

## How a new Christian or prodigal can lay hold of Christ (with my testimony)

D E Wasake Esq.

August 2018

### Basics

Until I truly became a Christian in March 2017 and then became baptised in May 2017, you could call me the KING OF "BACKSLIDERS". You see over a 20 year period since I had first come to know Christ at the age of 13, I had been "hot and cold" for God (hence "backsliding), for example:

**Secret secular things (secondary school):** The 2 year period from when I was 13-15 years in boarding school in Africa. I claimed I loved the Lord and in about 3 months even read the entire New Testament. On the weekend, as a "good Christian" I attended Christian fellowship when the SINNERS were enjoying "secular" movie entertainment - the very same movies I used to watch during school holidays, away from their prying eyes.

Also the "worldly" music I hated, I secretly followed it (also during school holidays).

**Scary book (university):** The perhaps 6 month period after I read a scary book "He came to set the captives free" about a doctor working in a hospital that belonged to Satan. I thereafter "feared the wrath of God" (or was it Satan?) and subsequently dumped my girlfriend who was "holding me back from knowing Christ". I was hot again and this time moved about in my pocket with a blue Gideon's bible. I regularly preached to my neighbour best friend about God. Soon we were partying together!

**Drug heist part 1(Bahamas):** The night when a friend asked me to try "Hush Brownies". I didn't realise or perhaps after a night of drinking, didn't care that they were a cake baked with Marijuana (ganja we called it). I woke up at 5 am and thought the ceiling fan was going to chop my head off! Next it was that I would slip in the shower (I tried to shower at 5.00 am). Then it was the turn of the leftover chicken to choke me. Eventually, I knew, I was done for and my drug overdose body was going to be shipped back to my poor mother in Africa. So I grabbed my Bible and slept while holding it.

I have not mentioned the times I had heard a Christian message, cried, repented and asked Jesus to forgive me and promptly forgotten it, when the danger was past. I had tried Christianity many times and it hadn't worked. So what was going to be different this time?

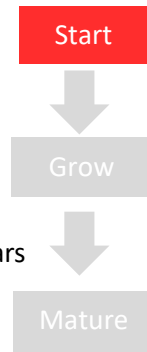
### Examples from the bible

The bible says that we should be careful not to build on any other foundation, other than Jesus.<sup>i</sup>

You see this Christ is the Foundation of Christian life, the Rock on which you are to build your life because as he explained himself in a famous story (called a parable), if you don't your house will come crushing down – like mine had many times.

He explains the parable thus:

*Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock.*



*“But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall.”<sup>iii</sup>*

It would seem that Christianity had “failed” to take a firm hold of me over the 20 year period as I have narrated, because my life wasn’t built on the rock... BUT there is something Beautiful about the Holy Spirit and this is a revelation that came to me, just recently:

In Genesis 1: 1-2, the bible says:

*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And **the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.** Then God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light.*

In the beginning, the Holy Spirit (who you will get to know), was hovering. Some say, this means He was Brooding, Thinking, Pondering while he looked at the chaos. After a while, He decided to put an end to the chaos. He commanded light to flood in. And there was light!

That is what happened to me and this is how it happened.

## What happened next...

About 3 months before my conversion, at the start of 2017, a Christian friend of mine asked me that we should read the bible together over one year. She didn’t think I would do it, she later told me, knowing of my hot and cold journey.. but she tried anyway. I said yes (to her surprise) and then I started. I downloaded a [bible reading app](#). You see the Spirit of God had been preparing me for this firm foundation and this is how it unfolded.

**Bible reading.. but no results.** I started reading the bible daily. Starting with Genesis 1 (with that passage above). Nothing really happened (as I thought). My life didn’t really change. I continued with my partying and my former lifestyle. A Christian girl I had recently met at this time (I later married her) even offered to pray with me daily and I REFUSED. I wasn’t ready.

The one thing that was different this time though - I refused to stop reading the bible. I would read, promptly forget the stuff I was reading and go about my day. What I didn’t realise is that God was working in the 2 months plus that I read. I know this because on 8 March 2017, I wrote down my first bible lesson in a notepad on my phone. It seems the word was finally taking root firmly and I had even by this point developed the habit of writing down what I was learning.

