. If we cannot deny that we are sinners, we cannot deny that Christ died for our sins."⁵

Briefly stated, to savingly believe in Christ, you must:

- *Accept the truth about Christ*—believe the gospel message.
- *Accept the authority of Christ*—submit to Him as Lord.
- *Accept the forgiveness and cleansing of Christ*—invite Christ into your heart and life, trusting in Him to save and transform you.

Union with Christ

Union with Christ occurs when we place our faith in Christ. When God enables us to trust Christ for salvation—when we identify with Christ in His death and resurrection, we are placed in Christ and receive all the benefits of union with Him. We are regenerated, justified, and adopted into the family of God. We have spiritual life because He lives in us (Gal. 2:20). He is our life (Col. 3:4). Our spiritual life is continually dependent on our

abiding in Christ and He in us (John 15:4). There is no condemnation to those who are in Christ (Rom. 8:1).

A reference to union with Christ occurs in Wesley's *Plain Account of Christian Perfection*: "But the best of men may say, 'Thou art my light, my holiness, my heaven. Through my union with Thee, I am full of light, of holiness, and happiness. But if I were left to myself, I should be nothing but sin, darkness, hell.'"⁶

Justification

Justification is a legal term that means "acquittal." Imagine that I'm in a courtroom. I am standing guilty before the judge, but then I'm acquitted—the judge declares me "not guilty." The charges are dropped. Punishment no longer looms over me. In the courtroom of God, now that I am justified spiritually, the charges on my record are expunged; my account is cleared. If I am justified, legally, it is "just-as-if-I'd" never sinned (see Rom. 3:24-26). However, though the legal penalty for sin is erased, I could still suffer some earthly consequences from my previous sins.

Regeneration

When someone is justified, he is also born again, or regenerated. Regeneration is an instantaneous work of God that brings spiritual life to a man and renews his fallen nature. Scriptural support for the doctrine includes Titus 3:5—"He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit." Regeneration is the work Jesus referred to when He declared that no one could enter the kingdom of heaven without being born again (John 3:3).

A distinction should be made between regeneration and justification. Justification is what God does *for* a person; regeneration (the new birth) is what God does *in* a person. In justification, the righteousness of Christ is *imputed*; in regeneration, the righteousness of Christ is *imparted*. God makes righteous (regenerates) anyone He declares righteous (justifies).

Adoption

When one is born again, he is also adopted into God's family. Earthly adop-

tion includes receiving the full rights of a son or daughter. Likewise, in our spiritual adoption, God grants us all the legal rights, privileges, and blessings that come with being His children. Galatians 4:4-5 speaks of God sending His Son, born of a woman, to redeem us so that we could be adopted as the sons of God. What Christ is by nature (the Son of God), we are by adoption (sons of God). Those who receive the Son have been given the right to become the children of God (John 1:12).

Assurance

Wesley considered it the common privilege of believers to experience the witness of the Spirit to their salvation. He defined the witness of the Spirit as "an inward impression on the soul, whereby the Spirit of God directly witnesses to my spirit, that I am a child of God; that Jesus Christ hath loved me, and given Himself for me; and that all my sins are blotted out, and I, even I, am reconciled to God."⁷

Summarizing Definition

From a Wesleyan perspective, conversion is the transformation that takes place in the life of a person who, cooperating with grace, repents of his sin and places his faith in Christ. Conversion is completed when, through the believer's union with Christ, he experiences justification, regeneration, adoption, and assurance. That conversion is confirmed through integration into the Church, participation in the means of grace, and a lifelong pursuit of holiness. ■

Dr. Mark Bird has been a professor in the GBS Ministerial Education Division since 1997. He was instrumental in GBS forging relationships with Answers in Genesis and Open Air Campaigners. Mark and his wife Kristin and daughters Karissa, Megan, and Karina live in Alexandria, KY.

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3. Collins, Kenneth J. and John H. Tyson, *Conversion in the Wesleyan Tradition*. Abingdon Press, 2001, pp.144-46.
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Finding Jesus *in the* Footsteps *of My* Father

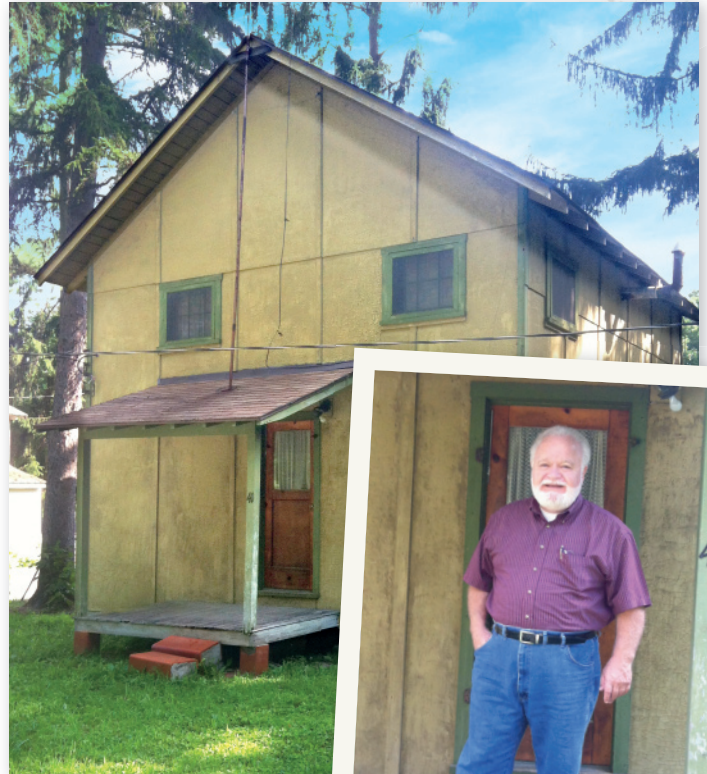
by Joe Emert

An old fashioned Free Methodist camp meeting in central Pennsylvania is etched in my memory. It was 1962, and, as a 10-year-old boy, I enjoyed running across the pine-needle-covered dirt, skillfully maneuvering around the trip-you-up tree roots that seemed ever present at the campground. It was an annual pilgrimage to the spot in Lamar, Pennsylvania, where my Emert grandparents had built a little two-story cabin.

I did not know that my story really began long before I entered the world in 1952. My father, William Emert, was born in 1920 in Mill Hall, Pennsylvania, and did not come to Christ until he was 28 years of age. He was—by his own testimony—a rebel and a drunk. My shouting Baptist grandfather, Rudy Emert, prayed fervently for his son “Bill.”

In 1948, Bill and Dorothy Emert consented to attend Lamar Camp Meeting at the request of his parents. God had already begun doing a work in my father’s heart and had even healed him of advanced-stage tuberculosis. Back then there wasn’t much that could be done for those with the dreaded disease. He was dying and in a sanatorium in Cresson, Pennsylvania. He knew his father was praying for his salvation, and one night, with other men dying all around him, he prayed a simple “foxhole” prayer telling God that if He would heal him of his tuberculosis, he would serve God the rest of his life. God took Bill at his word and instantaneously healed him! My father—skin-and-bones-in-a-bath-robe—walked out of that sanatorium the next morning! Later, X-rays would reveal all scar tissue in his lungs was completely gone!

Lamar Camp Meeting followed soon after, and, hearing a clear, biblical message about what “being saved” meant, my father, along with



top and inset: Joe Emert revisits the cabin his grandparents built at the campground in Lamar, Pennsylvania.

bottom photos: Father and son, Bill and Joe, work on broadcast equipment; Joe records a radio program at God’s Bible School.

my mother, walked down the aisle in that grand, old, wooden tabernacle and knelt in the sawdust at an altar of prayer and repentance. They were both washed clean of their sins, never to look back again!

