

My Testimony and How God Has Led Me. By Richard Story

The purpose of this testimony is not intended to be an all-inclusive autobiography. I'm trying to tell how I kept Jesus out of my heart, and He finally got me to listen to Him.

I was born in a Naval hospital, in Atlanta, Georgia, during a snow storm which is highly unusual for Georgia, even if it was December 12, 1944. I was 22 inches long, and weighed 6 lbs 12 oz. My initial size belied the fact that throughout my life I've been average height and definitely not skinny.

World War II was just about over, and I was a blissful, happy baby, and totally unaware of the Chaos of the times. When I was 2 years old, my parents, and I, moved to Benton Harbor, Michigan where we lived, in, what I knew as, the little brown house on Superior Street. I loved that house, my baby sitter, and fire trucks. I clearly remember when, one evening, the local fire department brought a fire truck to our neighborhood and demonstrated what firemen go through in combating fires. I loved every minute of it, and they even started a big fire that they quenched with their water hoses and expertise. I loved the excitement, and the siren. I was 4 years old but I'll never forget that night.

Soon after this, we moved to a farm near Berrien Springs, Michigan, my tears flowed. I hated leaving the little brown house. However the move to the country was a good one that I and my siblings adjusted to easily, as there was much to do, we were never bored. We lived on a hill, in an old, 130 year old farm house with 30 acres to roam, and neighbors who didn't mind if we wandered over on their land either, so my brother, Joe, and I explored throughout the whole township.

Our Father, Claude Story, taught in the Benton Harbor public school system after the war was over. He had been baptized into the Seventh-day Adventist church a year or 2 before I was born. Mom (L. Elizabeth Torkelson Story) had become a member of the SDA church when she was 13 years old, at a 1928 camp-meeting in Topeka, Kansas, along with her mother and 2 of her brothers, Fred & Ted. They had come into the church through the work of a colporteur who sold Grandma Torkelson a subscription to the "Signs of the Times magazine." It is interesting to note that "Uncle Ted", after a 20 year stint as a missionary in India, became an assistant editor for the "Signs of the Times magazine" for many years, in California.

My Dad was not fully converted, however, and gradually slipped out of the church, leaving Mom to keep the spiritual lamp burning, and she determined to see that all of her children would have their education in Adventist schools. Dad refused to pay for the education so mom worked night shift at a hospital in Niles, Michigan for at least 12 years as an RN, in order to keep her promise to God, to see her children raised in the truth.

At an early age, I became interested in reading books. Mom would read our Sabbath School papers to us on Sabbath afternoons, as well as books she would obtain for us from church sources, such as biographies of historical people and of good character. As we did not have television, we learned to enjoy these reading sessions and I learned to read, early, before I started school. I would read to myself under the covers with a flashlight, at night, as I grew older, even though it was against house rules, but I got away with this most of the time, as I was very good at not getting caught. Our mother wanted us to learn to read good books, but I discovered that Berrien Springs, Michigan, which was 6 miles from our farm, and where our school was, had a library, and I had time after school before I had to take the bus home, in which I could check out books from the public library.

The books that I began to read were a mix of good and not so good, Many were classics and biographies which most people would see no wrong in them, but I began to sneak some home that I knew mom would not approve of. For example, she told me how she had read a book, in her teens, that for a time got her interested in western classics, named "Riders of the Purple Sage" by Zane Gray, and how, now, she regretted reading those books. "They were not for Christians." Well, I found that book in the Library and read it at night and was hooked for a while on cowboy thrillers, but lost interest when I found another genre that I liked even better, "Science Fiction".

Reading became like a drug to me, it was an escape from reality. One of my favorite places was the shed where we kept the hay to feed our goats, we did not bale our hay, so it was cozy, and on a rainy day that was where I would go. The fact is, that my spiritual life suffered, and although I was a reasonably good student in grade school, my studies suffered some because I often was not getting enough sleep. I did excel in Bible because I did have a bent toward spiritual knowledge and we were faithful in our Bible studies, even though my mind was also filling with "garbage".

