

Catholic Context

I was raised in a religious family. My parents took me to church regularly. Sometimes I read my Bible and attended Bible studies. I knew about God and believed in God. However, when I became a teenager I began to get farther and farther away from God. When I was 14, I began to drink alcohol and by the time I was 16 I was drinking pretty regularly and experimenting with drugs. I was happy on the outside, but on the inside I felt trapped by my sin. I wanted to stop doing wrong things, but I could not. Sometimes I felt guilty and ashamed. When I was by myself I felt lonely. When I would lie down to sleep at night, I was afraid of dying.

One day a man came to our high school. He talked to us about God and about our country. He talked about how Jesus had changed his life. He invited all of us to come back that night to listen about God. He told us boldly, "If you do not want to hear about God tonight, then don't come." Something in my heart stirred. I knew I needed to go hear him. That night, over 300 students came to hear this man speak. He told us things I had known all my life. He told us that Jesus loved us. He told us that Jesus had died on the cross for our sins and that on the third day. He had been raised from the dead.

However, he began to talk about sin and how we needed to turn away from our sins. I knew I was a sinner. In fact the Bible says that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. He told us that if we died without a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, then we would go to Hell. The Bible also teaches us that there is a payment for our sin, and that payment is death; physical death and spiritual death forever in Hell. He said, "If you save your life you will lose it, but if you lose your life for my sake, you will find it." He explained that if we allowed anything to keep us from coming and giving our whole life to Christ, then we would lose our soul for eternity. He then pointed to the end of the gymnasium and asked, "If you were to walk out of those doors tonight and die, where would you spend eternity?" I knew I would go to Hell. I knew I was guilty before God. I knew more than anything I needed Christ in my life. I really did not know if God would, or could, change my life or if He wanted me to come to him. I will never forget what the man said that night. He said, "If you are willing to bring God all of your junk, sin, bad stuff, and give it to him, then he will take it. He will then come into your life, bring a broom and begin to clean your heart and make you into a new person." I believed. I prayed a simple prayer that night. I said, "God, you know that I am a bad person. I have sinned against you. If you are willing to accept me like I am, I will give you my life. I need you. I believe you love me and died for me. Come into my heart and make me new."

I knew when I prayed that God had heard me. He forgave me. He gave me peace that night. He began to change my life. He began to change my desires. I could not believe it! The bad things I did in the past, I no longer wanted to do. I began to read my Bible, not because I had to, but because I wanted to know Christ better. I began to talk to God every day. I was baptized and began going to church. I began telling others about the Love of Christ. He gave me and still gives me victory over bad habits. He took away my fear of death. I now have hope in my life. I found forgiveness, hope, purpose, and eternal life, not because of religion, but because of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Religion cannot save you! Good works cannot save you! Even prayer cannot save you. Only by leaving your sin and coming near to God through Jesus Christ can you find salvation. Jesus is the door! Would you be willing to come near to God today? Would you be willing to leave your sin today? Would you be willing to step through the door and find a close relationship with God? He is waiting for you.