But, why is my testimony about them? The Bible teaches the reality of generational sin...generations negatively impacted by the sins of their fathers. But the beautiful opposite is also true. Generations can be blessed with wholeness, love, and the "joy of the Lord" as biblical precepts and principles are passed along to a rising generation.

By the time I came along in 1952, my father had completed the Christian Workers Course at God's Bible School and had experienced God's blessing as a Free Methodist pastor in Tyrone, Pennsylvania. Many came to the knowledge of Christ during those years of his ministry. He had also been bitten by the "radio bug" and built his first radio station in 1956 in Philipsburg, Pennsylvania.

Like my father before me, I attended Lamar Camp Meeting. It was the summer of 1962, and while I can't remember the name of the fire-brand preacher, I certainly can remember the conviction of the Holy Spirit drawing me lovingly to the Lord. When the altar call was given, I stepped out into the aisle, knowing that the salvation of my parents and grandparents did not qualify me to receive God's wonderful forgiveness and a relationship with Him through His son, Jesus Christ. As I knelt at the altar and poured my little-boy heart out to the Lord, I felt a hand on my shoulder and heard rejoicing voices. I looked around, and there was my dad, weeping and whispering as he told me, "Joey, you are at the altar kneeling in the exact spot where your mother and I got saved!" I believe that means much more to me now than it actually did that night. My salvation was sure, but my maturity was in process!

Eight years later, as I was preparing to graduate from high school, God called me to God's Bible School and College in preparation for a life of ministry-service.

While my Christian testimony is aided and interwoven into that of my parents, my experience of salvation is mine alone. I was not "saved" because of the experience of my parents. But, what a huge impact they had on me and my current-day walk with the Lord. Oh, how I wish they were here for me to tell them! Thank you Lord, for generational salvation! ■

Joe Emert (BRE '74) was Director of Broadcasting at GBS (1972-75). He has also served as an alumni chapter president, a member of the Executive Committee, as well as president (1985-1990) of the National Alumni Association, and a member of the GBS Board of Trustees. Joe has been active in Christian broadcasting for over 50 years. Although now semi-retired in North Stonington, CT, with his wife Jenny (Ogg) (GBS 1970-72), Joe continues to provide on-site consulting to a group of Christian radio stations in northern Ohio.

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

Letters should be emailed to revivalist@gbs.edu or addressed to the Editorial Office, 1810 Young Street, Cincinnati, OH 45202. Letters reprinted here do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the editor of God's Revivalist nor those of the administration of God's Bible School. Names and locations of writers will be withheld at their specific request or at the discretion of the editor. We reserve the right to edit and condense.

I just read your "thinking out loud" article [GR December 2023, p.2, "Creating Community Connections" by Editor Ken Farmer]. Powerful! Yes, we have been called to interface with our community, no matter ethnicity, religion, age, etc. God's call and Jesus gave the example. I could not be more pleased, proud, and joyful of your years of community involvement—the Holy Spirit at work through you in issues of housing, education, safety...finding common ground for the common good. My mantra in leading The Wesleyan Church has been "God did not call you just to be the spiritual leader for your church, but He called you to lead in various ways in your community." You articulated this so elegantly and humbly in your article. Thank you for "passing the baton" to other GBS leaders to continue in community leadership. Blessings.

JO ANNE LYON (HS '58)
General Superintendent Emerita
The Wesleyan Church
email

Heartfelt thankfulness to have GBS choir share worship, praises, testimonies in Lakeland, FL. To God be the Glory!

CECELIA ZAMMITO
Highland City, FL

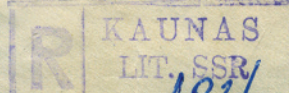
This is my favorite publication. It is a highlight of the month when it comes.

MARSHA GAFFORD
Mineola, IA

Thank you so much for what you have done for so many. I am 83 years old. I am not as spry as I once was. I have been widowed twice. All in all, God has been so faithful to me! Love and prayers to all.

CHARLOTTE SICHELSTIEL
Mount Laurel, NJ

MARCH 2024





A GREATER SCHOLARSHIP

by Jack Bimber

The earthly strivings of my coming to faith in Christ began in my mother, Rose, over two years before I was born. My older brother, Tommy, was born with a heart murmur, and after his passing my mother made a promise to God that if He would give her another son, she would raise him as a Christian. This was consequential for her and me as she was not yet a Christian. On July 1, 1940, her appeal was granted, and I was born in Cincinnati. In 1942, she was converted.

My earliest childhood memories involve a consciousness of God which could hardly be avoided as my mother delighted in taking me to camp meetings, church, and prayer meetings. One of those recollections is when I was a three-year-old playing in the gravel in the back of the chapel under the camp meeting tent at GBS in 1943. Mom was always reading stories of God and the hope of heaven to me from *Sparkling Waters*, a children's periodical published by the GBS Revivalist Press.

After her conversion, my mother was advised to attend the Vine Street Wesleyan Methodist Church, pastored by Brother Zuch, who dedicated me. Brother Zuch accompanied Dr. Stephen Herron to Florida to found Hobe Sound Bible College. His pastorate was filled by Brother Mark Russell and, eventually, Dr. L.D. Wilcox, who became my professor and mentor in my years at GBS. As we lived in the suburbs and had no automobile, every Sunday involved four hours of public

transit—two in the morning and two at night. We were earnest seekers.

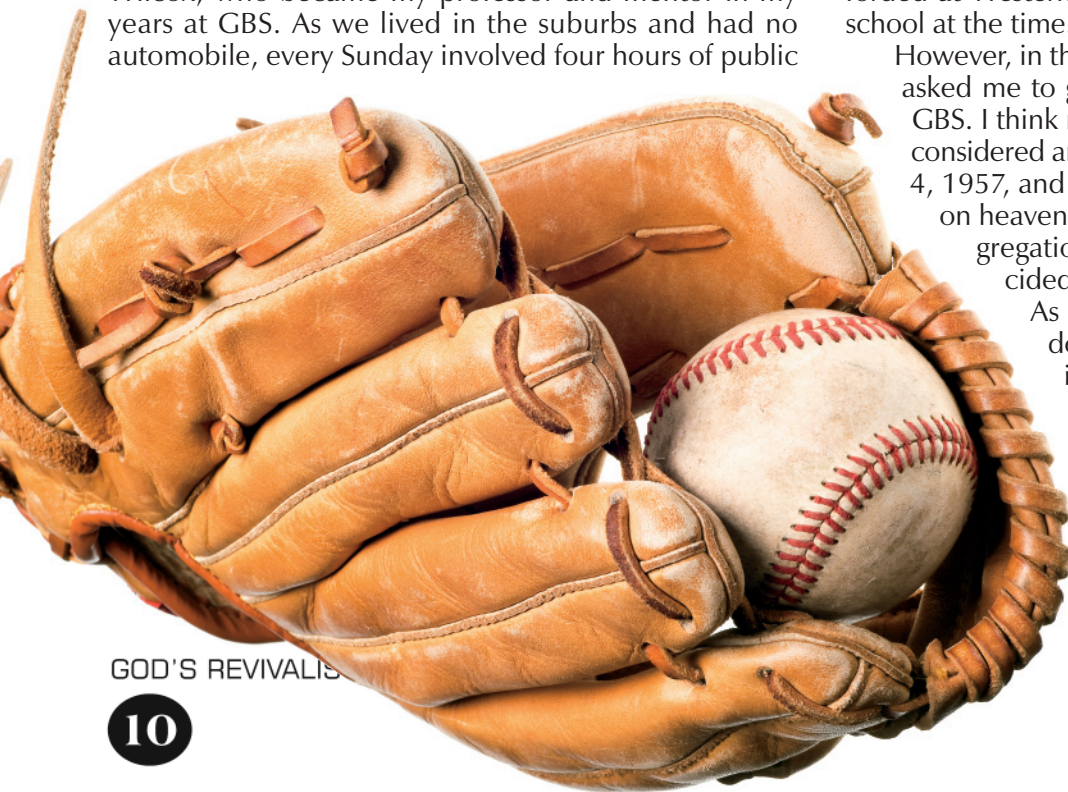
My father was a driven businessman and not inclined to spiritual matters, and when I was six years of age he passed away after suffering a major heart attack. This left a large void in my life.

