

From Wasted to Worthwhile



The Spiritual Resurrection of Pastor Warren Hoyt.

(Eph. 2:1-7)



**I dedicate this testimony to my
Mother, who never stopped
praying for me.**

**3rd Edition
November, 2010**

**You can listen to Pastor Warren's testimony on
our website www.jesuschapelep.com**



My mom and I, together with my siblings.



My wife and I with our grown children.

From Wasted to Worthwhile

The Spiritual Resurrection of Pastor Warren Hoyt. (Eph. 2:1-7)

I was born in a decent family, but not a truly Christian one in the biblical sense. My grandfather was a Methodist pastor, and he named my dad John Wesley Hoyt. Dad named his first son John Wesley Hoyt Jr., and my brother John named his son, JWH the third. They were all quite proud of the name John Wesley, but unfortunately, I don't think they fully appreciated John Wesley's spiritual teachings!

My grandfather was a pastor/preacher, but from what I can gather, his faith was more about being a good person, moral, upright, etc., rather than about the supernatural power of God to save, the need for radical conversion, obedience to the Lord, or what we know of as relationship with the Lord. My grandmother was probably more of a vital Christian than her husband, but still, her faith was mostly about being good and kind, etc. It just wasn't the kind of vibrant, day-to-day living relationship with God I've come to experience.

As a result, my dad was a kind man, and a good man. He believed in God. But Christianity to him was mostly about living a decent moral life, with rules and regulations, but not about really knowing God. His father was rather harsh with him. So he didn't really walk with God in an intimate, daily, practical kind of way.

My mom was Episcopalian. She believed in God, and went to church as a young person. She was taught morality and responsibility and such, but again, not so much about a supernatural faith in a living Christ who could be intimately involved in a person's day to day life. Because my parents didn't have a vibrant kind of faith, they couldn't pass that on to their kids. They took us to church, but we hated it! It was boring, meaningless, and mostly just a social club to us.

When I was 14, my parents told me I didn't have to go to church anymore if I didn't want to. This was, in hindsight, a big mistake, but they didn't know any better! I never returned to church till more than 7 years later. At 17, I left my home in Florida and traveled to California, to be with an older sister. No sooner had I arrived than my sister introduced me to smoking marijuana. We smoked pot every night, and I gradually began to like it. It wasn't long before I had proceeded to other drugs, including LSD and lots of alcohol.

When I returned to Florida, I started working construction with a bunch of rough, hippy-like guys. I smoked with them and began to imitate their lifestyles. During this period, I traveled across America 9 times, once on a motorcycle, once in a '63 Chevy Impala, a couple of times in an old Ford van. A friend and I lived on the beach in California, and surfed every day, smoking pot at night. Another friend and I sold blood



to get money, stayed in a crummy hotel in Albuquerque for a time, and just bummed around.

My life was about having experiences. I especially liked taking LSD, and going on “trips” that way too. Eventually I took Quaaludes, amphetamines, cocaine, even heroin a couple of times, but never got a good batch, thank God. Years later, in 2009, my mother shared with me that during this time she actually had an experience one afternoon, in which she saw me in her mind’s eye, sticking a needle into my arm. This prompted her to close herself in a room and pray for an extended period of time, and I believe this was the reason I never got physically addicted to heroin or other injectable drugs.

I grew large quantities of marijuana in a secluded area of farm land near my parents’ house in Florida. For a while I lived with 13 “freaks” or hippies in a house on the edge of a woods. They were all in a rock band, and practiced till all hours in the house. We all did drugs, and had psychedelic paint and black lights in the room where the band played.

Some of my hippie friends were into “awareness” and that eventually became the band’s name. We talked about seeing the “white light” which was some sort of breakthrough “revelation” or enlightenment a person could experience if they did enough acid and/or meditated, or whatever. We were all looking for that kind of thing to eventually happen to us. We talked about it all the time, and sought it through drugs, as well as some dabbling in Eastern religious thought.

About this time, my parents, but especially my mother, became very concerned about all us kids. I was doing drugs and they knew it, but so was my younger sister, and the older sister who got me started on marijuana. My brother was in Vietnam, and when he came back, he drank all the time and smoked pot too. My oldest sister was going through marriage problems and she became so depressed she tried to commit suicide with pills more than once, and had to be put in the psych ward. My second-oldest sister also had a terrible relationship, and tried to kill herself by slashing her wrists. We were a messed up family!

