



The Burning Bush—Online article archive

This is the LORD'S doing...it is marvellous in our eyes.

The testimony of Gary McCullagh, Kilkeel, Northern Ireland.

I had the privilege of being born into a good Free Presbyterian home. I was faithfully sent along to church, Sunday School and even a local Christian School; so from a very young age, I knew the gospel and my need of the Saviour.

One night when I was at a children's meeting and was being once again told of my need to get saved through Jesus alone, I realised that these were more than just nice little stories I was hearing, but the true plan of Salvation designed by God even before creation. I believe this was when I reached the age of understanding but more than that it was the first time I was convicted by the Spirit of the Lord. I realised that in my present state, I was on a broad pathway to hell's damnation. This was something I needed to sort out, and so when I went home, I asked my mother if it was true, for I knew she would tell me the truth. She told me how to get saved plainly and simply, and I thank the Lord that that night at the age of seven I came to the Lord in childlike faith.

I was glad to be saved and loved the Lord even though I didn't understand a lot about the way to be a Christian. I knew right from wrong, and I read my Bible, or at least all the words I could read, and prayed to God often. I even tried to witness to a few men I knew were not saved at the harbour, where I spent most of my free time learning how to mend nets.

But by the time I was 12 all had changed. It started by not reading the Bible; then prayer went out the window. Soon I was more interested in the world than my Saviour and, at around 13, I started to smoke. By 14 it was drinking that excited me. Meanwhile the music of this world fuelled my rebelliousness. I left the Christian School, which my parents reluctantly agreed to, because they believed I was unhappy in it, and joined the local state school where spiritually I deteriorated quickly with my new found friends of the world. I began to experiment with drugs and every other pleasure of the flesh I was able to, behind my parents' back. I denied God even existed as it was the easiest way to deal with the guilt of sin in my life, and as my parents punished me, I pretended to myself that they weren't really hurt by my actions; they just wanted to hurt me.

So I continued in my ways, always searching for something to satisfy the lack of true joy in my life. It soon became harder drugs and I even thought tattoos would make me happier. I'm now stuck with four of them! I became a punk and wanted to be seen as someone who didn't care about anything. I even spiked my hair and dyed it wild colours. None of this, though, brought me happiness, at least not real joy, only a bad set of lungs, while I smoked up to 30 or even 40 cigarettes a day at times, scars from drunken accidents and body piercings and a drug addiction. I was at my lowest and going lower day by day, some of which I would never even tell anyone about. My parents, and everyone I knew, I was pushing away, and I was going nowhere, until the Lord brought about a series of events, which changed my life within three weeks. I had left home. I had a lot of rows with my parents, which led me to give up hard drugs, although I still was taking some lighter ones.



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For something to do with my spare time I joined the junior Young Democrats, the junior wing of the Ulster Democratic Unionist Party, of which I am now Secretary/Press Officer. But at that time I was anxious to do something that was worthwhile for a change. I wasn't going to church at the time, and had almost left it altogether, so it was the right time for the Lord to intervene. As I canvassed for the 'No' camp with Christians, I soon realised they didn't have my problems and, although my conscience was clear on political matters, it was far from clear on godly matters. This irritated me a lot but I pressed on still not bothering with church, although I was planning to go some time again.

On May 20th, the day before the referendum, I sat waiting to go to a rally in Kilkeel in support of the 'No' campaign. As I waited I began to read a little booklet on "Five Things Every Protestant Should Know." As I continually read verses referring to God's children, I was overwhelmed with guilt, so I went and threw out all that I had which I knew was wrong: cigarettes, drugs, music CD's etc. Then I went to the rally feeling a little better, and tried not to curse, as I really had a foul mouth, but later as I walked down the Knockchree Avenue in Kilkeel by myself, I was really convicted by the Lord. I knew I needed to repent and seek the Lord and submit to Him again. I said I would do it when I got home, but as I walked on the fear of the Lord came upon me and I just couldn't go any further. 'What if I didn't even make it home?' I dared not take that chance and fell on my knees by the side of the road and asked the Lord back into my life and I can only describe from then onward as joy! joy! joy! and I thank the Lord He still grows sweeter every day, Amen.