When I entered Western Hills High School at the beginning of seventh grade, I began to take sports seriously. Baseball and football kept me busy, and my attention was captured by the larger-than-life athletes and competitions offered to me. I was competitive, and this gave me an outlet for my energy, filling the gap left by the loss of my father. However, in the middle of all my activity, I still stopped long enough for my mother to read Scripture and pray with me every day. I remember coming home from football practice and finding no one home, and then calling Sister Callahan or Brother Lashbrook just to make sure the Rapture had not taken place!

In the summer between my sophomore and junior years of high school, my mother informed me that in her prayer time she had felt impressed that I should go to a Christian school for my last two years of high school. That information was a non-starter with me, as I was so committed to my athletic endeavors and the opportunities afforded at Western Hills High School, a highly-regarded school at the time. My identity was there.

However, in the winter of my junior year, my mother asked me to go with her to the mid-year revival at GBS. I think my first response was "No." Later, I reconsidered and said that I would go. It was February 4, 1957, and Millard Downing preached a message on heaven. God was speaking to me. As the congregation sang "The Unclouded Day," I decided heaven was the place I wanted to go.

As the invitation was offered, I walked down the aisle and knelt at the altar, asking God to forgive me for everything I could think to confess and for all that I couldn't. I gave everything I knew to God. He saved me, and that night I decided to leave Western Hills





GBS college senior



St. Augustine Boys Club football team - Cincinnati city champs!

High School and enroll at GBS. Thank God for Mom's prayers about me attending a Christian school! She was only off by five months.

I knew I had to leave behind much of what I knew and loved in order to start a new life in Christ. I also had to make a couple restitutions: one involved my having sneaked into a ballgame without paying, and the other had to do with a broken bus window that I may have hit with a snowball. I really questioned whether I was capable of living the Christian life, but God was always there in His faithfulness to help and encourage me. He gave me a desire for a pure heart, and He completely filled that desire. I am fond of C.S. Lewis's insight on Christ's teaching, "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God." Lewis says, "It is only the pure in heart who want to see God."

After graduating from high school in 1958, I was not sure about college. I had no money, as everything I had been making from my job at the H.H. Meyer Meatpacking Company went to my mother to help keep our utilities on and the refrigerator partially stocked. One day, my mother said to me, "Jack, the company you are working for—I think they are able to pay your way through college." I thought that was the dumbest thing I had ever heard! She finished with, "I am praying."

I will never forget the day the manager of the building I worked in called me over and said, "They want you across the street." I thought I was going to be fired. I was greeted by the vice president when I arrived, and he began by saying, "We are interested in you and your future, and we have decided to pay your way through any college of your choice." Almost speechless, I managed to blurt out, "I want to go to GBS."

"Oh," he said. "You want to go to the school where the sun never sets on its students." That was a well-known GBS saying which was oft repeated in the school's publication.* I asked him if he read *God's Revivalist*, and he said that he did.

I am often reminded that God, through the prayers of my mother, afforded me a greater scholarship than I ever would have gotten playing baseball or football!

I met my wife Joan White at GBS, and she graduated in 1960 with a ThB. I followed with a ThB in 1963. We have three wonderful children, two fine daughters-in-law, and five busy grandchildren, all living for the Lord. I am currently in my 62nd year of ministry. I retired after fifty-seven years of full-time pastoring, and I am still preaching most Sundays as a pulpit supply speaker. ■

Jack Bimber (HS '58, ThB '63) and his wife Joan (ThB '60) are retired but staying very active in pulpit supply ministry. They live in New Castle, IN.

* "The Sun Never Sets on the Students of God's Bible School" refers to the fact that at any given hour of the day there are GBS alumni engaged in carrying out Christ's Great Commission somewhere around the globe.



THE "KIDS' HOUSE"

When the school purchased a house at 532 Channing Street in 2022, you could hardly even walk through it. The previous occupant had been an extreme hoarder. We began referring to it as "The Kids' House" because various campus families got involved in the process of cleaning out the house. Cheri Weed, specials instructor for Alders-

gate Christian Academy, headed up this project. The school secured a large dumpster which was placed in front of the house, and families signed up for specific slots during which time they simply dragged everything out of the building and pitched it in the dumpster. It took about two months to complete this process. Our Facilities Department then began the renovation.

On December 14, when the entire building was completed, campus families were invited to walk through the newly renovated house so both kids and adults could see the final product. Kudos to the Facilities team and to the campus family clean-out crews!



532 Channing Street

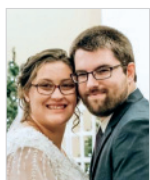


Some of the kids who helped clean out the house pose in the newly renovated kitchen.

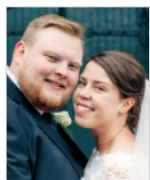
REVIVALIST FAMILY

On these pages, we feature items about GBS alumni, significant events scheduled throughout the "Revivalist Family," and brief news notes from across the Holiness Movement.

WEDDINGS



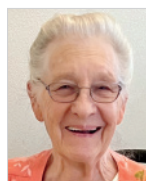
Kaitlyn Fourman (AA '19) to Caleb Case (BA '20), December 31, 2022, at Grace Baptist Church in Oak Harbor, OH, with Deron Fourman and David Hartkopf officiating. The couple resides in New Castle, IN, where Caleb teaches at Heartland Christian School and Kaitlyn works as a Medical Assistant at Henry Community Health.



Katrin Crater (HS '11, AAS '16) to Christopher Dean Cravens (2016-19), January 6, 2024, at Covenant-First Presbyterian Church, Cincinnati, OH, with the Revs. Chris Cravens (father of the groom), Mark Cravens, and Travis Johnson

officiating. The couple resides in Findlay, OH, where Christopher works for Hoening's Funeral Home and is in an apprenticeship to become a funeral director; and Katrin is a teacher in the Fostoria Public Schools. Parents of the bride are Tonya (Cheatham) (BA '89) and Timothy (BA '89) Crater, director of the GBS College Choir.

DEATHS



Erlene Myers, 86, of Gilbert, AZ, was welcomed into heaven by her Lord and Savior on December 18, 2023. She was born in Fairmont, WV, on April 5, 1937. When she was five, her parents, E. Wayne and Mary Alice Shuttlesworth, moved their family to Cincinnati to take the Christian Workers Course at GBS. They remained there for 15 years while Erlene's dad worked in the print shop and traveled as a field representative raising money for the school.

WELCOME, JOEY TILLIS

Joseph ("Joey") Tillis II has been hired to work in the Finance Office. Joey is no stranger to GBS. His parents, Joe (HS '88, 1988-92) and Faye (Dudek) (BA '92) Tillis, met at GBS, and both his paternal grandparents were graduates: Amos (HS '56, ThB '59) and Ruth (ThB '56) Tillis. While a student at GBS, Joey worked on maintenance and security. After graduating with an AA in General Business (2022), he worked at Ohio Valley Bank as a Customer Service Representative (2022-23) and then Account Services Representative. He is in training at GBS for the position of Business



Manager. Originally from Longsville, OH, he now resides on campus.

