

PERSONAL TESTIMONY

SALVATION AND BAPTISM

Both Jen and I have been in the church since we were kids. I had a single mom who gave her life to Christ when I was 6. Jen's parents started going to church when she was in Jr. High. I gave my life to Christ at the age of 9 at First Assembly of God in Goldsboro, NC. Jen gave her life to Christ when she was 12 years old at Trinity Church in Omaha, NE. God was doing great things in our lives, even though we were in vastly different places, experiencing two different upbringings that would eventually meld together a family that has dedicated their lives in service to the Gospel of Christ.

Easter of 1982 is when I gave my life to Christ, I was captivated that God could love a young man conceived out of wedlock, from a divorced family, and poor as could be with seemingly little future. My mom moved from the United Methodist Church to an AG church when she was filled with the baptism of the Spirit at a Full Gospel Businessmen's Meeting. Her Methodist pastor suggested that the local AG church would be a place that we as a family could grow and become disciples. I later found out, he was a "Closet Pentecostal," just nervous about letting the UMC know about his passionate experience. He and my mom would have coffee at the hospital where she worked, and she tell would him the things the Lord was doing in our lives.

This started a journey into Royal Rangers, VBS, Youth Groups, Missions Trips, and Youth Camps. Attending First Assembly, I stopped going to Cub Scouts and started attending Royal Rangers. I walked in the very first Wednesday night and saw this really tall man, with black military issued eyeglass frames. Nine months later, my mom married that man — my first Royal Ranger Commander became my dad!

At this church, I was so fortunate to have a group of "tween-agers" that had Godly parents and the inspiration of our Pastoral Staff to seek God together. We would often pray together at the altars before we would enjoy a 30-minute round of tag through the church and outside that often ended with a skinned knee, fingers slammed in a door, broken "fake" plant pots, which always led to a grounding or public spanking (those were the worst)!

It was in those prayer meetings at the altar, in a classroom, huddled together that God would pour out His Spirit on us. Out of our group of about 7 to 10 kids, I was the third to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit. I remember being in the aisle between sections of pews. Everyone around was laying, crying, or completely still. As I noticed I was still standing, I flopped to the ground thinking, "Why is nothing happening to me?" It was then that 2 girls from our group came and got the rest of us. They circled us up and prayed that God would baptize us that night. Frustrated at the end of the night that "nothing happened," we were all encouraged to keep praying, never give up, and that it would happen soon. That was a Sunday night; then on the next Wednesday night, after Royal Ranger and Missionettes, we all gathered to pray. All of a sudden without even looking for it, it came out of me like a passionate life-giving stream of cool water. I'll never forget the night, as I stood beside Pastor Ralph Painter's big rolling chalk board. A night that changed my life forever!

Dad was in the Air Force and we were then stationed to Offutt Air Force Base in Bellevue, NE in March of 1986. I was in 7th grade, and thought to myself, "Where in the world is Nebraska?" I was a proud Tarheel. I remember asking my mom "Is Nebraska in the US?" Once we arrived in Bellevue, we began to attend Bellevue Christian Center, Pastored by Sam and Jeanne Mayo.

OUR CALL TO MINISTRY

I remember we arrived on Tuesday; started school on Wednesday; and went to Youth Group that night and met Jeanne Mayo and Rick Lorimer. They were my first youth pastors. Under their passionate ministry to students and young adults, I was mentored and began the journey to what would become, now, a 38-year journey to fulfilling the call of God on my life. Our church in NC was about 250 people. B.C.C. was about 2,000 people. I was lost in such a huge place, but I loved it. There was the same Spirit there that was at 1st AG in Goldsboro, just a whole lot more of it. This church had a K-12 grade school that the Lord made a way for me to attend, graduate, and meet my wife there. I remember sitting in church my first Sunday, looking up at the front. My 7th grade English Teacher was leading worship. I remember telling a friend the next Monday, "Dude, Mrs. C. is our worship leader at my church!" Courtney responded, "Watch out, she is crazy!"

