

Life with my Heavenly Father

By
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When Ernie asked me to talk about living with our Heavenly Father, I wondered if I was the right choice, not because I don't live my life in God's word, because I certainly do try as hard as I can to do just that, but because I have been a Christian only a few years now. Then I thought that maybe I am a good choice to talk about living with our Heavenly Father since it wasn't many years ago that I wasn't doing that.

God has blessed my life in so many ways I can't even count all the blessings. They go all the way back to the parents He gave me, the best parents I could have had, parents who taught me the ethic of right and wrong, decency and morality, and about God and Jesus. My mother was a strong Christian woman, who dearly loved Christ, and a great mother. My father was a good man and a strong man, both physically and mentally, tough on the outside, tender on the inside. He was dirt poor as a child, but he got his life where he wanted it and did well for himself and our family. He loved to hunt, but wouldn't shoot a dove because of the role it played on Noah's Ark and what it stood for. He was a great father, a man's man, the person I wanted to be like. Then he died, when I was 22 years and 5 days old.

I went through the next 30 some years of my life looking up to no one, looking to no one for guidance. I thought I was a pretty good guy. I didn't do anything to intentionally hurt anyone, I helped people when they needed it, and I wasn't a heathen. But, I sure made some bad choices, choices I would have made differently had my heart been right with God. And, we all know that being a good person just isn't good enough if we're not serving our Lord.

I believed in God and Jesus, but I don't think that made me a Christian. Polls suggest that something like 90% of the people in this country believe in God, with about 80% identifying themselves as Christians. But, 80 or 90% don't live their lives that way. What many are forgetting or ignoring is the part of Christianity about accepting God's word as taught through Christ as our guide in life. I was one of those people.

Hebrews 10: 26, 27 says

If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God.

That doesn't say to me that just because we believe in God and we're good people that we can carry on doing whatever in life we want while forgetting God's will. Nor does it tell me that once forgiven, always forgiven. Christianity is a lifestyle that we accept, and living with our Heavenly Father is something we do everyday.

I had heard the Gospel, and I knew the truth. A few years ago I decided it was time to start living my life with Christ. Even then, I wanted a great revelation to get me in the Christian lifestyle. I know many of you have seen the movie Sgt York when he was riding his mule and a lightning bolt struck him and he immediately became a Christian. Well, that's what I was longing for - that lightning bolt from God. But, it didn't happen for me, and it didn't happen for Alvin York in real life. Both of us, like many others, decided that we needed to change our lives and we went about learning how to serve our Lord. And, we all know that being a Christian is a continuous learning process.

Then, God sent my family and me here to Mount Olivet, and we're so thankful He did. Mount Olivet is the perfect church for Emily, Bernie and me. What a great church to come to learn the bible, to hear God's word, and to fellowship with so many good, dedicated Christians. I really had no idea being a Christian and serving the Lord could be so fun. I didn't know anything could be as fun as hunting, but I've found something that certainly is. Instead of reading hunting magazines I now read the Bible and other Christian based books, and I love every minute of it.

I heard a saying a few years ago while listening to a Christian radio station. It said, "**The life of a person whose bible is tattered, usually isn't.**" I thought about that and decided that was one of the most profound statements I had ever heard. I've noticed a lot of tattered bibles in our church. Mine isn't tattered yet, but I'm working on it. Can you imagine what a beautiful, wonderful world this would be if everyone had tattered bibles?

I've been in law enforcement for 32 years, 27 of those being a cop in Richmond. My uniform years were all spent in 1st Precinct, which is Richmond's east end and Church Hill area. I've seen the violence, a culture that makes you somebody after you've shot somebody; where hatred and anger run rampant; where sociopathic behavior is the norm, and illegal drugs rule the day, every day.

Almost half of my 27 years have been spent fighting narcotics trafficking. I can't say I've seen it all, but I've seen my share. I've seen people so desperate for drugs they steal anything they can get, and sell anything they have including their bodies, just to get the next fix. Sin is a way of life. They either haven't heard the Gospel, or they just refuse to accept it. It's sad and depressing. Being a cop can give you a cynical and tainted view of the world, and can make you think everyone's just a low life and that the whole world is just rotten.

Then there are places like Mount Olivet, where I come and fellowship with my church family, fellow Christians who live our lives dedicated to pleasing our Lord. The good side of life, the happy side of life, the life we all should be living. It brings things back into perspective.

I lost my dad, the man I modeled myself after, the man who gave me comfort and security, I lost him many years ago. I still miss him. But now I have a Father in my life that is far greater than any earthly father any of us can have, or could hope to be. So, on this Father's Day, a day we honor and recognize our earthly fathers, we also recognize the greatest Father of all, our Creator, our Heavenly Father. We're so blessed to know Him and have Him in our lives, a Father who loves us with all our imperfections, asking only that we love Him in return, a Father who will always be there for us, who will never leave us, a Father who will never die, but will live always and forever. Our Heavenly Father!