Searching for help, my mom found a book by Dr. Bill Bright, founder of Campus Crusade for Christ, the title of which was “Come Help Change the World.” The author said that if a person wanted to change the world, he or she would have to be changed themselves, and he explained how Christ died and rose again to make that possible. There was a simple prayer in the back of the book, and Bill Bright said if you want to be changed and help change the world, to pray this prayer. My mother prayed the prayer alone in our house. She didn’t feel much of anything at the time; didn’t have a vision, or hear God’s audible voice. But slowly, she became more aware of God’s presence and work all around her. She went to a Methodist church and got involved in something called the Navigators, a one-on-one



discipleship ministry. Through all of that, she began to grow spiritually and understand more about God. She began to pray consistently for the family and to trust God to hear and answer.

She met a couple who happened to be visiting the Navigators meeting, that would play an important role in my life sometime later. She began to leave gospel tracts around for us to read, and even put stickers on my mirror when I stayed at their house. I thought she was just getting old, and that was why she was suddenly so concerned for eternal things. On more than one occasion, she took me to meet Navigator people, and got them to witness to me. I prayed the prayer of salvation on at least 2 or 3 occasions, but nothing ever came of it.

About this time, I broke up with a girlfriend and joined the Navy. What a change and what a clash of civilizations that was! A hippy getting his hair cut and being forced into a routine of discipline! I did what I had to do, but I was still a hippy at heart. Once I got out of Boot camp to the fleet, I was back to drugs, alcohol and smoking pot almost constantly.

My friends and I hung out in bars, engaging in very risky behavior, I went AWOL in the Philippines, but my Filipina girlfriend turned me in for \$20, and I was arrested and brought back in hand-cuffs. I was punished severely and restricted to the ship. But through it all my mom kept praying.

Eventually my dad also came to Christ. Now there were two of them praying in agreement! Gradually things began to happen to me. People would come up and witness to me about Jesus Christ. Two particular times I remember were when I was drinking whiskey from a bottle I had in a paper bag in a park, and one time when I was on acid and a young man came looking for someone else. I always wondered why these people came to me – did I have a neon sign above me or something? I now realize it was all the result of my parents' prayers!

I ended up going to the psychiatric ward at Tripler Army Hospital through a strange turn of events. It really was almost a sort of accident! I had several experiences that brought me to the place where I was tired of my life, and all seemed darkness around me. I began to want change. But I would never have gone to Rehab if it hadn't been for a "chance" conversation while standing in a pay line. My friends were arguing with me that I should turn myself in and go to drug rehab. I answered back that they needed it as much as me, and I certainly didn't want to go to rehab. Just at that moment, the ship's drug rehab officer "happened" to walk by! He heard only the part of my comment in which I said the words "drug rehab," thought I was interested, and though I denied it, he took me to his office, ordered me to have a psychiatric evaluation, and eventually got me sent to the psych ward!

While there, a friend and I still got drugs smuggled in and got high! But I did find a Gideon Bible and I read it surreptitiously, finding the passage in Jn. 14:15-17 where Jesus said, "If you love Me, keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever— the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you". NKJV

As I read that, it seemed to speak right to my heart. I felt I needed this "Comforter"

the passage spoke about. So I did something I had only done a couple of times before in my life – I prayed! I asked God to send me someone who would understand my problems (because I didn't think I could tell anyone about them), and someone who could explain to me who this "Comforter" the Bible spoke about was so I could receive Him.

Of course, I didn't even know what I was talking about! I went to a chaplain, thinking he could get me in touch with God. But he offered to hypnotize me, saying he could cure me of drug use in that way! The next day I "accidentally" slept late and missed the appointment. When I called the chaplain to see if I could reschedule, he cussed me out! "This God stuff is all a joke!" I thought, and went back to drugs in my heart.

The Navy sent me to Rehab near my home in Florida, because most don't really rehabilitate. They get kicked out of the service, so it's best to send service people to the Rehab center closest to the point where they joined the service, to lessen the expense of then sending them home when they fail to change.

I was put into a lockdown situation, strip-searched and observed 24 - 7. Eventually they moved me to a different section where I had more freedom. I stayed "straight" for 7 full days, and came to the conclusion that it was actually a good thing. I figured staying off drugs for a time would be good, because my system would "dry out" and I could get higher when I eventually began to use drugs again!