Yes, she was, crazy for Jesus! Let me fast forward about 3 years. 1989—I'm now a Jr. in High School and just met this beautiful 10th grade cheerleader named Jennifer Hall. Jen was an office aide and was diligently doing her job one afternoon when Mrs. C. (the crazy lady) saw her in the hallway. Mrs. C. was leading our evangelism class through a teaching on the Holy Spirit. A few in the class were already baptized, but there was some powerful ministry happening. Mrs. C. grabbed Jen, brought her in the classroom, and prayed over her and she was baptized right there in the beginning of her 10th grade year. Jen changed classes from Office Aide to Evangelism Class, then 6 months later Jen and I took our first missions' trip, together, to Juarez, Mexico with Mrs. C. and my High School Pastor, Rick Lorimer.

What a powerful time we had in Mexico, through us and in us! It was so awesome; I went back my Senior Year for another 2 weeks!

When we returned from our first trip to Mexico, we took a trip to Kansas City, MO. to a Christian School where Pastor Rick knew the High School Pastor there - Matt Larson. (I became Matt's youth pastor many years later.) On our way to KC, Rick asked me if I would preach at the chapel service the next day. "Yes," I said, nervous as anything. The whole trip there, that night, and the next morning I scoured to find something in scriptures that made sense to me. I couldn't find anything. Rick asked me what I was going to preach, and I calmly said, "Jesus loves us!" (Glad he didn't ask for a reference, I couldn't even think of John 3:16.)

Well, I preached. Some hands went up, hearts were challenged, and I still have no earthly idea what I said that day! I still have the Bible that I held in my hands; it remains note-less from that morning. Later that night, we got home from KC. I called Jen (from a home phone — remember those) and asked her what she thought if I told her I was going to be a preacher. She calmly said to me, "I already knew. God told me while you were preaching." I love that God spoke His dream and destiny to the woman that was going to become my bride!

The next Friday, April 5, 1990, in 5th period Evangelism class — the Lord took me to Isaiah 42:6 & 7...

"I am the Lord, I have called you in righteousness, I will also hold you by the hand and watch over you, and I will appoint you as a covenant to the people, as a light to the nations, to open the blind eyes, to bring out prisoners from the dungeon, and those who dwell in darkness from the prison!"

That day, He spoke to me, “Danny, I will hold you by the hand and watch over you. Will you serve me?” “Yes Lord, I Will.”

I wish I could write that from my 17-year-old life, moving forward, that I did everything His way. I have had more than my fair share of “wrong way turns, moving infractions, and even wrecks” along the way! But this I can tell you, on Sept. 1, 1998, as we walked into the sanctuary as the new youth pastors at Milford Assembly of God in Milford, NE — He has definitely watched over us and held us by the hand every step of the way. From a single parent family to getting a dad and 2 brothers to boot. Through secular college to Master’s Commission. From medical frustrations to the miracle of 3 children. From broken dreams and broken crayons to a put together beautiful mosaic of family and ministry, I know this for sure - when we have tried to wiggle our hand out of His, we have found that His hand NEVER LET’S GO!

PERSONAL NARRATIVE

My childhood, years 2 through 10, were without a father in the home, I look back on them with great joy and happiness. My mother loved me to pieces. I have something that my brothers will never be able to share, and that is the love of our mother’s heart all by myself. She was my friend and role model. She taught me to play catch and ride a bike. To like hot sauce and enjoy a well-made pen and a great book. Mostly importantly, to develop a great passion for Jesus.

Royal Rangers is a foundational part of my growing up. There are so many levels to the complexity of a boy, especially one that has no father figure in his everyday life. I am thankful for the men that picked up the slack in my life. They taught me how to camp, cook over a fire, tie knots, sharpen on axe, gig for flounder and frogs, pitch a tent, and fold a sleeping bag. But I think the one idea that I remember the most and has had the most profound effect on me is, “Leave a campsite better than when you found it.” Now I have grown up in urban environments much of my life, I have to really work hard to use 6 of the first 7 things. The 8th idea sticks with me in all things, with all people, in all places — always leave them better than when I found them!

