

God Is Talking, Are You Listening?

The Testimony of the Wife of a Former Mayor of Wells, Tx

By: Mrs. Judy Booker

I. My Background

If I may, I would like to tell you a little about my life. I was born in Alabama in 1949. I was the sixth child in our family. Daddy worked in the coal mines at night and in the fields in the day. I can only imagine how little sleep he got, just trying to make a living for his family. He passed away at the young age of thirty-three; I was just six weeks old. My mama told me that he had heart and lung problems.

As a young mother, she did all she could to meet our physical needs. She told me that relatives wanted to ease her burden of six children, but she would not let us be separated. I was told that she married my step dad when I was four or five years old. During that time frame, he moved us to Texas.

I really do not have any fond childhood memories. I will call my step dad "George" from this moment on because he was far from being a DAD. George drank just about all the time, whether we had food to eat or not. He cheated on my mama and he was a child molester. During their marriage, she had four more live births, and also three stillborn children.

We were raised in a home where children were seen and not heard. We were told to do whatever any grown-up said and not to question them, even in a way of entreaty, or as a way to understand. They called this "respecting your elders," but sadly, I believe this custom was abused. To my grief, we were not raised in a Christian home. Mama would send us kids to church with anyone who would stop by to pick us up; it did not matter what denomination. My understanding of God was limited to these sporadic church visits.

When I was six or seven years old, I remember my mama having to go to the hospital. I was told she was having a baby, but my little brother did not come home with her, for he was stillborn. It was around this time that I had my first memories; they were of how bad George was. I will not go into any details, for some things do not need to be said. I could not tell my mama the evil of this man because she was grieving over the loss of my little brother. I know now that this was when I truly started to hate God! "How could he allow this to happen to a child?" I thought. As the years went by, George would still come into the bedroom in the wee hours of the morning. However, by this time God had given me a voice and I had learned how to use it, screaming at him to "get out!"

Thankfully, my mother soon divorced him, hanging child molestation charges over his head. He left Texas and we never saw him again. Now, I find myself praying for all the

other children he came in contact with. May God have mercy on his soul.

At the tender age of fifteen, I met James Booker. When I was seventeen-and-a-half years old, he became my husband and joined the Navy during the Vietnam War. Therefore, we barely saw each other during our first two years of marriage. In 1969, our first son was born, and in 1971, our second son was born, and in 1975, our daughter was born.

When our boys were little, we partied every weekend, drinking, dancing, and playing cards, etc. A few months before I conceived our daughter, we were invited to a church with some of our "party-goer" friends. This was a new experience for me. One Sunday, I somehow found my way to the altar, where I heard myself asking God to forgive me and save me from my sins. This was followed by my baptism about two weeks later. Thinking back on it now, I do not recall anyone at any time asking me if I was growing spiritually, about the change in my life after my professed salvation, or if I had any questions about how to walk with God. This should have been a wake-up call to me. There was no true depth of spiritual fellowship. We met every week within the church building, but the rest of the week, we just went our separate ways. I just thought this is how it was supposed to be done.

I was about three months along with my daughter at this time. James wanted to move the children out of Houston to the country, so we moved to a small off-the-map country town called, "Wells, Texas." Moving from all the activity in Houston to a quiet little town was a big shock to me. However, here I did not fear letting my boys out to play, riding their bikes and visiting with the neighbors, who took care of them, baking cupcakes, cookies, etc. We were the youngest family on our street at that time.

Despite all of James' efforts, there was very little work here in East Texas, so he moved back to Houston, leaving us in Wells. He would come home every weekend to visit. We were not happy with this arrangement, so when our daughter was a few months old, I located a house to rent in the Conroe area, which is just north of Houston. At least this way, we could become a family again. We found a small church in Conroe, and it soon became our church home. Our whole family became very active in this church during that period. It was a very happy time for me. As far as I knew then, I was growing in God's grace and he was using me.

When my daughter was about two years old, we moved back to Wells. It was a hard struggle both financially and spiritually. On occasion, we would visit different churches in Wells, but they just did not fill what we believed to be our spiritual needs. Then, a while later, we were invited by friends to visit a church in a neighboring town called Alto. One of our party-goer friends told us God led him to start a church. We went to this church for several years. Sadly, as we studied the Bible, we were seeing that this church was not lead the way God wrote in the Bible for His church to be ordered. They did not follow the Biblical structure of authority: God, man, woman. The church soon began to fail us miserably, and, in God's mercy, it is no longer in existence to deceive people by twisting the Bible. Due to this experience, we stopped going to church and did not join another.

