

Testimony of Glen Williamson

My father took my mother's life when I was only six weeks old in Ephrata, Washington. A year and a half later, my sister Teresa and I were adopted into a new family. There were some good times, but more bad than good. Both of my adoptive parents drank a lot daily. Mom had her vodka, and Dad had his bourbon and beer. Dad would get "snockered" and would go to bed. Mom would get loud, obnoxious, and even violent. Although they did this at home, most of the community did not know about it, we did. Even though our parental influences were not good, I still had decisions to make. Most of the time, I made the wrong ones.

I began stealing cigarettes when I was 9. Mom never threw away jars. So I started stealing her vodka and Dad's bourbon when I was 12. I liked the effect of the alcohol. Drugs were eventually added to the scene.

I joined a branch of the Masonic Lodge called Demolay when I was 13. I began to share some alcohol with some of my friends. In one instance, we let many animals out of their pens at the Pierce County Fair. We also hauled massive logs onto the road, and the consequences were more than we bargained for—a van slammed into them at highway speeds at night. Destructive behavior accompanied the influence. It only became worse with time.

Home life stunk. I was not too fond of it. So I left twice. I had my guitar; that was all I needed. Once, I went to the police station and told them I did not want to return home. I suggested they send me to Remann Hall in Tacoma, a youth detention center. I thought that life would be better there than life at home.

A neighbor had always had a vested interest in our family. She told me when I was very young that she would always pray for me. Unfortunately, that meant nothing to me at the time, but I remember her saying it. She tried to help by asking our parents to let us go to the church down the street. One time they did let us go. We attended Vacation Bible School. Terri prayed to receive Christ, but I had no desire to give up my life.

When I became 12, I figured out a way to stay away from home more often—WORK! If I ever wanted my own money, I would have to work. So I mowed lawns, picked berries, worked in fields, etc. I bought a ten-speed bike when I was 13, a trombone when I was 14, and my first car when I was 15.

One day, Terri and I were picking raspberries in Orting with John and Sue Barnes. We missed the returning bus, and unfortunately-- we had to walk a long way back home. John was one of my close friends.

Music has always been an outlet, a hobby, and a passion. I have always loved sports, but music has helped me get through life. I found something that I loved to do and tried to develop an ability to play several instruments. I liked many types of music, but country music was one style that seemed ridiculous. I did not like it at all!

Between the band, orchestra, stage band, Dixieland group, and jamming! with my friend Harold on 7th Avenue I had plenty of musical opportunities. I was also working with a Tacoma group of all black men except a trumpet player and me from Puyallup. We practiced the entire Stevie Wonder album "Songs in the Key of Life," and we sounded good! Of course, it helped to have a guy there rolling and passing joints constantly!

At the young age of 16, I already had my license and a car. I also had a decent job! School was an insignificant part of my life that I had to finish; otherwise, I would never amount to anything. My parents kept reminding me of this! Therefore, I did the minimum to pass. I had other interests-- girls, parties, music, work, and school. I did not care about anyone. I just wanted to live it up and have some good times. I could have cared less who I hurt. I didn't care.

By the time I became 17, alcohol and drugs were a vital part of my life. Since I had the freedom to drink and smoke at home, I began searching for something more exciting—thrills! I was also getting out of control. For years, my parents would drink, get drunk and go to bed at night. After a while, they began staying up and drinking coffee, waiting until I got home in the wee hours of the morning. The usual greeting for me when I stumbled through the door was- "Get to bed before you fall; we'll talk about this in the morning!" I was often so drunk that I could barely walk, but I drove home!

I got a job working forty hours a week at a gas station. I repaired tires and pumped gas for those who needed "full service." Working nights and weekends alone there seemed okay. One evening, one unique car pulled in. This guy offered me a job driving a truck for his "company." I said that I had a job and that I needed to finish school (whatever!).

He told me he was looking for someone like me and that I would get much more money than I could ever dream of. I did not refuse him but asked him to elaborate. He told me I would be hauling stuff from Seattle to Dallas. In time I learned that the "stuff" was stolen electronics and goods. They were to be transported to a warehouse where new serial numbers were attached, and then they were to be resold. I responded with an "I'll think about it." He then got up in my face and said that he had already told me more than I should know. He said that he would kill his mother. He then opened the trunk with many automatic weapons and other things. I told him that I had seen and knew nothing. They left, and I was scared all night, thinking they might return.

If I had taken them up on their offer, I knew they would probably have killed me eventually.

On New Year's Eve (1976), I wanted to party, but my boss forced me to work. So I partied at work. When my friends came by the gas station, I invited them into the bay,—where we drank, smoked, and partied! John came by with Dave Davies and wanted to borrow my car. I had let him borrow it before, and he had taken care of it very well. I was hesitant because it was New Year's Eve. I also knew that they were headed somewhere to have a good time. I trusted myself behind the wheel, intoxicated, but not someone else.

