

## Simeon Western's Testimony

The Apostle Paul spoke these touching words to Timothy, *“And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.”* (II. Timothy 3:15) Timothy had the privilege of being raised under the influence of a godly mother and grandmother (II. Timothy 1:5) who faithfully taught him the Word of God. The result was that Timothy came to know Christ as his Saviour and then went on to be a great preacher who was used mightily in the service of God.

I thank and praise God that He gave me a similar privilege to that of Timothy's - the privilege of being raised in the *“nurture and admonition of the Lord.”* My father is a faithful pastor who has stood for the Word of God without compromise. I have a godly mother who has given her life to investing in the lives of her children. I am so thankful for this privilege; especially when I consider the darkness of so many children's homes.

Growing up in a Christian home did not make me a Christian. My heart was as deceitful and wicked as any other child; born with a sinful nature inherited from Adam. I praise God that at the age of 5 I came under the convicting, awakening power of the Holy Spirit of God and began to realise my need of a Saviour. On a September night in 1992 as I was lying on my bunk in our bedroom, I distinctly remember being under conviction of sin. I do not remember the events leading up to that night but I clearly remember the awful sense of guilt. My brother Jon would sleep in the bunk above me and I still remember calling to him and saying, “Jon I want to get saved.” He then called my mother who came in and showed me from the Scriptures how I could have my sins forgiven. I still fondly recall kneeling on my bedroom floor and calling on Christ to save me. Immediately, I sensed the burden of guilt and sin removed from my shoulders and a definite change took place in my life.

A year or two after I was saved I had the opportunity to follow the Lord in believers baptism in obedience to the Word of God. I was baptized in the Murray River on a cold, wintery day along with another young man who was also following the Lord in Baptism.

Soon after this time, at the age of seven, I heard a powerful message at Northside Baptist Church on the crucifixion of Christ preached by an American Evangelist by the name of Tom Williams. That day I surrendered to full time Christian service and have sensed a clear call of God on my life ever since. Little did I know then that about 20 years later, God would call me to pastor Northside, the very church where He called me to preach! Generally speaking, I grew up with a desire for spiritual things and a desire to serve and please God.

The teen years marked the beginning of an intense spiritual battle in my life. Some of my older siblings made choices that took them in the direction of the world and my sinful flesh nature was tempted to follow the error of their ways. I began to desire the

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leeks and garlics of Egypt and wanted to see what the world had to offer. I even began listening to rock music on the radio at nights in my bedroom and went to the movies several times in disobedience to my parent's wishes. At the age of 15 I came to a distinct crossroads; either I was going to go full blown into the world, or turn back to God. The lights of sinful pleasure beckoned and called but God was at work in my heart. I still remember sitting in the car after I had expressed my rebellion to my father yet again and the Lord brought a verse of Scripture to mind. At the time I didn't even remember the reference but I knew the verse. It was Psalm 84:11b which says, "...no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." The Spirit of God powerfully drove this verse to the depths of my heart and shattered my stubborn pride. I realised that God had so many good things in store for me if I would just follow Him. I didn't need to look for what the world had to offer; God would give me those things which were truly good, pure and wholesome. Soon after this I began to read my Bible with renewed earnestness and vigour. I still remember spending large amounts of time in my bedroom reading large portions of Scripture. The Lord spoke to my heart in a special way during those times.

In July 2003 at the age of 16 the Lord un-expectantly opened an opportunity to go to Vanuatu on a mission's trip. I can now see that this was another part of God's plan in bringing me back to the place of complete consecration to His will. I had the privilege of serving there for a month and the Lord dealt with my heart in a very real way. I was riding in the back of a truck on the way to the bush one day and was reading my New Testament when I came across Matthew 4:16 which says, "*The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up.*" The Lord literally overwhelmed my heart with a renewed burden for the lost; a burden to be used by him to reach those trapped in darkness with the glorious light of the Gospel. Right there on the back of an old, beaten up truck, as we made our way up a windy, dusty road, I rededicated my life to preach the Word of God.

The following year I returned to Vanuatu for a month and ended up staying for the whole year. During that time I had the privilege of working in the tribes as well as being involved with other church ministries. The very first message I ever preached was in one of the remotest villages on the Island. I still remember the joy of sensing the Lords presence and enabling as I preached for the first time. I also had the privilege of running a kids club in town and working with the youth as well.

After the year was complete, the Lord opened a door to attend South Pacific Baptist College in Fiji. Again, this was something the Lord clearly directed me in. I spent close to 2 years in Fiji and completed three semesters of Bible college training. During that time the Lord laid it on my heart to do open air preaching. Every Saturday I would go to the market place with several other young men from the college and we would preach for 10-15 minutes one after the other for a couple of hours. The Lord blessed with several making professions as well as a steady trickle

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of visitors. As I began my fourth semester of study, I got sick and had to return home. Again, the Lord was clearly directing in this move.

Once I was home the Lord began to work in bringing me and my future wife together. Kate was studying Primary School teaching at University in Bathurst and had recently been gloriously saved through my Dad's faithful preaching. The Lord confirmed His will for us in many wonderful ways and we enjoyed a spiritual courtship with many blessings. On May 24th, 2008 we were married in Kate's home town of Parkes. Again, I witnessed the Lord's abundant faithfulness to His promise in Psalm 84:11. He gave me a beautiful wife who loves God and desires to serve Him no matter what. We have now been married for over six years and the Lord has blessed us with four precious children.

At the end of 2010 and in early 2011 the Lord dealt with Kate and me concerning completing a course of training. When I shared what was on my heart with Kate I was amazed to find out that the Lord had been dealing with her about the very same thing! We moved to Sydney in January 2012 and began studies in February. By God's grace we made it through and I graduated in November 2013. During our time at SBBC as a family, we learned many lessons in the area of faith. I often have said to my wife, "I think we learned as many lessons out of the classroom as in the classroom!" That being said, it was a great blessing to sit under experienced pastors in the classroom who freely gave of their time to teach us the Word of God. I believe one of the great benefits of Bible College is that it gives you a good foundation for future study. There is real labour involved in preparing the Word to feed God's people (1. Timothy 5:17) and my Bible College training (both in Fiji & Sydney) has contributed greatly to helping me learn the discipline of study.

Following Bible College training at SBBC, my family and I returned to Bathurst and to our home church, Golden West Baptist Church under the leadership of my father, Pastor Ian Western. I had the privilege of working in an Assistant Pastor role for 2014 and most of 2015. The practical training during this time was invaluable.

For the last 5 or 6 years I have had a great burden for my home state of S.A. and the city of Adelaide in particular. This is not just a superficial burden like what we sometimes experience when we see a missionary presentation. Throughout 2015, the Lord made it clear that it was His will for us to move to Adelaide and take the pastorate at Northside Baptist Church. As a family, we are looking forward to serving the Lord in Adelaide. We trust and pray that God will mightily use us for His glory.