In my ignorance, I felt in my heart that I could worship God on my own. Though I did not know it at the time, I was trusting in a faulty belief that I had been truly saved, even though my life really was no different than before.

Somehow all the years have just slipped away. Our children are now grown, with children of their own. Over the next almost forty years, we went from being the youngest family on our street to the oldest. We saw many people come and go on our street. The locals came to know James for his honesty and hard work. When asking for directions around town, people would say, "Go down Booker's street, and turn here, etc." Our house ended up becoming somewhat of a reference point in the town, so the street we lived on was renamed to "Booker St." James would end up serving twenty years in the Wells volunteer fire department, as well as serving three terms on the city council. After that, he ran for mayor and was elected, and served a term in that office.

II. The Big Change

Then it happened: my dear friend and neighbor of many years passed away and her house came up for sale. We decided to try to buy it, and we placed a bid on it. Several other families looked at it in that time, but the realtor never responded to our bid. When the house finally sold, we contacted the owners wanting to know why they did not want us to buy the house. We were told the realtor never turned our bid in to them. Truly God had his hand in all of this! He had put the wheels in motion for my True Salvation through these seemingly coincidental events.

At this time, we noticed people starting to move into the house. Little did I know my whole world was about to change. Rumors were spreading worse than any wild fires East Texas has ever known. I heard that the church was bringing a military arsenal into town, that they were stealing children, and many other terrifying things. I paced the floors in total fear that the rumors were true, crying all the time. I realize now that this was Satan trying to build a wall between us, fearing that I might be saved from my false testimony and be everlastingly born again. James tried so hard to reassure me, telling me not to listen to the rumors, that we should find out for ourselves what this "peculiar group" of people are like. So, we started to visit a little, casually speaking to them, offering them the use of our tools, our pasture for a garden and for grazing for their goats, etc. (In hindsight, I thank God that we did.)

They would come around at times to visit, asking if they could share their testimonies with us. It was amazing, the different backgrounds each one came from, and how God has brought them all together to do His work. Next, we were invited to a couple of weddings that turned into old-time preaching services. Also, we went to baptisms that were more than just being "dunked under water!" The presence of God was there, and we could not deny it. Further, we saw integrity in them, and honesty with the Scriptures. I would find myself hanging onto every word of the preaching like never before. Satan was telling me that I could catch them in their words, but it did not happen!

By this time, I could tell that something was not right with my soul and my lifestyle, yet I

was still clinging to my former testimony of salvation, which was all that I had left to hold on to. Months earlier, I had begun walking around the pasture trying to lose some weight. My blood sugar and eyes were giving me problems. Eventually, somewhere in my walks, I began to find myself praying. I asked God if He would please keep me from following any false doctrine from the new church. Still extremely terrified of being deceived by their preaching, I found myself reading my Bible. I had not done this in years and was so hungry for the Word of God. God told me, "*And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart*" (Jeremiah 29:13) on December 31, 2012, and I remember lying in my bed, crying, and praying for God to help me. Through seeing the godliness of the women in their church, how they talked about God all the time, respected their husbands, were gentle with their children, and were soft-spoken, I began to doubt my professed salvation. I wanted desperately to become a godly woman in 2013. I would find myself spending several hours every night reading my Bible. God was truly working in my life, even though I did not realize it then.

We were invited to another baptism. Since James and I do not see very well at night, we asked if someone else would drive our truck. William, one of the brothers and a preacher in the church, volunteered. We had extra room, so his wife, Holly, and our next-door neighbor, Autumn, came along. I asked William if he knew what the number twelve was in the Bible. He told me what it meant in the book of *Revelation*. I told him how that in everything that I was reading, the number twelve kept standing out to me. He told me to pray about it, and that it sounded like God was trying to tell me something.

As I continued with my walks with Jesus, something started to happen. James began to ask me how my walks were and what did God have to tell me?

I told him, "You know, it is so peaceful out there, and God will surely talk to you if you will just listen. Well, the first day He told me, 'Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal. **For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.**' (Matthew 6:19-21) He also told me, 'For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the savior of the body' (Ephesians 5:23)," so I gave James the little stash of cash I had put back. The tears were streaming, even though I was not crying. They were tears of joy from obeying God. James gave me a puzzled look and asked, "Can I give it back?" Fearing what God might do--I told him, "no way-- this is what God told me to do." Here began my obedience and trusting in the LORD.