LYLE WITT RECEIVES DOCTORATE

Lyle Witt joined the GBS faculty in the 2010 fall semester as a divisional chair of what is now called the "Division of Professional Studies." His educational background includes a BA in Religion (Missions) from Kansas Christian College (1994) and an MA in Education (TESL) from the University of Kansas (2005).

The division has fared well under his leadership and has gone through some restructuring and consoli-

dation. Just recently it has announced that its educational programs have received full accreditation through CAEP (Council of Accreditor Preparation)—a VERY big deal (see GR Jan-Feb 2024, p.12). In that previous announcement you may have noticed the Lyle was referred to as "Dr. Lyle Witt." Yes, Lyle has recently carried two tasks to their completion, both requiring substantial time and effort: the CAEP ➡



Dr. Lyle Witt and family at Johnson University, Knoxville, TN

Erlene attended a Cincinnati public school for grades 1-8, and then transferred to high school at GBS (HS '54). Subsequently, she completed 3 years of college at Trevecca Nazarene University, Nashville, TN. In 1957, while at home on a weekend break, her brother Sam introduced her to his friend, Lewis ("Lew") Myers, a GBS student. They began dating—mostly long distance by sending letters daily. They married in June, 1958, in Cincinnati.

After Lew graduated with a ThB in 1961, they took their first pastorate in Prairie City, SD, followed by Willison, ND. In 1968, the opportunity to go to Alaska opened, so they packed the family vehicles (including a homemade camper) and drove the Alaska Highway, ending up in Fairbanks. They were going to stay just one year. Lew got his pilot's license, and Erlene finished a bachelor's degree in elementary education in 1971 at the University of Alaska, Fairbanks. The "one year" turned into 49. They were both GBS donors and subscribers to *God's Revivalist*, and they founded the Far North Missionary Scholarship for GBS students.

Erlene was preceded in death by her husband of 63 years, Lew, and her daughter, Vicki. She is survived by daughters Martha (Tim) Miller and Marilee Cornforth; brother Bob (Terry) Shuttlesworth; sister Elayne (Bob) Hartman; 9 grandchildren; and 11 great-grandchildren.



Sheri Lyn Bell, 50, of Morgan Township, OH, passed away on January 9, 2024 at Mercy Fairfield Hospital. She was born on October 23, 1973, in Hamilton, OH, the daughter of Gerald (HS '67, BA '72) and Lois (Starr) (HS '67) Bell. She graduated from GBS in 1992 and the Cincinnati School of Medical Massage. She was employed as a certified nursing assistant and also a certified medical massage therapist. She was a former member of Montana Avenue Church of the Nazarene and most recently a member of Fairfield Church of the Nazarene. She was a subscriber to *God's Revivalist*.

Sheri is survived by her parents; brother, Jeremy (Rachel); three nieces; and other loving relatives and ➡

➡ accreditation AND Lyle's doctorate. He has been pursuing a PhD in Leadership Studies with a concentration in Missional Leadership from Johnson University, Knoxville, TN. His dissertation was "Assessing Undergraduate Missions Programs' Effectiveness in Preparing Graduates for Cross-Cultural Ministry." His family went with him to attend the graduation ceremony held on December 16.

WINTER REVIVAL

The Winter Revival began Thursday night, January 28, with Rev. Solomon Shaffer, associate pastor at God's Missionary Church, Beavertown, PA, where he has served since 2016.

President Loper opened the first service by encouraging those in attendance to commit themselves to these two statements: "Remember, I am available to God" and "I am committed to do whatever God

asks." Dr. Nicholas Pop led the congregational songs.

Before introducing Dr. Allan Brown for prayer, Vice President for Spiritual Life Richard Miles noted that he would be praying that God would protect the ultrasensitive who always feel guilty about something, while breaking through the hardness and deception of those who truly need spiritual help.

Rev. Shaffer came to the podium to preach on the theme "Don't Waste Your Life." His text was Psalm 39:4-5: "Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is; That I may know how frail I am. Behold, thou hast made my days as an handbreadth; And mine age is as nothing before thee: Verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity."



Rev. Solomon Shaffer



Dr. Nick Pop leads singing.

REVIVALIST FAMILY continued

➡ many friends. A Celebration of Life Service was held at C. Young Funeral Home, Ross, OH.



Rev. Merton "Rusty" Rundell III, 71, of Westfield, IN, unexpectedly went home to be with the Lord, January 14, 2024. He was born on November 14, 1952, in Chiclayo, Peru, the son of the late missionary/educators Merton Rundell, Jr., and Emma (Mitchell) Rundell who both taught at GBS (1983-89).

While at Hobe Sound Bible College, Rusty met the love of his life and faithful ministry partner, Isabel Fiskeaux. Shortly after their wedding (June 5, 1976), they moved to Honduras to serve as missionaries. He founded the Instituto Teológico Emanuel in San Luis, Santa Bárbara, Honduras, and leaves behind a legacy of 20 years of ministry with Evangelistic Faith Missions in Honduras and more than 20 years of service with Holiness Hispanic Churches in Indiana. In addition to his mission work, he served 25 years in various capacities

at Union Bible College, Westfield, IN, preparing young people for ministry. He retired from UBC in May 2023. Rusty was a subscriber to *God's Revivalist*.

Surviving Rusty are his wife of 47 years, Isabel; four children, Merton (Cindy) Rundell IV, Sarah (Zechariah) Robberts, Daniel (Sarah) Rundell, and Lorna (Amit) Dutta; nine grandchildren; two sisters, Mary (Paul) Holmes and Rebecca Veyon; brother-in-law, Steve Veyon; several cousins, nieces, and nephews; and a host of Hispanic people who consider him their spiritual father and grandfather. Funeral services were held at the Pilgrim Holiness Church, Noblesville, IN, with Pastor John Forsee officiating. Burial followed at Summit Lawn Cemetery, Westfield.



Steven Eric Smith, 38, passed from this life into the arms of Jesus on Sunday, January 14, 2024. He was a beloved husband, father, son, brother, and more to his extended family. He was also a highly regarded teacher. Steven faithfully served the

He began with an illustration about James Howell, a Welsh computer software programmer and well-known miner in the world of cryptocurrency. He was one of the first five persons to have operated bitcoin mining software. He had accumulated 8,000 bitcoins when they were worth only \$3.78 each in 2009, only to lose the hard drive containing them all. The value of the cryptocurrency reached an all-time high of \$69,000 per bitcoin. If James still held the bitcoin, it would be worth nearly \$500 million. What a loss of potential value!

Your life is an even greater treasure. Don't waste it! Here are some suggestions Rev. Shaffer offered to that end.

Start with the ending—look to the future. “Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my day and know how frail I am.” A builder starts by looking at a picture, then builds with that picture in mind. When you have children, get a picture of what they can become as a child of God and work toward that goal.

Think of the dates on someone's tombstone—the date of birth and the date of death with a little dash between them. The most critical thing is how you live your “dash.” What will people say in remembrance of you? Will you have given them something noteworthy, such as a clear relationship with God and a positive interaction with people? Start with the end of life



Lord through a long battle with cancer. He was a member of Pilgrim Church, Winchester, KY, where he was a shining example of God's grace and love.

Steven was born on September 24, 1985, in Galax, VA, to Mitchell and Jeanette Smith. He was married to Lindsay Clark on July 18, 2008, in Lexington, KY, and resided with his wife and children in Winchester, KY.