Because he had done so well in the past, I agreed to let John have the car but insisted that he return it by 3 AM. By 3 AM, I was already blitzed. There was no more "full service" for anyone, and the place reeked drugs and alcohol. I did not pay attention to the time until about 4:30. By that time,

realizing that John had "disobeyed" me, I began thinking of ways to help correct his behavior. At about 5:30, he finally walked up to the station. I asked him where my car was, and he said it would not start - the bumper was bent. I asked again where my car was, and he said it was at a particular place and that there had been an accident. I sank emotionally when I finally saw it. I managed to sell it for \$65 the next day. John promised to pay me back, but I never heard from him again. I sometimes borrowed my parent's car and rode my bike to school for the rest of the year. The army recruiters were after me. Although I did not want to enlist, I decided to enlist since I could be closer to John Barnes! I would have basic training in South Carolina, not too far from North Carolina, where John was stationed—an ideal opportunity to get even with him!

My plans were never fulfilled. I never saw John as I had hoped. I knew I would not get the money back for the car, but I wanted to get to him for a few moments and half-kill him. I thought I could be satisfied since I was very vindictive. But it never happened.

I got stationed in Kaiserslautern, Germany, toward the end of 1977. Soon, I was assigned to Entertainment Showcase, an elite Army musical group under the Morale Support Division of the 21st Support Command. I started out playing trombone but was eventually heavily involved in arranging auditions, beginning and endings, chord progressions, and background vocals. A few months later, a beautiful blonde soldier came to audition. She sang country music. Although I did not like country music, I did when she sang! I learned to like it a lot, and we were married about four months later in Copenhagen, Denmark.

Eve was with Showcase for only a month. Her unit commander would not let her be attached to Showcase for the usual year-long assignment, so she had to return to work in her unit at Kleber Kasern. I resigned from Entertainment Showcase in 1979 because I had been asked to play with a prominent group- "Soul, Satin, and Silk." We had some great times-- traveled a lot, made a lot of money, and enjoyed life in the fast lane while still serving in the army! Since the military moves soldiers every three years, we were reassigned to Fort Hood, Texas, in September 1979. Eve already had the "nine-month disease," and Nadyia was born in April 1980. Moonlighting continued with a country group—music was my passion!

In 1981 we were reassigned to Heilbronn, Germany. Moonlighting continued with another country group. Cheri was born there. Approximately three years later, we moved to Fort Stewart, Georgia. Since government housing was unavailable, we moved to Richmond Hill, GA. Money was tight but moonlighting continued with the formation of another country group. I was beginning to learn to like country music. Playing in bars always led to more drinking. Over the years, we miraculously made it home dozens of times—I was always drunk. I believe that God intervened many times on our behalf.

Larry Traw played guitar and sang in our group. He was a retired warrant officer. He told me one day that he thought we could make more money by working together as a duo. So we did. We had two PA systems, two vans, and a lot of equipment. Although we were a two-person band, we sounded like an entire group. Things went well in those days, but satisfaction was still missing from my life.

On a particular Wednesday, Eve told me that the girls had never been to a Sunday school. Just after she spoke, someone knocked on the door. Two ladies were standing there. One lady—the pastor's wife, said she was from Bethel Baptist Church. I told her it was a fantastic coincidence, especially since Eve had mentioned that the girls had never been to Sunday school. She noted that they have a Sunday school bus that can come by and pick up the girls. Eve said she did not think Nadyia (4) and Cheri (1) would ride the bus. Mrs. Cooper then offered to pick up Nadyia in the car. Eve later felt guilty about sending her daughter to Sunday school and not attending herself. Mrs. Cooper invited us to go also, but I told her I was busy on the weekends. I did not tell her that I played music in bars until 2 AM and was always hung over until about 4 PM each Sunday. I just said that I was busy. God can handle "busy."

I had booked a gig at a country club for the following weekend. But we found another group already set up on stage when we arrived. Double booked. I am still determining what I did on Friday or Saturday, but I woke up unusually early on Sunday morning. Eve was already awake and looking at me. I knew what she wanted. She was going to ask if we could GO TO CHURCH! Honestly, I did not want to go to church. If I had wanted to go to church, I would have gone. But I had no desire to go. She asked. She used that mighty influential force all wives have, but few of them use. It is a "meek, quiet, and humble spirit" that most men find impossible to resist if they love their wives. She won. We went. I agreed to go "one time."

I told her that we would sit in the back of the auditorium. People were friendly, and the music was tolerable. The congregational hymns were okay. The choir was very difficult to listen to. But I did not care. It was the "one time." I had no plans to return—but God had other plans.