As previously stated, we did not have TV. Mom fought tooth and nail to keep it out of our home, her opinion was that it was a tool of the devil. I saw my first TV in 1953, and it was our neighbor across the road from us, that had the first one in the neighborhood. It was a large floor model like many of the early radios were designed, except it had a small screen, about 8 or 10 inches square, with a black and white picture, but I was hooked. Still no TV for us, and only occasionally we were invited to the neighbors to watch a "good program".

When I was about 10 or 11 years old, Dad & Grandpa Story built a home for his parents to live in, just down the hill from us and easy walking distance, and guess what? They had a television. I got to see a lot of TV that I loved such as cowboy films and occasionally a Science Fiction story. Grandma didn't mind. TV was like a drug to my mind and although I didn't realize the effect it was having on me, the fact is, it was hypnotizing me and changing my mind. My love of books still continued, but most of all I loved fast easy reading, war stories, science fiction and things that allowed me to lose myself into other worlds to temporarily escape the one that I lived in.

I was Baptized, into the Seventh-day Adventist church, when I was 11 years old. It was a glorious Sabbath that I will never forget, and I felt the presence of God all day. It was like a golden glow about me. The next morning, however, the glow was gone and I slipped into my old ways. I did not understand what Baptism really meant, and I thought somehow that it would change me. I know, now, that change should come before baptism, as this beautiful event is a witness that God already began the change and has been let in to the heart to take control of the life. I really needed a mentor that could lead and guide me, and although my mom tried, she did not fulfill that need completely, and my dad was out of the question. He needed a great deal of help himself when it came to spiritual things, and he had no patience with his children, so we often walked as though on egg shells around him. In thinking back on my father's behavior, I think that he definitely had psychological issues, but I won't go into those, except to say that they caused problems for the whole family. My love of media was an escape from reality and it started with books.

Why am I relating this here? Because in all of this there were signs that, if people that were in the church, school, or family had understood that there were problems in our home, that were affecting our lives, there might have been someone who would have helped, pastor, teacher, extended family member, or

church family member, with understanding and to, somehow, help, us as a family to be on a better track. Mom was basically raising 5 children by herself, as Dad, who did care for our physical needs, had no patience to deal with life issues or spiritual training.

Even so, I had a desire to be a pastor someday, but I knew that I was not worthy of such an exalted position. My school work, In 7th and 8th grade, began to suffer. No more "A" and "B" student. It was a "C" and occasional "B", and even a "D" or 2, but I was accepted into Mount Ellis Academy in Bozeman, Montana for my freshman year when I was 14. I was a long way from home in Michigan and while it was an adventure for me, I went through home- sickness for 3 or 4 months. During that year, I discovered that my mother and father had temporarily separated, and dad was living in California. Mom did not want me at home when this happened as dad had become more verbally violent, and she thought it would be better in Montana, where her sister, Esther, and her husband, Uncle Clare, lived, as he was a teacher at the school, and could keep a watch on how I was doing.

I really loved it in Montana. When I went home the following summer, I wanted to go back after 3 weeks at home, but mom decided that another way would be better for me. In her nurses training at Hinsdale Sanitarium near Chicago, Illinois, in the "30's", she met a man by the name of Ralph Martin who was involved in the Self Supporting work and especially the Education part of it. He was starting a high school level school in a wooded area about an hour from Berrien Springs and thought it would be good experience for me, so I became one of eight teen-agers for the first and only year that "Oak Haven" had an academy level school.

We were living on almost 2 square miles of oak forest so the place was appropriately named. Except for a large house and a few out buildings there was nothing but trees. It was summer and the boys were put to work helping to build the building that we would live in for the year. I loved it. Every building was heated by wood and we had lots of wood. When we were not building, we were cutting wood for winter heat or clearing land for the farm that, it was hoped, would produce food for the little organization. Best of all, our leader, Brother Martin, was a very interesting speaker, and I loved to hear him preach. It was there that I gained greater respect for the Word of God and The Spirit of Prophecy, and also learned how to work, but I still did not have victory over my sins because I did not understand how the process took place, and had not fallen on the "Rock". I mention this experience because, in later life, this interest in the Spirit of Prophecy became very important to me.