After some weeks in lockdown, I was allowed to check out, under the supervision of a friend who had been in Rehab longer. We signed out that we were going to a movie. But instead, we went to the woods and got high again! On the way home, I tripped on a railroad track and had to have stitches in my left eyebrow. My parents came to visit me, but the guards were smoking pot that night! My dad was sure I'd never change. He didn't have much experience with trusting God yet at that point.

I finally got to go home on a weekend, but it turned out badly. I met with some old friends and we all just got plastered. When I returned home, my mother cried, seeing me in that condition. There seemed to be little hope I could ever be different. But God was working behind the scenes in answer to my parents' prayers.

As I mentioned above, at one of the Navigator's meetings she attended, my mom met a couple who, it turned out, were only visiting that evening. But they had a Christian group that met in their home. My mom had never been there, but she knew they prayed for people. She asked them if they would be willing to speak with me and minister to me. They agreed, but apparently they hadn't really listened to her well. They thought I was a counselor at the Navy Rehab place, not a person who was attending it for treatment!

On my next weekend leave, I went home again to visit my parents. My mom told me she had arranged for me to visit this home group, and asked that I go fishing with my dad for the day, so as to not be able to drink or use drugs. I agreed to go, not knowing what to expect. As the time drew near, I began to feel very nervous. I tried to get out of the whole thing, but with an urgency I'd not seen

before, my mother pleaded with me to go. She just felt I was supposed to go to this, she didn't even know why. My father took me to the house and dropped me off. I was on my own!

What a night that was, and what a meeting! Before the meeting began, the leader asked me about myself. As I answered his questions, the whole group quickly realized this was no Christian counselor seeking more of the Holy Spirit as they had imagined! They looked a bit nervous, not knowing exactly how to respond, but they told me that God had obviously brought me to them that night in order to minister to me. I told them to please not change the order of their meeting for little ol' me!

The meeting began with what I now know as praise and worship, and I'll never forget one song they sang, "Praise the name of Jesus, He's my Rock, He's my fortress, He's my deliverer, in Him will I trust." As the small group sang the song, they closed their eyes and lifted their hands. I thought I should try to do as they did. But as I attempted to lift my hands to heaven, I began to shake and tremble, and the muscles of my abdomen convulsed, alternately tightening and loosening. I was embarrassed and told them I didn't know what was happening to me! They told me not to worry, and had me sit down, then placed towels around me and told me if I felt like throwing up, to go ahead and do it!

I was so shocked and amazed, I just had no experience of anything like this! It turned out that that particular night was very special for the group, because they had another visitor, one of the pastors on staff at their church, who moved in the gifts of the Holy Spirit. This man's name was Larry Kennedy. Larry came up to me, placed his hands upon me, and began to tell me about my life – details that no one could possibly have known about me! He told me about my relationship with my older brother, about things I had thought about my mom's parents, and other things I can't remember now. He led me in a prayer of confession, in which he had me confess and renounce my sins before God and ask for His forgiveness. I just followed along, not really knowing what was going on.

When that confession and repentance phase was over with, I was still shaking and knotting up on the floor. Suddenly this pastor spoke out strongly and said, "You spirit of addictions, I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to leave this man now and not come back!" Not knowing what to expect, I suddenly began to thrash wildly about on the floor, flailing my arms around and growling like an animal. The pastor again commanded the spirit to come out of me. After a few moments of this, I could actually feel something seemingly coming out of me, though I cannot explain how that was, what it was, or where it went from me. I just felt something come out, and I slumped over and fell to the floor.

But that wasn't the end yet. In a couple of minutes, I was sitting up again, and once again trembling and feeling my muscles knot up. Pastor Larry was still behind me, with his hands on my head or shoulders. All the home group members were praying fervently in a circle around me. Suddenly, Larry began to speak to a different spirit, and again, he commanded this spirit to come out of me in the name of Jesus.

I waited on the floor for a few moments, then again, my arms began flailing and I

was growling and moaning like a wild animal. Pastor Larry continued to command the spirit to leave me, and suddenly, something again burst forth from me and I slumped forward.