I found myself getting one to four hours of sleep at night. This was truly not me. I could not pray or read my Bible enough. I was just so hungry for his word. During my other walks, God began tearing away the "worldly me." I had thrown away my makeup and perfume, burned my shorts, and taken things out of my house that God did not want in it. I obeyed whatever God told me to do, no matter what time of day or night. No man or woman told me to do these things. I have found myself outside at three a.m. burning

stuff that he told me to burn. I was really tired one night, and had to get up early the next morning, but God woke me up and told me something that He wanted me to do. I responded by saying, "God, I have to get up so early in the morning, can I do it tomorrow?" I got this loud response: "DO IT NOW!"...so I threw back the covers and obeyed. You know, He has not had to talk that loud to me anymore. Now he whispers softly in my ear.

I continued in my walks with the Lord— but He had yet to reassure me that I was truly saved. My next door neighbors Tanner and Autumn were visiting one night and Tanner asked how we were doing, so I shared with him what had been happening in my life. He told me of the parable in Luke 11:5-9 about the friend asking his neighbor for bread at midnight. I asked Tanner, "Salvation is free if I just ask him, isn't it?" He said, "Salvation is free, but he does not have to give it to you. You have to keep knocking, begging, pleading and doing whatever it takes to get him to open the door."

So far, to my knowledge, I had done everything God told me to do. So now in our walks together I begin to tell the Lord what a miserable creature I am. It was because of my sins he was on the cross. I was not worthy to touch the hem of his robe. I was lower than a worm, not worthy to be stepped on by him. I do not know how he understood me through all my sobs and tears, but he did. He began to pull up my sins— starting as a young child in school. He called me a liar, a thief, a hypocrite— everything but a "child of God."

Now he had told me himself that I was not saved!!

I could feel my whole world falling apart. I stopped walking because my legs were shaking so much. Here I was, standing absolutely broken. I had never seen anything so ugly as my sins. God told me that despite obeying all the things he had commanded me to do, that I would be in hell with George if I did not truly forgive him. If I did not forgive George, then how could He forgive me?

This was the most eye-opening walk yet. The next morning, I read about Stephen getting stoned and how he forgave those stoning him (Acts 7:54-60). And in Luke 23:34 Jesus said, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." I had told God at least ten times that I had forgiven George. But now, I knew how I must truly forgive him *from the heart*. So, with such a sight of my sin, I continued in my walks praying more fervently, tears streaming down my face, begging, pleading for His MERCY on my wretched soul, even though I was not worthy; telling God that I forgive George, for he was possessed by a demon and knew not what he was doing.

As I walked past the pond, through teary eyes, I lifted my head slightly and beheld a vision:

A CROSS DRIPPING IN BLOOD,
not just where Christ's hands and feet were nailed,
but the ENTIRE CROSS DRIPPING IN BLOOD

I just stopped and looked, and my tears of sorrow became tears of joy. As I began to praise God, I looked up again. The vision of the cross was gone. But His joy still remained with me. When this happened to me, I did not realize it then, but I believe this was the day the Lord redeemed me!!!

A few days later, Ryan, one of the church's elders, and his wife, Joy, came over to share God's word with us. I asked Ryan if I could share something with him. God told me that Ryan would preach at my funeral! I said, "but God, this cannot be, because if I am not saved, Ryan will not preach at my funeral." I began rejoicing in this, because God enlightened me by saying, "Ryan will preach at my baptism." Ryan looked up at me and asked if I was alright. I knew I was beaming because I was so happy. He asked James and Joy if they saw a change in me, they both could see it. I still did not realize that I had been redeemed.

I woke up that night hearing "Praise God" coming from my lips. That weekend, I was filled with charity toward both the brethren and sinners. Jesus Christ had truly bathed me in his BLOOD AND PRAISE GOD, I AM REDEEMED!

Now, if you remember me telling you about the number twelve God kept showing me: it was after twelve short, life-changing days in my walks of seeking the Lord that I received my true salvation.

A FEW DAYS LATER, JANUARY 22, 2013, at 5:30 P.M, I WAS BAPTIZED. THE OLD MAN DIED & I WAS ANEW IN CHRIST. Praise God.

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