I finished my Academy instruction with one year at Emanuel Missionary College Academy, and 2 years at Sunnydale Academy in Missouri, where I graduated with a D+ average. They must have been hard up for students at Union college, Lincoln Nebraska, that year (1964), for I was accepted into the Theology program on probation. I had to bring my grade point average up to at least a "C", and I brought it up to a "C". It wasn't that I was dumb, I was trying, but also working full time, and even with a slightly less than full study load, was having trouble with focusing on studying. That year was the only year that mom could help me financially as I was \$700 short at the end of the school year. I studied for one more year at Union College and then moved to Southern Missionary College in Collegedale, Tennessee. My brother, Joe, was also there.

I was still in the Theology program at Southern, and still taking less than a full load of schoolwork because I worked full time to pay my bills. I learned to make brooms and finally got to the place that I was making more than \$2 an hour, piece work, which was slightly over the minimum wage. I met there a young lady that I married in May of 1967. Melva was a Theology major also and we met in Greek class. I will not go much in detail on this marriage, except to say that it lasted 15 years. After three months of marriage I realized that to continue in my Theology major was not going to be a good plan. I still had a problem of not finding the victory over sin, and there were issues with our marriage that I began to see would be a problem in being a pastoral couple, so I changed studies to work toward Physical Therapy as a plan for my lifework. It was the height of the Vietnam War, and this change also changed my deferment and Uncle Sam took me into the Army.

The next 15 years would almost make a book in itself. 2 years in the Army, most of it in the "White Coat Project", 2 years of study and graduating from Loma Linda University school of Physical Therapy with a solid B average. Moving from place to place trying to find one that satisfied both of us. (Melva was a Registered Nurse), We lived in North Carolina, Tennessee, Northern California, 5 years in Alaska, and 3 years in upstate New York. In 1982 we divorced. I did not want the divorce, and we had 3 children. At the time it seemed to me that life was not worth living, but I plugged along.

I met Kathy within the 1st year after the divorce, but we married on January 8, 1984. We lived in Pittsfield, Massachusetts until the spring of 1988 When we moved to Wichita, Kansas area where we now live on 18+ acres 10 miles north of Wichita. We have lived here now for a little over 32 years. I'll move on from here to

tell how God finally got hold on my life to bring about the spiritual change I so badly needed in the last 17+ years.

I want to make it clear that I have never left the church and have always supported the corporate SDA church through my journey, although I was often tempted to throw it all out the window several times. It is not a good feeling to know that you are a hypocrite, knowing much truth, and not doing what is right, yet appearing in the church as though you are headed for the kingdom of God. I have been both Deacon and Elder. I have preached truth that I believed, but did not practice. I had no victory! I was baptized 3 times, once at age 11, re-baptized at age 19, (at Union College), and again when I married Kathy. I wanted to be cleansed of my past and have hope for the future, but the last 2 baptisms did not have the same glow as at age 11.

When I was 59 years old, I had some tests that uncovered the fact that I had severe, Osteoporosis of the spine. I also had a Laminectomy and after the procedure the doctor advised that I have no more surgeries on my spine, and recommended no lifting above 30 lbs for the rest of my life. I was told that my bones in the lower spine were so soft that his scalpel went through the bone like a butter knife through butter. I returned to work under lifting restrictions, but then I had a bout that was so much like a heart issue that I was put in CCU for three days of testing, of which the final outcome was that I didn't have a heart attack, but they watched me for a, 2 year, period. The biggest problem that came out of this was that I was not received back to work because of the fact that lifting restrictions, according to the doctors, would be permanent, and I was considered a liability. Eventually I was put on Social Security Disability, which transferred to regular Social Security at age 65. Over time I have come to accept what happened as something the Lord used to get me to search for more truth and to finally get Victory in my life.