This experience of deliverance went on and on for hours. I don't remember all the spirits that came out of me, but I think there were four or five. The first was addictions, but another one was blasphemy, As Larry commanded it to come out, I suddenly had all sorts of profane words flood my mind and start to come out of my mouth. For years I had "cussed like a sailor" because I *was* a sailor! I even said these foul, profane words in front of my own dear mother!

Somehow, Larry knew what was going on, and he spoke out with authority, "You will not say anything! I command you to come out of this man, and say nothing! Shut up!" That particular spirit seemed to stir me up more violently than any of the previous ones, but it too had to eventually submit to the name of Jesus and leave me.

Sometime around midnight, everything became still. I was very calm on the floor. The home group people were all praying in tongues quietly. It was like a storm had passed or a violent sickness. One brother quietly said, "You're free, brother." I somehow just knew he was right, and together, we all stood to our feet. Pastor Larry said to me, "Do you believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, who died for your sins and rose again?" Weeping, I said, "I believe whatever you people believe!"

At that point, Larry led me in "the sinner's prayer," to confess Christ and receive Him into my life personally as Lord and Savior. I had prayed this prayer at least three other times in my life, but nothing had happened. This time it was different! Still, I just repeated the prayer Larry led me in. I felt nothing special at that time.

After that, Pastor Larry explained to me that my life was like a house. It had been swept clean, and the demons were no longer living inside me. But my house needed to be filled up with something positive, or the demons would come back. I needed to be filled with the Holy Spirit of God. I accepted what they told me, and all of them gathered 'round to lay hands on me and pray. They told me that if I felt like I had any new words in my mind, to not hesitate to speak them out. I was rather perplexed. New words? But they prayed, and they led me in a prayer, asking God to fill me with His Spirit. I prayed it obediently, just as I had the earlier prayer. We all waited in silence a few moments. Some prayed quietly in tongues, though at the time, I didn't know what that was.

Suddenly, I lifted my hands for the first time (earlier I had tried to, but couldn't). I thanked God for His Spirit. And then it seemed I had these three little words in my head, so I tried to speak them out. As I did, I began to tremble again, and it seemed a flood of words came into me, seemingly from the top of my head, then down to my belly, then up and out of my mouth again. I can't describe why they seemed to flow that way, but that's the way I perceived it. But as soon as I spoke those words, I shut up again, because I wasn't sure if I was "doing it right." I clammed up, but the people didn't care, they were so excited! "He's got it!" they all

said. I wasn't sure what "it" was, but I was pretty sure they were right – I had definitely received something!

They put a New Testament in my hands and said, "This is God's Word. You need to read it every day to learn about this new life He's given you. And you need to pray to Him every day in English, and in that language you just spoke." I read the NT through in two weeks! I prayed every day in English, but I just couldn't speak that other language at all, no matter how hard I tried.

One week later, I was back to the home group for a little more ministry. They prayed over me, and some squeezed me, telling me to not hold back, but to just start speaking in tongues again, just let it out! I tried, but I just couldn't do it. I didn't understand, but I was still thankful for my salvation.

The following week, it finally "clicked" for me when I was out on a baseball field late at night. I just started thanking God for saving me, for being in my life, for the hope He'd given me. I thanked Him for giving me His Spirit, even though I couldn't speak in that heavenly language any more. I can't really explain what happened, but as I thanked God and prayed like that, it suddenly came into my mind so clearly that I had received God's Spirit! He was living inside me! And if that was true, I could speak in that language! I can't explain why, but I just knew it! I opened my mouth and started to speak in tongues, a language I'd never learned! Over the next weeks, that language just increased in and through me. There were more words that came out, and they were different words. I just prayed in tongues freely, whenever I prayed. And I've been praying like that ever since!

When I returned to rehab after my salvation experience, I had to tell everyone my story. One heroin-addicted friend actually shielded his eyes when I came near him. He acted as if I were the bright sun shining in his face! When I told my therapy group, they were all dumbfounded and speechless! My counselor spoke for everyone and said, "I don't exactly know what happened to you, or what you've got now. But it sure seems to be working, and I hope it continues to work for you." "My spiritual resurrection took place in January of 1976, and today I'm still serving the Lord and pastoring a church. I think it's still working!"

I had to go before a board of high-ranking officers for an evaluation. They asked me what had happened to me, and I had to tell them the whole story! I realize now what a witnessing opportunity that was for Jesus Christ, but at the time, I was just answering the questions and doing what I had to do!