Steven is survived by his wife, Lindsay; children, Carson (12), Kennedy (8), and Caiden (5); parents, Mitchell and Jeanette Smith; two sisters Kendra (Dustin) Muir and Kari Smith; grandfather, John Wayne Smith; father-in-law and mother-in-law, Pat and Joyce Clark; brother-in-law Ryan (Maria) Clark; and several nieces, nephews, aunts, uncles, and cousins. A funeral service was held at Leon Pace Memorial Chapel, Winchester, KY, officiated by Pastors Paul Bates and David Spivey. Burial followed in the Winchester Cemetery. A memorial service was also held at Haven of Rest Bible Church, Galax, VA. ■

Commissioning Weekend

at God's Bible School & College
May 16-20



guest speaker:
Darrell Stetler II
Oklahoma City, OK

in mind. “This world is not my home. I have to make it to heaven.”

Be aware of the past—Look back to the beginning.

“For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well (Psa. 139:13-14). Your beginning has significance. God has intentions for your life. He made you with a purpose, a plan.

Treasure the present that is between the two. You had no say in your beginning and little say in your early years when under parental control. This gives way to limited choice as a teen, and then to complete responsibility. You have a light to share with a lost world. Don't have the attitude that you are currently getting ready for future ministry. No—ministry is NOW. A close relationship with God is not something for the future. It starts NOW. Careful living, discipline, and ministry all must happen NOW! Don't waste your present. God wants you to maximize your “now” for Him.

Picture a \$100 bill in your hand. You value it and want to be careful with it. Then some little trinket catches your eye. You think there's no harm in spending a little. But then another little thing comes along. You soon discover that all of these little things have added up to a significant amount. Similarly, if you are not careful, you will waste your “now” little by little.

Rev. Shaffer summarized his sermon: “In one of my first college classes, we were given a statement by C.T. Studd: ‘Only one life, 'twill soon be past. Only what's done for Christ will last.’ I didn't think too much about it at the time. But now, 20 years later? Absolutely true! This is your life. This is your moment. This is your opportunity. Don't waste it.”

All services can be viewed on the GBSC Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/GodsBibleSchool>. ■



The Start of an Amazing Journey



Bill and Sherilyn - GBS student days

As a young child, I was impacted by the presence of God through the lives of various family members. Several of them were saved in a Nazarene church which our family attended for a short period of time. But the biggest influence in my life was my grandfather. He was saved out of the Amish community. He read his German Bible and was a steady influence during the difficult times our family experienced, especially when my parents separated for a period of time.

by Sherilyn Marshall

I will never forget the day that my grandfather did not come home. In his 80s and with some hearing difficulties, he had attempted to cross a busy road, was struck by a car he did not hear coming, and died instantly. This left a huge hole in my life at the age of seven. In fact, our family no longer remained involved in church after losing his stable influence. This caused our family to drift apart, creating division.

After I graduated from high school, I decided that I did not want to conform to my parents' expectations—I wanted my independence. I will never forget my dad's reaction as I walked past him to leave home and go my own way. He was heartbroken.

But God was working. As a result of the bad choice I had made, something amazing happened. In his desperation, Dad turned to God and became a genuine believer in Jesus. His life was transformed. Mom's conversion soon followed. They started attending church and visiting camp meetings all over the United States. It was then they started to pray for me to get saved. Even though I did not realize my need at that point, God was working.

For the next two years, my life spiraled out of control. It was in the early 70s, and the "hippie movement" was

prevalent. I considered myself an individual who was looking for happiness and love. I experimented with drugs and had several failed relationships that left me feeling empty and unsatisfied. My life took a bad turn after a bad trip on LSD. I thought I was in hell and the experience was crushing. An emotional/nervous breakdown forced me to return home to my family. I was a broken person.

Little did I know that God was working to bring me back home, both to Apple Creek, Ohio, and to Himself. My parents tried to get me to go to church with them, but I was having no part of that. They planned their year around various camp meetings scheduled throughout the holiness movement, and they were getting ready to attend the Hobe Sound Bible Camp associated with the Florida Evangelistic Association in February. They did not want to leave me alone, so I considered going to Texas to stay with my sister. But, at the last moment, I decided to go with them to the camp meeting—thinking that when we arrived in Florida I would just hang out on the beach! I had no idea that I was heading toward a life-altering decision.

We arrived at the campground, and while my parents were elated that I was there with them, I resisted going to the services. Nevertheless, God amazingly started a work in my heart that was unexplainable. I began to see my life from God's perspective for the first time. I saw what I was doing and realized that all my plans were leading me down a dead-end street and producing pain and heartache for me and my parents.

During the middle of the camp meeting, as I was alone in the camper of our truck, I sat down and wrote out my confession to God in a notebook. I humbled myself, and God, for Christ's sake, brought forgiveness and peace to my heart. I was instantaneously transformed and started attending the camp services. As I listened to the preaching, I realized on a larger scale what God had done for me.

That was the start of an amazing journey! Not all of it has been easy. There have been many disappointments, trials, and tribulations. But God has been faithful and, by His grace, has sustained me all these years. The journey led me to attend GBS, where I met the man who would become my husband. For the last 47 years, we have been involved in full-time ministry in Christian education. Our three children have been in ministry as well.

It has been an amazing experience to serve Jesus! 📖

Sherilyn (Troyer) Marshall (BRE '76) and her husband **Bill** (BA '76, BRE '77) have dedicated their lives to Christian education, serving long stints at Hobe Sound Bible College and God's Bible School, their alma mater. After serving in educational administration for most of those years, Bill currently serves as office manager for the facilities department at GBS.



PLUCKED from the GRASP of the ENEMY

by Valorie Quesenberry

Conversion suggests a change. And opening one's heart to Christ always brings change in dramatic ways, whether we see it at first or not. Perhaps my story mirrors yours. Raised in a loving, Christian home, I had an idyllic childhood. That is not an overstatement. While my family was not wealthy, and we experienced hardships and trials, we were blessed in abundance with family love and togetherness, with good times in the home, with wonderful church experiences and prayerful support for one another. I'm sure my parents could describe difficulties of which I still am unaware, but they had that glorious ability both to shield and to prepare my brothers and me.

I can't remember a time when I did not know about Jesus and the fact that He loved and died for me. This is most likely because my parents talked to me about Jesus even before I was able to speak, and they kept me in church and Sunday school where my little mind and soul matured while being immersed in this truth.

I prayed at the altar many times as a child. My heart was tender and my soul was open, but my understanding, naturally, was not yet complete. And so I often sought the Lord for forgiveness when my conscience was pricked over my recent misdeeds and attitudes. Rather than denigrate that now, I embrace the beauty of a childish heart that runs toward God, even in the innocence of immaturity. But I remember speaking to my mother about my wish to have "a date" like other people had for their conversion. I wanted to "nail it down" as the preachers said. And that, too, is a good thing. Conversion needn't be a



fluid thing, achieved in misery and wondering, a thought that begins fear and shame. While we may make many steps to God, there is wisdom in telling a seeking young person, “Make it sure today and write it down.” That’s what my mother advised me.

And so, in a tent meeting in Andalusia, Alabama, the summer I was 10 years old, I brought everything to Jesus—everything I could remember of my past, and also my longing to know that I had indeed come to Him specifically for salvation. The sweet confidence that I had known all my life was there—the knowledge that this Jesus (the “sympathizing Jesus” as the old gospel song says) had heard, as He always hears His children, and that He would do what He promised to do. I did not need lightning bolts or warm electric jolts up my spine. I had assurance because of my knowledge. And it seems to me that one’s spiritual demeanor/behavior in spiritual experi-

to make many more strides in my obedience and surrender as I follow Him. My redemption is up-to-date with Him, but it has not been completed since He is still working on me and chipping away at the places that need His refining work.

Yet, my story of conversion is dramatic because I have been rescued from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of His dear Son (Col. 1:13). There is no “best” conversion story, just as God has no favorite children. Every time a soul is plucked from the grasp of the enemy, it evokes praise from the angels around the great throne in heaven. How wondrous is this love the Father bestows on us!

