

My Conversion Experience

John 3:7

Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'

My mother believed that we all had to come into a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ. Each of us needed a personal experience of being born again. For me that day came when I was very young. I remember it clearly because it is the same day my brother Dave gave his heart to Jesus and he was seven years old. I was a year younger. We had been sitting at the kitchen table eating lunch in the first house we lived in on Keagan Road. We were eating tomato soup with saltine crackers and peanut butter. I think it must have been a Saturday. Mom was telling us about heaven and hell and the end of the world and that we needed to “get saved” or we’d go to hell. I didn’t care. I was having fun with my friends and hell was a long way off. I remember clearly the hardness of my little heart. David said, “Mommy, I want Jesus as my Savior. I don’t want to go to hell.” Mom took David into the bedroom so he could get saved. Little Mike followed them into the room. I stayed behind.

My big sister Norma, alias, Jeannie, came back into the kitchen and continued to preach mom’s sermon to the only heathen left at the table, me. She preached a hell fire and brimstone sermon. I remember it. I remember her saying, “All of us are going to heaven except you, Dickie. Don’t you want to go to heaven when you die?” I clearly remember my answer was an emphatic, “No!” Then she really laid into me with the fires of hell. Finally, seeing she was getting nowhere,



she added, “Besides I’m going to tell Mom what you said.” That did it. I must have figured I would get a whipping to get heaven knocked into me and another hotter place out of me. So, I went into the bedroom. It is weird how some things stick in your memory. As I arrived in the bedroom David and mommy were crying and praying, so being a good imitator, even at that age, I started to imitate crying.

At the end of that mom turned to David and said something like, “David, what just happened? Did you ask Jesus into your heart?” Goody two-shoes David said, “Yes, mommy, I asked Jesus in to my heart and he came in and I am going to heaven.” Then she turned to me and asked, “Dickie, did you ask Jesus into your heart to be your Savior?” It was like time stood still for a moment. I suddenly realized that I had not asked Jesus into my heart. I cried. I am sure I must have

prayed something, but could not remember what. I panicked. If I said 'no' I would get a sermon or a spanking. If I said 'yes' I would be a liar and really go to hell. I did what any red blooded American boy would do, I lied. "Yes, mommy I asked Jesus into my heart too." Mom hugged and kissed everybody as though the whole world just got saved. With that they all traipsed back into the kitchen to finish lunch – all, except for me. I remember it all so clearly, like a film rolling in my mind.

I stopped in the hallway really under a heavy sense of conviction that I had lied to my mom and was now really a sinner and headed to hell. I paused, leaned against the wall on my right shoulder and said, with eyes half open half closed, "Jesus, I lied. I am a sinner. Forgive me and come into my heart and be my Savior. Amen." You see, I did not realize I was supposed to ask Jesus to come into my heart. I thought I just needed to go through the motions like my big brother and copy him. So I copied him. The revelation that I was a sinner and bound for hell came to a little six year old like a bolt of lightning. Don't tell me kids don't understand enough to get saved at an early age! They can. I did.

The back story to this incident is that when I was in college the leader of our gospel team had asked each of us to share our personal testimony of when we first came to Christ. I shared that I did not have a specific memory of the first time I asked Jesus to be my Savior. I must have responded and asked Jesus into my heart a hundred times for years during my childhood. He said, "Dick, there was a first time. Why don't you ask the Lord to bring that first experience back to your memory so you can nail it down?" That night I did so. I asked the Lord to reveal to me the very first time I opened my heart to the Lord. That night God gave me a dream, or better yet it was a memory, of the story I just shared with you. Even the smells and tastes came back to mind. Yes, I think it is very important that every child of God KNOWS when and where he first invited Christ into his life. God doesn't have any grandchildren. No one is grandfathered in because of growing up in a Christian home or church. Jesus said, "YOU must be born again." That new life happens when you ask Jesus into your heart and life.