I still had two more years to go of Navy service, but those last two years were totally different from my first two! It was the difference of night to day! I worked hard. I did my duty. I was straight, drug and alcohol free. I had Christian friends and we kept ourselves on the straight and narrow. I read the Bible and learned so much, so fast, it was incredible. I witnessed to everyone around me all the time.

On my last ship, we had Bible studies every day. I eventually even taught some myself. Some of the guys told me, "You ought to be a preacher." I had no idea I eventually would be!

Since that time, I have had so many wonderful experiences in the Lord. I have grown and learned so much! God gave me a wonderful wife, for whom I prayed, and I had the privilege of leading her to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit only

three days after her conversion. God has given us 4 wonderful, now adult children, all of whom are married. I have been in ministry for over 25 years, and have been privileged to travel to many nations, preaching and teaching the Word of God.

So often during these years I have witnessed to someone in a situation like my own. I've been the person some mother was praying would speak to her son or daughter! I have been blessed to lead, I don't know how many other people to Christ. Somehow, the story of God's work on earth spread and came to my mom, and it changed her story. Then she prayed and witnessed, and that changed my father's story, and then one by one, our whole family's story. My younger sister actually accepted Christ before me, when she attended an evangelistic rally. After me came my oldest sister, who came to Christ through the ministry of some believers who visited her at home. Years later, my second sister, the one who had introduced me to smoking marijuana, came to the Lord. Last of all, our brother bowed his knees to Christ one day in a Pentecostal church service. Today all five of my siblings are born-again Christians and we all love Jesus Christ!

Since the day I met Jesus, my story has intersected many other people's lives, and played a part in changing their stories. And on and on this goes. I hope this story will change some of your stories today!

I guess my point in telling you all this is to say, "Jesus Christ is Risen!" And He is Lord! Because of this reality, I have been resurrected. My life has been transformed. Because I have experienced this reality, I know that anyone can. I want to repeat the words of Bill Bright, "Come, help change the world!" Come and surrender yourself to Christ. He will raise you to new life. He will make you a new creation. He will one day raise us all to walk in eternity with Him! Glory to His name!

I want to close by just pointing out some important aspects of my resurrection story:

1. Life without God has no meaning, no direction. I didn't know God, so I thought life was about whatever *I* wanted; *my* pleasure, *my* philosophy. It wasn't meant to be that way, and that kind of thinking brought destructive habits and a meaningless waste of my life. They used to call me "Wasted Warren"! I could've ended up in Hell, but there was a resurrection!
2. Because Jesus rose from the dead, there can be a resurrection in our lives and in our families! God is out to change the world. He does it one life at a time. A drug or alcohol-addicted son can be resurrected and changed. A marriage can be resurrected and saved. A dysfunctional family can come into wholeness and harmony. Because Jesus came to earth, died for our sins and rose again, new life is truly possible!

Mom's visit in 2007



3. Giving your heart and life to God is the first step. He wants to save the whole family, but it all begins with one “resurrection.” My mom looked for help in God, and He saved her, raised her to new life! She believed the gospel story of Christ’s life, death, and resurrection, and she surrendered herself to the Lord in a simple act of faith. That’s what you can do as well, to start your own new story.
4. Consistent prayer will make the difference in your life and the lives of those around you. It is the secret to changing the world! You just pray to find God in the first place, and to experience the new life He has for you. And you just pray and keep on praying, believing that God hears you if you want to see His work go on in your life and your family’s life. Be patient and give the whole process time. Don’t give up your faith when things look negative. God is working; you just might not see it!
5. It’s amazing how my grandparents were believers and even pastors, yet they didn’t pass on their faith very well for various reasons. I believe they prayed and that eventually got all of us saved, but they could have explained the gospel to us more effectively. We need to know what we believe and why, and we need to communicate it faithfully. We must have a vibrant, living relationship with God, and know how to pass that on. We can’t make our loved ones “get it,” but we do need to know what we believe and how to articulate it, both with our words and with our lives.
6. The home group meeting was so crucial to my salvation. The people met faithfully for their own growth and fellowship, but they were willing to welcome a needy person, not really like them. May God help us to be those kind of people! Faithfully meeting with God, so others have a place to come and experience Him, and also willing to change their routine and minister to others. We are here to tell our stories, so all can know Christ’s story, and all can have resurrection life!



The End