If you, like me, lived your childhood in the courts of the temple, as it were, and struggle at times with assurance, find hope and strength in the words of Christ. Don’t listen to the Liar. What gain is there for a loving Father to torment you with thoughts that perhaps you aren’t saved? What glee is there in Satan if you believe him? Who loves you? Who hates you? The Holy Spirit speaks in specifics, not in shadows. If you ask Him, He will show you the truth. If you cannot sort it out on your own, get the help of your pastor or spiritual advisor who can give you a factual, biblical approach, and stop leaning into your human ruminations.

The just shall live by faith.

Faith that He saves if we ask.

Faith that He *has* saved since we asked.

Faith that He will keep us after we ask.

Faith to follow in step with the Holy Spirit until faith becomes sight.

Thank God for redemption through His Son.

I am redeemed—all glory to the Lamb!

Saved from all sin and purified I am,

Bought by the blood that flowed from Calvary,

For the Lord has made me free!

I am redeemed; my ransom has been paid.

All of my guilt on Jesus has been laid.

From all my sins I now have liberty;

Hallelujah, I am free!

“I am redeemed,” my song shall ever be,

Both while on earth and for eternity.

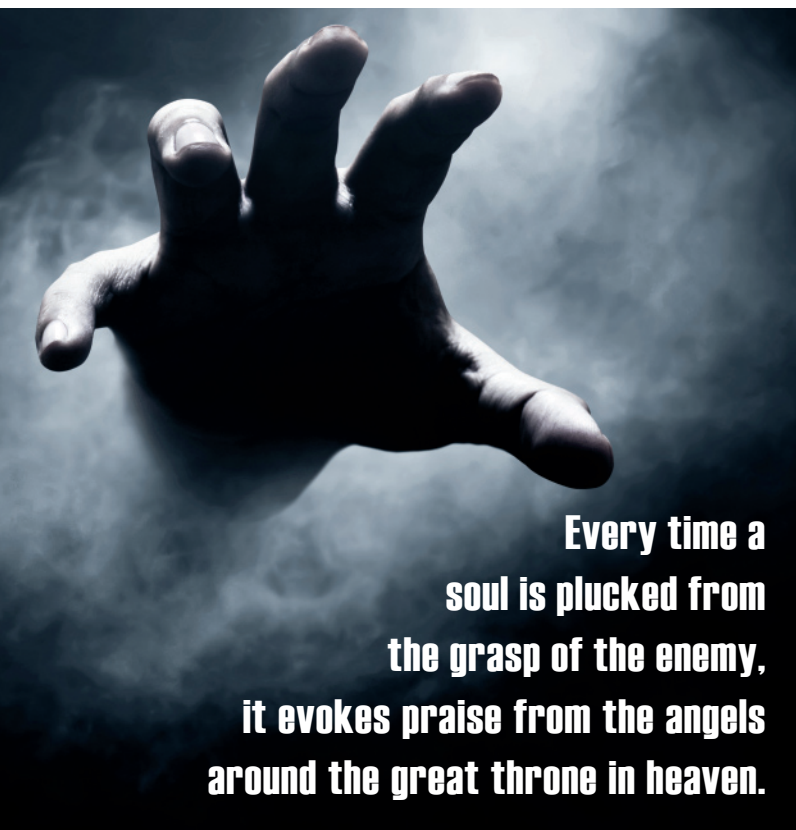
Praise be to God for all He is to me!

Hallelujah, I am free!

—A.A. Jameson ■

ence and in worship may be related to these things—personal knowledge, unique temperament type, and individual faith needs (God knows who needs a nudge and who needs a jolt for the good of our own spiritual growth). I needed only to trust the One Whom I had known about in such good ways.

Since that time, I have grown in my understanding of what conversion really means. And I certainly have had



Valorie (Bender) Quesenberry (BSM ’94) is a wife, mother, writer, musician, and director of financial aid at GBS. She is married to Duane Quesenberry (BRE ’94), the GBS public relations director.



CONVERSION: THE GREAT CHANGE

by Allan P. Brown

Scripture: *“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” —2 Corinthians 5:17*

INTRODUCTION

Within Wesleyan circles, it is sometimes said that the key to victory over willful sin and the power to live a consistent Christian life is found only in the experience of entire sanctification. It is almost implied that whereas conversion provides forgiveness of sins and membership into God’s family, real spiritual stability is found only by those who are entirely sanctified.

It is the intent of this message to seek an answer to the question: “What kind of change takes place when a sinner repents, opens his heart to Jesus as Lord and Savior, and is converted?” Let’s look together at the biblical data.

MANKIND’S INABILITY: NEED FOR CONVERSION

The apostle Paul explains in Romans 5:12-21 that the defilement of Adam has passed to all his descendants. This is what some theologians call the “imputation” of Adam’s sin to humanity. As consequence of Adam’s sin, every descendant of Adam comes into this world self-centered—seeking his or her own way. This self-centered condition is given various names: “inherited depravity, carnality, radical corruption, pervasive depravity, total inability.” The simplest meaning of these terms is that every human (apart from Jesus) is born with a bent toward evil and a natural aversion to God (Psa. 51:5; Psa. 58:3). We are born “sons of disobedience” (Eph. 2:2). It is “natural” for us to rebel against God and His law (Rom. 8:7). Isaiah tells us that, apart from God’s gracious intervention in our

lives, we all go astray like sheep because we want our own way (Isa. 53:6; cf. Rom. 3:23).

Apart from God’s restraining grace, Paul tells us that in our sinful condition we are disinclined to good and inclined to evil. It is not “in us” to pursue God and turn to Christ in faith (Rom. 3:10-18). Our problem is not that we lack the right faculties of the soul or the necessary intellect to understand right from wrong, but our problem is that “sin reigns” (Rom. 6:14). Our minds are set upon the flesh and we are slaves to sin and self-centeredness (Rom. 7:14). Sin is so ingrained in our disposition that it has distorted our judgment and desires. We are free to do as we will, but what we “will”—what we desire—is to sin, not to serve God. And, as evangelical theologians for centuries have stated it, apart from the intervention of God’s grace, mankind in its fallen condition is unable to refrain from sinning. Thus, humanly considered, apart from Divine intervention, salvation is “impossible.” But, thanks be to God, that which is impossible for man is possible for God (Mark 10:27)!

GOD’S INTERVENTION AND RESCUE: SALVATION THROUGH CONVERSION

It is only against the dark backdrop described above that we can better appreciate our salvation as a gift of divine grace. God planned for mankind’s salvation before He created Adam (1 Peter 1:20; Rev. 13:8; 2 Tim. 1:9). He initiated His gracious program of intervention and rescue in the garden of Eden immediately after Adam’s sin when He promised He would provide the human family a Victor Who would triumph over the Devil (Gen. 3:15).

Salvation is initiated and provided for us by the Lord’s love and mercy (Eph. 2:4) and His gracious enablement (Phil. 2:13). God demonstrates His own love for us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us (Rom. 5:8). Jesus provided redemption from the slavery of sin for all mankind when He propitiated the righteous wrath of a holy God by offering Himself as a sacrifice of atonement through the shedding of His blood (Rom. 3:25). And although the gracious gift of salvation is of God (Jonah 2:9), God requires and enables fallen mankind to receive it by “faith” (Eph. 2:8-9; 6:23; Phil. 1:29; 2 Peter 1:1).