My grandfather on my mom’s side was a baseball nut! He is a legend in the North Carolina city leagues for boys and men in the 1940s through the 1960s. One could say, it rubbed off. Grandpa died when I was 11, but I can tell you that his passion for the boys he coached was passed on to me. As a boy that grew up, I now coach the game of baseball, love my boys —the one they call “Big2na” Isaiah Daniel Lewiston, and “Big 3” Ian Daniel Lewiston!

My being in a single parent home for much of my younger years, we depended on childcare. Back in the early 80s, I went to a childcare center that had a pool, unlike today. I was thrown in the deep end and told to swim when I was around 8 or 9. I remember it like yesterday. Well, I had to overcome that fear, my wife is part fish, and having lived in Florida and Cape Cod — you had better learn to love the water, because it is everywhere.

I saw my first interaction with drugs at the age of 7, sitting on the swings at our apartment, about 25 yards from my front door. I heard a commotion on the other side of the complex. I watched a mom literally beat her teenage son

with a broom. Then I saw the mom throw a bowl across the way and white powder drifted through the air. That started a passionate conviction to never put things in my body that I couldn’t control or that had no place in the hearts of kids.

When my mom and dad married when I was 11, they went on their honeymoon, I went on mine. My new grandparents on my new dad’s side took me on a trip in a new Lincoln Town car. I had the whole back seat to myself, and with Scruffy, my stuffed dog. While visiting some other new relatives in the DC area, we made a stop along the interstate. A buffet. I tried — for the first time - and actually liked frog legs. Seriously, they do taste like chicken (hot sauce helps too). And now to this day, I will eat anything — except for Factory Meatloaf from the Cheesecake Factory!

MEETING JEN

Jen and I met in Study Hall her sophomore year, my junior year in high school - 1989. She was on the wrong end of a spit ball that was not supposed to hit her. From that moment forward, she has always been in the center of my world. She was a cheerleader; I was a football player. She liked burgers and pizza; I liked Chinese food and Tacos. (NOW, WE EAT IT ALL!) She was into Hip Hop and Pop; I was into Rock-n-Roll. Somehow out of all the opposites, God attracted 2 first born kids that love to live with passion, and we started writing a beautiful and messy love song! Our first date was on Oct. 14, 1990! Married November 22, 1996. Now almost 30 years later, we don’t get as many date nights, but the love is still there and won’t be burning out anytime soon!

MARRIAGE

We set early in our marriage to “Prefer and Defer” to one another. I am happy to report that we have done exactly that for the last almost 28 years of marital bliss. Okay, not exactly! There is another saying that we set, “Please forgive me and I Love You!” Those 2 sayings have kept us falling for each other time and time again!

We never say the words divorce, leave, separate, or use the phrase “Whatever.” We have found that when those words are used, bad things happen.

God is the center! We pray with our kids every night. We read the word together as a family most every night! We have a healthy intimacy both emotionally and physically. Constantly trying to relearn the love language that each other has. Jen’s is quality time. I’m the shallow one — gifts. We both enjoy words of affirmation.

Marriage is the hardest thing in the world, next to parenting and ministry. So, the key is to not do any of them alone! Our most favorite thing is to pastor together, it will eventually be traveling to see the grandkids together, and then to walk the streets of heaven!

Jen’s focus has always been our kids! Our number one priority are those three. They are a product of our marriage. They come from us, and it is our job to steward and nurture them. We believe that the greatest ministry we have, period, is to pastor and love our kids to go on and do what we could not do and go where we weren’t able to go!

We are each other’s best friend, most honest critique, most loving touch, and most gentle whisper. We will love passionately, because we can fight passionately only to forgive each other time and again! Two first-born kids, passion is the name of the game!

OUR KIDS STORY

Isaiah: He is our first miracle! After being told for close to 6 years that we would not have children, God said "Let's see about that!" He was born in Sanford, FL. Isaiah was called of God to travel the world to preach the Gospel at age 7 in Kids Church and has been passionate about the Gospel ever since! He is passionate about reading, baseball, fire, guns, knives, and all things man! He is 23, getting his credentials and walking in his destiny.

