

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 was adopted into a new family. There were some good times, but more bad than good. Both of my adopted 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, but 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 began stealing her vodka and Dad's bourbon when I was 12. I liked the effect of the alcohol. Drugs eventually were 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. We let many animals out of their pens at the Pierce County Fair in one instance. We also hauled huge logs onto the road; 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. Homelife stunk. I hated it. So I left twice. I had my guitar; that was all I needed. Once I went to the police station and told them that I did not want to go back home. I suggested that 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. When I was very young, she told me 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. I bought a trombone when I was 14. I bought my first car when I was 15. One day, Terri and I picked raspberries in Orting with John and Sue Barnes. We missed the bus, and unfortunately-- we had to walk a very 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! I had plenty of musical opportunities between the band, orchestra, stage band, Dixieland group, and jamming' with my friend Harold on 7th Avenue. I also worked in a group in Tacoma consisting of all black men except for 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! For me, the school was an unimportant 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 simply. 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 could drink and smoke at home, I began searching for something more exciting—more 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 did not seem bad. 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 needed to finish school (whatever!). He told me that he was looking for someone like me and would get a lot more money than I could ever dream of. I did not refuse him but asked him to elaborate. He then told me that I would be hauling stuff from Seattle to Dallas. I learned that the "stuff" was stolen electronics and goods. Drivers hauled them 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 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, and there were many automatic weapons and various 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 that The crooks would have probably killed me. On New Year's Eve (1976), I wanted to just 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 somewhat hesitant because it was New Year's Eve. I also knew that they were going 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 wasted. There was no more "full service" for anyone, and the place reeked of drugs and alcohol. I did not pay attention to the time until about 4:30. By that time, I realized that John had "disobeyed" me and began thinking of ways to help correct his behavior. 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 that it was at a certain place and that there had been an accident. I sunk 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 borrowed my parent's car sometimes and rode my bike to school the rest of the year. The army recruiters were after me. Although I did not want to enlist, I decided to 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 realized. I never saw John as I had hoped. I knew that I would not get the money back for the car, but if I could just get to him for a few moments and half kill him. I thought I could be satisfied since I was a very vindictive person. It never happened. I got stationed in Kaiserslautern, Germany, toward the end of 1977. Some weeks later, 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, and doing 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 at Kleber Kaserne. 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 army moves soldiers every three years, we were

reassigned to Fort Hood, Texas, in September 1979. Eve already had the "nine-month disease," and Nadya was born in April of 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 not available, 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. Unfortunately, playing in bars always led to more drinking—I could not resist these temptations. There were dozens of times over the years that we miraculously made it home—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. One day, he told me that he thought that we could both make more money by just 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 pretty well in those days, but there was something still missing from my life- satisfaction. One Wednesday, Eve told me that the girls had never been to a Sunday school. Just after she said that, there was a knock on the door. Two ladies were standing there. The pastor's wife spoke up and said she was from Bethel Baptist Church. I told her it was an amazing coincidence, especially since Eve had just mentioned that the girls had never been to Sunday school. She mentioned that they have a Sunday school bus that can come by and pick up the girls. Eve said she did not think that Nadya (4) and Cheri (1) would ride the bus. Mrs. Cooper then offered to pick up Nadya 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 that I was busy on the weekends. I did not tell her that I played music in bars until 2 AM and was hungover 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 when we arrived, we found another group already set up on stage. Double booked. I do not know 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 uses. It is a meek, quiet, and humble spirit that most men find impossible to resist if they love their wives at all. She won. We went. I told her that we would sit in the back of the auditorium. People were friendly, and the music was tolerable. The hymns were okay. But the choir was very difficult to hear. But I did not care. It was one time. I had no plans to return—but God had other plans. When the pastor started preaching, I looked up and noticed that the speakers were mounted (on purpose) toward the back of the auditorium. As he preached very loudly, I wondered who he was mad at. I did not like it. I told Eve during the message that I did not like it and that I was NOT going to come back. The following Wednesday, there was another knock at my door. I opened it to see Pastor Cooper and Bro. Walker was 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 that they were going to use it). I invited them in. They complimented us on our place and then wasted no time. Pastor Cooper asked me if I knew for sure that I was saved and on my way to heaven. I am a 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 that I was saved but not living exactly right, he turned and began talking with Eve. I thought I was off the hook until he started asking me questions about my life. He said that Christians read their Bible, pray, witness, faithfully in the 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 next 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 really 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 on offering a final farewell to the pastor on the way out, but he asked me to please 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 a feeling of 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 had been around the world, performing 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 that 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--all bothered me. But I listened--I tolerated it the entire day, both going to work and going 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 heard the Lord speak something like- "Boy, you are in deep trouble! What you need is on that cassette! This might 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 the following message I understood clearly. It went something like this- "Glen; I want to save you. I want to forgive you. But there are two things in your life which 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 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 right then and vowed to God that I would never drink again if He would help me. 2. "You must forgive John Barnes." This was almost funny. I had looked for him for a long time. I thought that I would probably never see him again anyway. This is easy. "Yes, Lord, I forgive John." I then prayed, asking God to forgive my sinful life, make me His child, and 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 I sought after. 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 both of 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, Nadyia and Cheri. Our children have been a huge blessing in our life—especially while serving in Ukraine. God is good!

Glen Williamson