How can a sinner who is the enemy of God (Rom. 5:10), spiritually dead and enslaved by sin, respond to God’s offer of salvation? Only through the enabling work of the Holy Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit gives grace to those who are lost (Titus 2:11). Grace brings with it the desire and power to do God’s will (1 Cor. 15:10). The Holy Spirit works with the sinner, convicting of sin (John 16:8). It is the Holy Spirit Who opens the heart (Acts 16:14) and mind

(Luke 24:45) of the sinner, thus drawing the sinner to Christ (John 6:44; 12:32), and the sinner is thus enabled to respond to the gospel message. If the sinner does not resist God's grace (Heb. 12:15; Gal. 2:21) but accepts it and puts his faith in the finished work of Christ, then the Holy Spirit will bring regeneration and renewal to the one who was "dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1; Titus 3:5). The sinner is delivered from the domain of darkness and brought into Christ's kingdom (Col. 1:13). The Holy Spirit also awakens him to spiritual realities which could not be seen or appreciated before (2 Cor. 4:4; 1 Cor. 2:14).

All that God provides us in salvation is rescue in every sense—not only rescue from the guilt and punishment of sin, but also rescue from its enslaving corruption. What was impossible to man, apart from divine intervention (Mark 10:27), is possible with God. When the convicted sinner responds to God's gracious drawing and repents of his sins, God unites such a one with His own Son (Rom. 6:5). Because of God's grace, we are no longer slaves to sin and sin no longer reigns over us (Rom. 6:14; 6:2). Its power is broken and we are free to serve God (Rom. 6:7). The saving work of Christ rescues us not only from the guilt and the brokenness of sin, but also from its power. This is the reason Paul can affirm that when Christ died for sinners, those who put their faith in the saving work of Christ not only died with Him and were buried with Him (Rom. 6:3-4), but also rose with Him and thus are enabled to live a new life in Christ (Rom. 6:4). The new life we live is a life not lived for ourselves, but for Him who died and rose again on our behalf (2 Cor. 5:15). Salvation involves a radical and complete transformation of the soul (Eph. 4:23-24).

RENEWAL AND THE GREAT CHANGE

This great change of conversion is experienced by every believer upon entering the Christian life. God "renews," "begets," "regenerates," and "creates." Man consequently demonstrates his faith by obeying God's Word. God recreates the governing "disposition" of the soul and the believer is renewed in the spirit of his mind and is now a new man in Christ Jesus. He is also renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him (Eph. 4:23; Col. 3:10). This is the fulfillment of God's new covenant promise (Jer. 31:33; 32:39; Ezek. 36:26; 37:14). The Holy Spirit gives the believer a "new heart" which manifests itself in inward and outward holiness. In addition, the Spirit of adoption makes us a member of God's family, making Jesus our Elder Brother, and God our Father in the truest sense of the term (Rom. 8:15).

The great change of conversion is described figuratively in the New Testament as a change of cloth-

ing (Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:9-10). The old person we were before conversion is laid aside like dirty clothes, and the new man is put on like a clean garment. In reference to Jesus, the source of our conversion, the new life is described as the "living" or "forming" of Christ in us (Gal. 2:20; 4:19). All of this is the result of our ongoing union with Christ. We are united with Him in His death, burial, and resurrection (Rom. 6:3-4). Further, we are now led by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:14; Gal. 5:18), and are seated together with Christ in heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come (Eph. 1:20-21; 2:6).

The Apostle John tells us that after conversion, as we walk in the light that God gives us (1 John 1:7), we come more and more to act like our Father Who is best revealed in Jesus. Sonship implies likeness, and we demonstrate by measurable attitudes and obedient actions that we have truly been converted and are God's children. All of God's children give evidence, by their godly obedience, of their sonship. This is how we know God's holy seed has been implanted in us: it shows itself in holy living (1 John 2:3).

CONCLUSION

According to the biblical data we have looked at in this message, the greatest spiritual change a person can experience prior to glorification is conversion. It is at the moment of the new birth that one receives the precious gift of a personal relationship with God through His Son Jesus Christ. This gift is spoken of as the gift of eternal life (John 17:3; Rom. 6:23; 1 John 5:12), and with this gift comes the power to live victorious over willful sin.

The natural and proper response of Christians to the saving grace of God is to dedicate themselves to Him. This consecration has been called "the Spirit-filled life" (Eph. 5:18-21), "the fully surrendered Christian life" (Rom. 12:1-2), and "the entirely sanctified life" (1 Thess. 5:23-24). When we obey these Scriptures and yield every area of our lives to the control of the Holy Spirit, we experience a strengthening and a further purifying as we are conformed to the image of Christ. As we continue to walk in the light of God's Word, we will grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18). Thank God for such a great change! ■

Dr. Allan Brown has chaired the Ministerial Education Division at God's Bible School since 1995. He also is an evangelist, convention speaker, and Bible teacher. He and his wife Nadine live in Alexandria, KY.



SATANIC IDOL AT IOWA CAPITOL

Iowa legislature's current policy on the displays on state property is "either allow all displays or none." Therefore, when the Satanic Temple applied for and met all the requirements for a display, they were approved. Their display, featuring a caped statue of Baphomet, complete with a red and black "holiday wreath" and a pentagram, was set up in the capitol building on December 2 and was to be on display through December 15. However, on December 14, it was torn down and beheaded by Michael Cassidy, a Christian and former military officer. Cassidy discarded the head of the statue into the trash before he was charged with fourth-degree criminal mischief.

ABORTION RIGHTS WINNING ELECTIONS

Since the Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade* last year, abortion rights have gone seven for seven on the ballot, including the red state of Ohio (56.6% to 43.4%). This shows that when initiatives protecting or establishing abortion rights are on the ballot, they are winning—even in red states.

POPE APPROVES BLESSINGS FOR SAME-SEX COUPLES

In a radical shift in Vatican policy, Pope Francis formally approved letting Catholic priests bless same-

sex couples. Some LGBT advocates still viewed the church's stance skeptically as they interpreted the pope's stipulation that blessings "must not resemble marriage" as reinforcing the church's idea that gay couples remain inferior to heterosexual partnerships. This comes upon the heels of another Vatican document, approved by Pope Francis, which said that transgender people can be more integrated into the church—that is, be baptized, serve as godparents, and be witnesses at church weddings.

UNITED METHODISTS LOSE ONE-FOURTH OF THEIR CHURCHES

United Methodist congregations in the U.S. had a deadline of December 31, 2023, to make a decision on whether or not to leave the denomination if they disagreed with the church's stance on LGBT issues. With only days remaining on the time for allowing such departures, the record showed that a total of 7,660 churches had voted to leave, with 5,643 voting to do so in 2023 alone. This means that about one-fourth of the United Methodist churches in the United States have left the denomination since 2019 due to LGBT disagreements.

Many departing churches are joining the new denomination launched in May 2023 by conservative Methodists—Global Methodist Church. In September 2024, it will hold a convening general conference in San Jose, Costa Rica. ■



student focus

JANAYE BYERS was born and reared (for most of her life) in Washington State—the baby sister of three older brothers. Her family was "very musical," and that instilled within her a love of music. She plays both the piano and violin. When she reached her 14th birthday, her family moved to Oklahoma. She became acquainted with GBS through Ochelata Youth Camp and decided to attend. At GBS, her relationship with God has grown deeper. Some of her favorite things about being a GBS student are "the relationships I've made while I've been here," and faculty and staff who are always willing to meet with students. She also says, "I have fallen in love with doing ministry while I've been at GBS."

Janaye is working on an AA in General Studies. After graduation, she is trusting God to guide her where He wants her to be. "Although I currently do not feel called in one particular direction, I am willing to follow Him and His direction." ■

Seventy-five percent of our students receive some form of financial aid which enables them to attend GBS. If you would like to support students with financial needs, you may send a gift to:

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GBS alumni are encouraged to submit updates on their lives and current ministries.

AVOIDING THE La-Z-Boy® TRAP

by Glenn D. Black (HS '69, BRE '74)

When God began to show me that I was to retire in 2012 from my leadership responsibilities as a district superintendent in my denomination, I knew it was the right thing to do. I never doubted it or wished I could change my mind. I have had no regrets at all!