Isabella: She is our princess! She changed our world. She was born in Memphis, TN. She is our little creative. She has no part in sports, but loves to dance and sing, paint and color, create and dream. Recently, God has really begun to speak to her through her dreams. She is sensitive to the Holy Spirit and is passionate about taking care of the poor and less fortunate. Bella has Celiac disease, which means we are becoming a Gluten Free family. She loves to have fun, and has a sweet, sensitive, and silly heart! She is 18 years old, in the 12th grade.

Ian: He is our cherry on top of the family sundae! We were not expecting him, until we were expecting him! He was born in Falmouth, MA — Cape Cod! He has the personality of all three of our kids wrapped into one. Everything is ALL IN, all the time. Even when he is sick, he is still ALL IN! He loves Jesus, knows that God made him for special purpose, and loves to sing to God when he is in his room by himself. He loves balls, baseball, playing video games with friends, and watching Movies! We truly can't imagine life without him. God truly completed our family with this "BIG" little guy! He is 13 years old and loves home schooling and is in the 7th Grade.

As a family we are big time into traveling, camping, cooking, shopping, and BASEBALL -- really most sports! We believe ministry is a "Family Sport" and we are in it together!

We have 1 dog... a Rhodesian Ridgeback — Dakota Joy who is an 85 lb. lap dog!

PHILOSOPHY OF MINISTRY

We love having teams around us. Teams build momentum and success. We believe that RELATIONSHIP DETERMINES RESPONSE, so a church has to equip people to build relationships in order to do "the work of the Lord," never forgetting that "the Lord of the work" is most important. We are very personal people, having people by us is what we love the most in ministry, second only to seeing people come to Jesus! We love serving, serving with people, letting people serve with us, and then people serving other people. Teams are built in service, small groups, and doing life together! All are important to the life and culture of a healthy ministry.

Simple things keep this philosophy charged and moving forward. We love seeing lives changed by the power of Jesus Christ! Seeing our family move in their calling and serving Jesus in and out of the local church. Missions trips, conventions and conferences provide perspective to learn and grow and be challenged not remain stale and comfortable. Dan is passionate about the Military, outreach, Royal Rangers, and city vision. These areas and others provide a real opportunity to have ministry grow exponentially. Using culture - Movies and Music, Food, Coaching Baseball and Basketball in the community, Sporting Events, and RELATIONSHIP - all simply are tools and giftings that God has given to me to reach out to the local community!

We have a passion to see the world changed through the life of Christ and to see the impossible become reality! We love being with people in our culture. Seeing a person turned onto Jesus and give Him all they have. People love to be led into a world that does not know Jesus and we love leading people! We have been in church all our lives and a constant hurdle we jumped over and over is people needing to be loved and nurtured. God has called us to do that. We love doing that. Our family loves doing that together. It is what we were made to do!

We believe Church & Ministry need to be powered by people of all ages, creeds, race, and backgrounds; people who have been radically changed by Jesus Christ. A team of committed people (leaders and servants) that are ready to "carry the cross" and "run for the prize," will change the world. This paradigm will present the Gospel through a modern and relevant message. By using our story, our gifts, and tools available (such as the spoken word, progressive music and passionate worship, anointed musicians, dramas, video, specials features, multi-media, etc...), we desire to be a "Family" that meets the needs and inspires the mindset of the un-churched and unsaved without tarnishing the message of the Cross!

Missions and Evangelism is the heartbeat of the Father! Combined with Faith, we believe that this turns the heart of God for the world that He loves so much. Short Term Trips, Speed the Light and BGMC, Missions Conventions, Monthly Missions Support, and hearing from our Missionaries are keys to keeping the wheel of Missions and Evangelism turning! It is important to note that missions is not just "foreign," but domestic as well. "Homeland" projects are equally important. "Hometown" ministry is doubly important. Jesus said, "Go to your hometown, next door, across the street, the blocks around your house, then to the ends of the earth, and everywhere in between!"

