

Bio and Christian Testimony

I grew up in rural Ohio, being raised in the Mennonite church. Like many churches in the Anabaptist tradition, it emphasized humble Christian piety, kindness, the Sermon on the Mount, and "quietly working with your hands" (1 Thess 4:11). I consider all of these to be good and true blessings. Less emphasized or absent was any doctrinal training, in-depth Bible study, evangelism, apologetics, or understanding of the Christian worldview. Our church was not deeply culturally conservative as many expect from the Mennonites and Amish, in fact, the dress and style and worship was not too different from a small-town Presbyterian or Methodist church.

One might say that I remained a skeptic of the faith during my high school years, but perhaps it would be more accurate to say that I was distracted by other things and did not want the encumbrance of religion. But I do remember thinking that one day "I would get serious about God." This happened my senior year in which I was ostracized by many of my peers, being the victim of cruel rumors, which triggered some hard questions about life and the proper response to such difficulties. I turned to the Lord sometime during my senior year of high school, but I'm not exactly sure when. A month before I graduated I started dating Lise, who I knew was walking with the Lord, and we immediately started talking about our faith with each other. I was baptized that summer, and headed off to Ohio University in the Fall (1992).

There I discovered para-church ministries, not to mention a solid church. I found Young Life and Navigators, and I was quickly discovered by Campus Crusade for Christ via a questionnaire. Quickly I was participating in 3-4 Bible Studies or Christian events during the week, and was surprised to find out how little I knew about the Bible and the Christian faith. I soaked up as much as I could, and started to imagine that I probably would go to seminary one day. I also encountered an emphasis on evangelism that I had not known before. During this time Lise and I were carrying on a very committed long-distance relationship, which kept growing, and eventually she joined me at Ohio University in 1994 upon graduation from high school.

We moved to Northern Virginia, where I began work as an electrical engineer and computer programmer. In the area we only knew my brother, who was working for Lockheed Martin also, and we decided to live near him both to enjoy him and to be a witness. (He was agnostic at the time, but has become a Christian finally within the last few years.) We continued in evangelical churches at this time, including a short-lived stint in a PCA church before we became aware of their pastor's plans to leave. Our faith was still growing, and Lise and I served in Young Life ministries in the Manassas area. I had not been an active reader in my youth (having been more interested in sports and academic disciplines that didn't require much reading!), but studying the Word of God with interest led to all sorts of other books and fields of knowledge.

We found the Reformed faith primarily through "The White Horse Inn," a Christian radio show consisting of two Reformed and one Lutheran theologian. Lise and I were deeply encouraged with their series "The Greatest Story Ever Told," which walked through the Bible in a Christ-focused way that we had never heard before. It transformed us. We found ourselves growing in understanding of what "the gospel" meant. Importantly, this change opened up the thought of attending a Reformed seminary.

Eventually we ended up in Glenside in 2002, as I entered the Master's of Divinity Program at Westminster Seminary. We were very excited to be here even though we did not know anyone. I had been thinking about full-time ministry for a long time, and was now ready to start preparing for it. Lise has always been fully supportive about this. We were encouraged to go to a New Life church by a friend back in Ohio, a Pennsylvanian Presbyterian who somehow found himself in an Ohio Mennonite church, which we quickly noticed on Easton Road. We loved the church and became members soon.

We are blessed to have four children: Susanna (13), Boaz (11), Mary (7), and Ezra (3). Lise is a homeschooling Mom *par excellence*, and the children participate in various activities outside the home, such as a learning co-op and sports. I teach software classes roughly every other week, typically taking me on business trips throughout North America.

There is much more that could be said, but the important thing is that our Lord and Savior has brought us through every step of this journey. We have steadily grown in Christ and have felt like the last 10+ years have been a "greenhouse" for us, in which we have been well trained and strengthened to serve the church. We truly want to *know Christ and make him known*.

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