

Simon Murphy's testimony

I was blessed to grow up in a strong Christian household with parents who loved me, prayed for me and taught me the gospel. I am so grateful for this. Their prayers, example and teaching laid a wonderful platform in my life and one that I wish to pass on to my children. We do not however, become Christians simply because we are taught the gospel. We must be saved, which means coming to see and turn from our sins, trusting in Christ as our Lord and Saviour.

Because I grew up in a Christian family, I had a desire to know God and to experience the faith that my parents demonstrated, though my heart did not yet love God. In primary school I was aware that being from a Christian family meant that I was not allowed to do what many of my school classmates were doing (swearing, cheating in tests, and viewing pornography). I felt frustrated by this, wanting to be able to do the things I was not allowed to do. Whilst I understood the content of the gospel, these desires showed that my heart did not yet love God as I had not properly understood the problem my sin against God or of God's love for me in Christ.

When I was about 12 years of age, I had a few experiences in church services through which I became a Christian. The first involved an experience of God's love which was like having liquid love poured into my body. Romans 5 describes something similar to this: "God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us". In that one moment I knew that though I was unworthy and unholy before God, He loved me through Jesus and called me His own. I trusted in Christ and knew that my sin was forgiven in Him.

I remember on that evening consciously understanding that my parent's faith had now become my own. I was no longer simply the son of Christian parents, I was a Christian. God was no longer just their God, He was my Father, and I was His son! From then on, a love for God grew in my heart. I found that I no longer wanted to do the things that I had wanted to do before. Sin had lost much of its appeal to me, and where it still was tempting I now understood it as being grievous to God and so I was glad to turn from it. God had given me a new heart and longing for Him. During subsequent infillings of the Holy Spirit I understood the holiness of God in a greater way.

This was not to say that from those moments I never struggled with sin or had any desires contrary to God's ways. I was and still am subject to temptation and my flesh is weak. But God has changed my heart, made it alive to Him, and broken the power of sin in my life. By His grace I am growing in my love for Him and seeing His grace work its way into various areas of my life. I long to serve Him and see His Kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven.

A significant part of my growth as a Christian happened in the church that my family attended. It was there that I learned God's Word through the preaching, saw models of Christian discipleship and was encouraged in my faith by people both my age and much older than me, and served the body with the gifts God had given me. The relationships that I developed there were crucial in my growth as a Christian and I'm glad that God does not simply save us and leave us on our own but includes us with His people in His body, the church.