Choices create consequences. When I officially retired, I had multiple decisions to make. Quit preaching altogether? Quit writing? Quit teaching? Maybe even withdraw from all social life and collapse into my La-Z-Boy® recliner and ultimately be a lazy and grouchy old man?

A ministerial friend told me not to retire because retirement was horrible. I am sure that if a person has serious health issues, retirement might not be enjoyable. Even though I have had two heart attacks and diabetes, I am still very active.

Retirement for me has been very enjoyable and rewarding. There are about seven churches in my area where I am invited to preach when the pastor is away or the church does not currently have a pastor. I do some writing. I have taught

classes for men and women seeking ordination in my denomination.

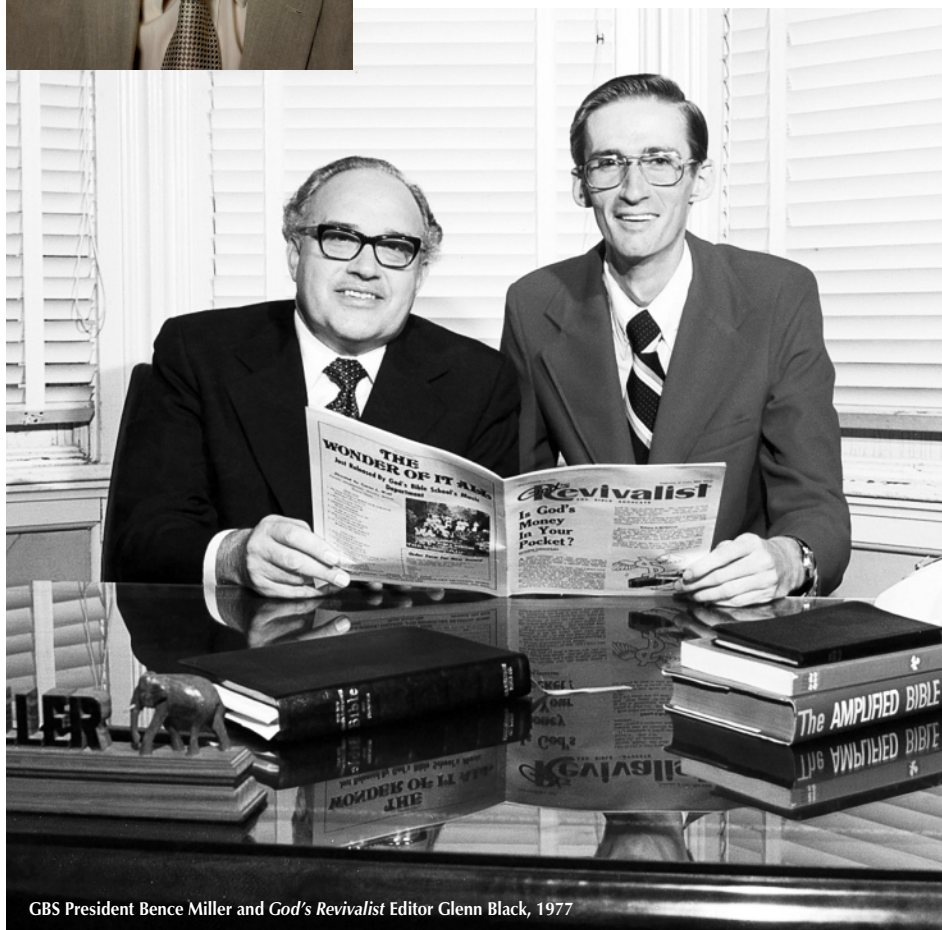
I live in a town of just under 1,400 people. For eight years I pastored a church in my little town. When we returned in 2012 after being gone for 22 years in Kentucky, we bought a retirement home in Westport, Indiana, and I felt led to start a personal "friendship ministry." My whole intent was simply to be friendly to people. That ministry has been very fulfilling.

The Lord has been very good to me. He has led me to pastor three churches. His Divine will has allowed me to be the editor of *God's Revivalist* (1976-1985). Being a district superintendent in my denomination for 22 years was a big surprise.

Retirement from church administration was not a retirement from my calling to preach and minister. My call to preach and minister to others will be with me until



As his wife holds the Bible, Glenn Black is sworn in as a member of the Town Council of Westport, IN.



GBS President Bence Miller and *God's Revivalist* Editor Glenn Black, 1977

my dying breath. Let that be clearly understood. However, at the age of 72, I wondered what was next in my life. The La-Z-Boy® recliner was not an option for me. To my surprise, God began to speak to me about serving Him outside of the church walls. He led me to file as a candidate for the Town Council of Westport, Indiana. I won the primary vote. Then I won in the November election!

This new adventure in the world of local government will be a new opportunity to reflect the spirit of Christ and the beauty of holiness among my fellow citizens, whom I love and respect.

So, what is my admonition to my fellow senior saints? When you begin to fade from prominence, do not fade from obedience to God. When you begin to fade from daily career responsibilities, do not fade from spiritual fruitfulness.

Finally, if you are reasonably healthy, only use the La-Z-Boy® recliner as a comfortable evening seat. God has something for you to do during the day. 📖

Glenn D. Black (HS '69, BRE '74) is a long-term pastor and retired district superintendent of The Wesleyan Church (Kentucky District). He has also served as editor of God's Revivalist (1976-1985). He and his wife Sharon (Jackman) (BA '70) live in Westport, IN.



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by Sonja Vernon

LET THE CHILDREN COME

"Then children were brought to him that he might lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples rebuked the people, but Jesus said, 'Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven.'" —Matthew 19:13-14 ESV

As a tenderhearted child, I made regular trips to the altar during invitation hymns. Happily, my parents recorded some of my post-altar testimonies. In one of my favorites, my father asked what had happened when I prayed. I reported that Jesus "forgave me." He then asked, "And how long are you going to live for Him?" In an emphatic tone, I replied, "For too many days!"

It has been many days since those early times of seeking God and growing in grace. The journey has not been without its missteps, but the God Who met me as a child meets me still. Around 4 years old, I truly understood that it was my sin that put Jesus on the cross, and, by faith, I accepted His forgiveness. I had much maturing to do, but from my earliest memories, my heart has been set toward God. As we celebrate conversion stories, I worship a God Who welcomes children, Who doesn't see them as second-rate, Who speaks to them, walks with them, and assures them of His presence.

Parents, foster your child's relationship with God. Children will be imperfect and need correction. But Jesus calls them to Himself. He has given them to you to guide and direct. Encourage them when they fail. Express confidence in their prayers. One of these days, they too may look back and see that "too many days" have unfolded into an entire lifetime of walking with Jesus! 📖

Sonja Vernon is Vice President for Student Affairs at God's Bible School.

SWSE SPRING TOUR 2024

Wednesday, March 20, 2024 | 7:00 PM
Bible Methodist Church
1647 N. Ellsworth Ave.
Salem, OH 44460
Pastor David Crosley
Info: (330) 337-6792

Thursday, March 21, 2024 | 7:00 PM
God's Missionary Church
852 Ridge Road
New Columbia, PA 17856
Pastor Brian Spangler
Info: (419) 563-4014

Friday, March 22, 2024
TO BE DETERMINED
For Update Go To:
www.gbs.edu/news-events/music tours/

Saturday, March 23, 2024 | 6:00 PM
God's Missionary Church
301 N. High St., Duncannon, PA 17020
Pastor Jeremy Fuller
Info: (717) 576-2684

Sunday, March 24, 2024 | 10:30 AM
Emmanuel Wesleyan Church
135 Emmanuel Church Rd., Gratz, PA, 17030
Pastor David Bubb
Info: (717) 365-3040

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