**Breakthrough.** By around 26 March 2017, I eventually couldn’t live with the double lifestyle, It was tearing me apart! I on my knees, with tears in my eyes basically told God he had won. I surrendered my life to him. I confessed my sins and asked him to become my Lord and Saviour.

**Church and other material.** As soon as I became a Christian. I also realised something had to change if I was not to fall into old patterns (of backsliding).

I asked 2 friends of mine which church they attended and the very next Sunday, I went to [Church](#) for the first time in perhaps 8 years.

During this time, I also realised, that in addition to regularly attending church to meet other believers, it was critical for me to get my foundation deep in Christ. I did two things:

1. I bought a book [written by the author of the Alpha course](#). This was to help me understand the basics of Christianity.

2. I started reading a book called Purpose Driven life by an author called Rick Warren. It's a 40 day journey in the Christian life. As part of the reading, I daily (at lunch) listened to his [daily audio messages to accompany the book](#).

**Baptism and Holy Spirit filling.** During my daily reading of the bible as well as these supplementary Christian books, I was reading, it became obvious to me that I needed to do all the things necessary to fully become a Christian. This is therefore what needed to happen next.

### *Baptism*

In May 2017 I became baptised when the pastor at [Church](#) announced a baptism. From my reading the bible for myself I clearly saw that childhood baptism commonly practiced in some churches and the model in the bible were not the same. In the bible, baptism took place after someone believed in Jesus. These were in all cases, adults who understood the meaning of salvation. A child can't do that.

### *Holy Spirit Filling*

A few months later, the Pastor again announced that those who wanted to be filled with the Holy Spirit should go to the front. I didn't go because by then, the same Holy Spirit who was already in full force by now in my life was in the habit of "embarrassing a grown man". I would often cry so hard I needed to carry tissue with me almost permanently! So No, I wasn't going to be filled in public – I knew what would happen. I however did this privately with the pastor (cry I surely did).

### **Learning Spiritual disciplines... and the voice of God**

If I was to really live the Christian lifestyle, then I needed to walk the journey and not talk it, otherwise, I would fool myself as in past times. There is a bible verse which explains it like this:

*"But don't just listen to God's word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves. For if you listen to the word and don't obey, it is like glancing at your face in a mirror. You see yourself, walk away, and forget what you look like. But if you look carefully into the perfect law that sets you free, and if you do what it says and don't forget what you heard, then God will bless you for doing it."<sup>iii</sup>*

I had to therefore let the bible teach me what I needed and do it. For example:

- **Meditate on God's word.** This meant I couldn't abandon my daily bible reading and bible study BUT I didn't rush as I did when I was younger. Instead I took my time, read, thought about it, revised it, and tried to practice it. The bible promises if you do this, you are like a tree planted by a river. Your leaves never wither. <sup>iv</sup>
- **Learning how to praise (and controlling rebellious thoughts).** When I started, I really had some rebellious streaks or thoughts in me – "Why should I lift my voice to praise God?" I was arrogant! These invasive thoughts often came violently in my mind but slowly by slowly Jesus renewed my mind and now they are fewer and fewer and I have learnt to make every thought subject to Jesus.
- **Learn how to pray.** I realised all my 20 years of hot and cold, I really didn't know how to pray! I therefore prayed to God to teach me how to pray and He responded by telling me to read the psalms. This is how I started knowing how to worship him and praying better.
- **Fasting.** I was living apart from my new wife and it was critical that I remain faithful. I needed to learn self-control, particularly given my previous hedonistic lifestyle. God taught me how to fast and he revealed to me a fasting mystery. If you can control your hunger for food, you can control other "fleshly" things e.g – anger, sexual urges, your tongue, jealousy.

- **Giving.** This was one of the hardest lessons I had to learn. One day in doing my bible reading, God interrupted me to remind me that I had to give. I had never tithed before in my life. I grudgingly had to learn to stop letting money control me, as it had for virtually all my working life. Tithing teaches you that all belongs to God and money is just HIS loan to you.