We believe that every person who follows Christ has the potential to lead multiple souls to the Lord every year. We believe that building relationships will multiply people in the church, as well outside of the church, is key to church growth and a healthy culture. We believe that every member of a church can participate in Short Term Missions Trips. We believe that through a constant and disciplined prayer life and passionate study of the scriptures, every Christ Follower can have the direction and assurance for the future plans of their life, no matter what their age.

We believe in **RELATIONSHIP** with the leadership of the church. We are not hirelings or bosses; we believe that we are a **TEAM TOGETHER!** We do not want to focus on the hierarchal point of position and title, as much as building a team of ministers (some that have Rev. in front of their name, some that are business owners, teachers, military, sales, etc...). Just as in our personal life, we do our best to live our ministry paradigm by a creed — **RIP IT!** Righteousness - Integrity - Passion - Intensity- Teamwork! We believe this is for us as individuals and our TEAM!

LEADERSHIP

Our four greatest strengths are...

1. (D) Evangelism — (J) Discernment
2. (D) Administration — (J) Leadership
3. (D) Prophecy — (J) Apostolic
4. (D & J) Teaching/Preaching

Our four lowest weakness are...

1. (D) Craftsmanship – (J) Administration
2. (D) Artistic Communication – (J) Artistic
3. (D) Counseling – (J) Hospitality
4. (D & J) Music

Our leadership style is summed up as: enjoying both tasks and people. Tasks are important. They keep people being the vision and serving in the ministry. However, the focus has to be people! Loving people is a passion, because without people — tasks mean absolutely nothing. The balance leans to doing rather than delegating. Dan loves to serve, but realizes that delegation is the priority in accomplishing the goals of team ministry. Sometimes it is tough to delegate simply due to the need to get the task completed.

Within leading, communication is the most important step. It has to be present in all levels, from beginning to end. God to Leader, Leader to God, Leader to the Leadership Team, then Leadership to the Team.

I believe there are 5 Steps that have to be fleshed out through the church when concerning vision:

1. **Pray for vision.** — Personally, earnestly, and passionately.
2. **Catch the vision.** — Take God’s vision and meditate on it and give our heart-felt attention.
3. **Birth the vision.** — Cast to the Leadership Team. Align every angle of church (Budget, Services, Outreaches, Programs, etc...) to run within the vein of that vision!
4. **Launch the vision.** — Begin the program/ministry in the “public/church.” Letting the people see the vision become a reality.
5. **Be the vision.** — Talk the vision in all places. Live it out for all to see.

Being baseball fans, we really buy into moving people around the bases of Leadership, keeping in mind that **RELATIONSHIP DETERMINES RESPONSE**. Developing people into leaders means developing relationship with people - those who are leaders —and those that don’t know it yet!

I do...	You Watch...	We talk!
I do...	You Help...	We talk!
You do...	I help...	We talk!
You do...	I watch...	We talk!
You do...	Someone else watches	You talk!

All done out of Relationship...
Relationship Determines Response!
All for the Vision!

By striving to always keep the vision in front of people, they will not lose sight of the goal. Being with the team is absolutely essential to their encouragement. We choose to be with them and love them, spending time with them and honoring them as often as possible! People in ministry/ church are the most important elements involved.

By taking care of the people, they take care of the ministry/church. Scripture tells us that, “We do not wrestle against flesh and blood.” It is so important to make sure people know the vision, understand the process, and build relationships. If these are clear, then the people will be the vision! Providing the proper connections to share, pray,

and plan in moving the vision forward are paramount. Team and church conferences, conventions, and retreats provide perspective to learn, grow, and be challenged not to remain stale or comfortable, and to maintain the passion of the vision in our hearts. Consistency and accountability keeps the vision in focus and process in alignment!

Prayer is the key to the success of any team; it has to be the most vital piece of the vision. Prayer truly is the greater work. As we team together in prayer, as we study through the Scriptures, and by prioritizing the lost — His Vision Will Be Reached — through His Church!