When the pastor started preaching, I noticed that the speakers were mounted (on purpose) halfway toward the back of the auditorium. As he preached very loudly, I wondered who he was mad at. I did not like the preaching. I told Eve during the message that I did not like it and would not return.

The following Wednesday, there was another knock at my door. I opened it to see Pastor Cooper and Bro. Walker standing there. I asked him how they knew that we lived at that address. He smiled and said that his wife had already been there and that I had filled out a visitor's card (I did not think they would use it). I invited them in. They complimented us on our place and then wasted no time. Pastor Cooper asked me if I knew I was saved and on my way to heaven. "I am the smart one," I thought. I know what he wants to hear. After all, I have tried for days "TO FORGET" what he had preached on Sunday- that you need to know that you know that you are saved. So I told him about when our parents finally let us go to the church down the road where we lived and that I had gotten saved then during Vacation Bible School. It was a lie. Terri had received Christ, but I had not done anything of the sort!

Since I told him I was saved but not living exactly right, he turned and began talking with Eve. I thought I was off the hook until he asked about my life. He said Christians read their Bible, pray, witness, faithfully attend church, etc. In the end, I told him that I would be back on Sunday (I did not want him to think I was not saved, although he already knew it).

That following Sunday was similar to the first—same friendly people, same music, same preaching, and same result. Except for this time, I told Eve that I certainly would not come back anymore. I did not care if they hunted me down; I did not like it. The preaching really bothered me. I intended to offer a final farewell to the pastor on the way out, but he asked me to come to choir practice that afternoon. I figured that there would be no harm in that.

A preaching service followed. This time it was different. I began to see people there who I knew. Some had worse problems than mine. But they had something I longed for. They seemed SATISFIED! Even in their need and difficulty, you could sense peace in their lives even in troubled times. I did not have that. Everything was a crisis, disaster, or catastrophe in my life. I was anything but satisfied. I have been around the world and performed music in front of thousands. I had recorded albums in the studio. I had a wonderful wife and two beautiful daughters. But it was not enough-- I was living a lie. I began to realize that my days were numbered.

I told the pastor that night that I drive 25 miles to work every day and wondered if he had anything I could listen to on the way to Fort Stewart. I was searching and seeking for whatever these other folks had. He handed me a few cassette tapes.

On Monday morning, I went to work listening to one side of the cassette by Oliver B. Greene. It was a tent meeting and a great choir. But once again, preaching--same as before. It bothered me. The name of Jesus and the mention of His blood bothered me. But I listened--I tolerated it the entire day, both going to work and home.

On Tuesday, I was warming up the truck and began speaking foolishly. "Who is going to make me listen to that next cassette? I am a free American. I do not have to do it." I did not hear an audible voice but listened to the Lord speak something like-
"Boy, you are in deep trouble! What you need is on that cassette! This could be your last chance!"
I was now terrified! I put the cassette in. It was a message from John, Chapter 10, entitled- "The Other Side of the Door." I listened to every word attentively. I stopped the truck about 20 minutes into the message and shut it off. I turned the cassette off. I was crying. God was right. I was wrong. God was good. I was bad. I was in trouble. I began to pray but stopped. I did not want to pretend any longer. I did not act any longer. I did not want to lie any longer. So I prayed, first of all, that God would help me pray correctly. So I stopped; I shut up. I listened; I waited. Again, there was no audible voice, but I understood the following message clearly. It went something like this-
"Glen, I want to save you. I want to forgive you. But two things in your life must be first dealt with."

1. "You are a slave to alcohol. You cannot live without it. But if you are going to be a Christian, you cannot have that element of life. It has to go." I had the same desire. I wanted to be free. But I did not want to mess around with AA or some other therapy that may or may not work. I wanted deliverance. And as far as I was concerned, God could do it by Himself. I prayed then and vowed to God that if He would help me, I would never drink again.

2. "You must forgive John Barnes."
This was almost funny. I had looked for him for a long time. I thought that I would never see him again anyway. This is easy. "Yes, Lord, I forgive John."

I then prayed, asking God to forgive my sinful life, to make me His child, and to save me.

What a blessing it was to find and have what I was seeking finally. The satisfaction found in Jesus Christ is unexplainable. He changed my destiny and my life. He is everything I need. I now know what those Christians had in times of trouble which I sought.

It has been such a blessing to speak with John over the phone. But I long for the day when I can see him again in this life. I thank the Lord for what He has done in our lives.

God is good (all the time)! After my salvation and baptism, Eve and I joined Bethel Baptist Church. After a few months, we began to pray that God would give us a little boy since I was the only male in my family. We also needed to move since housing costs were too expensive. After praying for a short time, God blessed us--Eve became pregnant with Benjamin! He was born in January 1986. What an answer to prayer! We are so grateful for our two beautiful girls, Nadya and Cheri as well. Our children have been an enormous blessing, especially while serving in Ukraine. God is good!

Glen Williamson