**God's voice really?** If you are wondering at this stage how "God interrupted me" or "Spoke to me". It is primarily through reading the bible and other material. I noticed a "strange thing". As I would read the bible, a verse would stand out to me. Then I switch on TV for example, and right on cue, the preacher is speaking about the same thing. Then I listen to an audio sermon – and AGAIN I hear the same thing.

I now know that God often confirms things through two or three witnesses. <sup>v</sup>

## And now?

Slowly by slowly over this time, I have built my knowledge of God and this has moved on to not only the bible and spiritual books but I am [now learning bible theology through a FREE online bible school](#). This training enables me to be able to know how to defend what I believe in.

Does all this make me "Holy" or "Perfect"? Oh no, far from it! I have found a biblical truth taking hold of me:

**My mind is daily renewed by the Word. It is almost like a river washing me clean every day <sup>vi</sup>and I find that, it is not that I am sinless. What I however find is that by the power of the Holy Spirit – I sin less and where I sin, I feel the conviction of the Holy Spirit who tells me I need to repent. Having been forgiven, I then get up and start crawling, then walking, then running again forward to the high calling of Christ Jesus. Towards the prize which he had laid hold of me. Amen! <sup>vii</sup>**

Please note, sinning is not the same as living a lifestyle of sin, what is often seen as:

### **I am saved so it's okay to continue in this [bad] habit?**

Christians who become saved BUT continue as a "practice" (something they do as a matter of lifestyle) to do the very same things they were saved from are at risk. The bible says the following about such:

*"Or do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were..."<sup>viii</sup>*

It is often clear to us from the bible that those who do evil will not inherit the kingdom but the verse above adds – "Neither (meaning in addition) ..." as he lists people who practice these things will ALSO not inherit it. This as you can see includes a Christian (including one who has become saved) who continues to practice these things, so we need to be careful! So please note, sinning and repenting of something is not the same as practicing it daily or regularly – as a life style.

There are 100s of other lessons I have learnt in 1 and half years of being a Christian such that I possibly can't relay them all on these few pages but some of them have been:

- **Take up your cross every day to follow him.**  
Discipleship is not a matter of Sunday or whenever you are around other Christians. It is a daily walk, one where you surrender your life to Jesus and are willing to die for him daily. Jesus says so as follows:

*“If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.”<sup>ix</sup>*

- **Joy** – even when I am in the midst of unbelievable pain and suffering (I went through this in the first few months).
- **Controlling the tongue/Humility** – Learning not to say something, even when the old me would.
- **Giving.** Becoming more tuned to the needs of those around us. Family, friends, those in the wider community. God’s heart is always for the downtrodden. I couldn’t claim to be a Christian if I wasn’t sensitive to people’s needs.

I have documented the rest of my spiritual journey to date through the website including how Jesus eventually gave me a message for People Like Me – Prodigals. This is my story, what will yours be?

## Your turn

What will you now do differently? Examples to think about from my story include:

- *Find a church to attend. Meeting other Christians is critical for your walk.*
- *Keep a journal* – for your bible reading and prayers. God speaks through this.
- *Developing a list of spiritual resources (e.g audio, video, book) which you can use during your devotional time. Other Christians will give you invaluable tips.*
- **Important:** *How will you make reading the bible (or listening to audio of bible readings) part of your normal daily routine?*

---

<sup>i</sup> 1 Corinthians 3: 11 (NIV)

<sup>ii</sup> Matthew 7: 24-27 (NKJV)

<sup>iii</sup> James 1: 22-25 (NLT)

<sup>iv</sup> Psalms 1: 1-3 (NKJV)

<sup>v</sup> 1 John 5: 7-8 (NJKV)

<sup>vi</sup> Romans 12: 2 (paraphrase)

<sup>vii</sup> Philippians 3: 14 (KJV) (paraphrase)

<sup>viii</sup> 1 Corinthians 6: 9 – 11 (NIV)

<sup>ix</sup> Matthew 16: 24 – 26 (ESV)