In 2005, 2006 I went on 2 mission trips. My wife, Kathy, encouraged me to go and I finally gave in. The first trip, to Peru, got me out of my shell, or cocoon, my comfort zone. The 2nd one, to India, showed me evidence that there is an unseen world where a war, as the Bible says, is going on, and I began to call on the Lord for strength to handle this war as it began to even effect me personally. I had 2 experiences in India that were demonic in nature, and we saw several individuals that were possessed by evil spirits. The Lord did protect me during this trip but I came back from it realizing that I lacked the armour of God and in fact I felt that I was lost, and knew not what to do. I knew that according to

Ephesians 6:11-18 victory was lacking in my life and I felt that my prayers did not go beyond the ceiling. At this point, I was desperate.

11 Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

13 Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

14 Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;

15 And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;

16 Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.

17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:

18 Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;

I was walking in the back yard in spring of 2007 and praying for help from the Lord to end this darkness that had settled over my mind, I didn't want to be lost and yet it seemed my spiritual life was of no effect. I had now lived for over 62 years, I had tried to cleanse my mind many times and even threw out the television, at least 2 or 3 times from our home, and it always crept back in. A new problem was added to the old problems, I was becoming a computer game junky. Entertainment media was choking me to spiritual death, causing me to make a wasteland of my life.

Suddenly, I heard a voice. It was in my mind, but it seemed audible and loud enough to be someone walking next to me as He talked. He said:

"I can't help you Richard because you won't let me in."

Those eleven words had more meaning than just to say that He couldn't help me. There was hope in those words. At the same time He spoke, I saw in my mind that picture of Christ standing before a door with arm raised to knock, and at the same time the view panned to my left and I saw the inside where I, myself, stood before the door that had a security chain preventing it from opening all the way. Jesus voice could be heard but He could not enter unless I would take the chain off and open the door. My mind went immediately to **Revelation 3:20-23:**

20 Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

21 To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.

22 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

In a moment I saw that **the reason I could not have victory over sin was because we can't do anything without Jesus, Himself, in our minds and hearts to take control of the sin problem, without His power, His victory, His righteousness to replace our lack of power, our lack of victory, and our filthy rags, which represent our righteousness, we can never overcome sin,** but the Bible is clear, if we do not have victory over sin we will never sit in Christ's throne with Him. By the way, It is Jesus that is speaking to the churches, all 7 of them. "Ye that hath an ear, let him hear what the **Spirit** saith unto the churches".

Ellen White wrote:

The truths most plainly revealed in the Bible have been involved in doubt and darkness by learned men, who, with a pretense of great wisdom, teach that the Scriptures have a mystical, a secret, spiritual meaning not apparent in the language employed. These men are false teachers. It was to such a class that Jesus declared, "Ye know not the Scriptures, neither the power of God." [MARK 12:24.] The language of the Bible should be explained according to its obvious meaning, unless a symbol or figure is employed . . . If men would but **take the Bible as it reads,** if there were no false teachers to mislead and confuse their minds, a work would be accomplished that would make angels glad, and that would bring into the fold of Christ thousands upon thousands who are now wandering in error. {The Great Controversy 88, 598.3}

I had not been a deep student of scripture. I had not learned to compare scripture with scripture, and I had more than once accepted human reasoning to explain difficult passages. I wanted to be a student that would not be ashamed of haphazard Bible study, but deep, complete study, and backing it up with the messages of the prophet that the Lord gave our church.

Ellen White also wrote:

"God means that truth shall be brought to the front and become the subject of examination and discussion, even through the contempt placed upon it. The minds of the people must be agitated; every controversy, every reproach, every effort to restrict liberty of conscience, is God's means of awakening minds that otherwise might slumber." {Mount of Blessing 33.2}

and:

If the pillars of our faith will not stand the test of investigation, it is time that we knew it. There must be no spirit of Phariseism cherished among us. When Christ came to his own, his own received him not; and it is a matter of solemn interest to us that we

should not pursue a similar course in refusing light from heaven.
{Review & Herald, June 18, 1889 par. 5}

I Knew that Jesus had manifested Himself to me personally. By faith, I opened the door, made a door-stop out of the security chain, that He might never more be kept outside of my heart's door, and, on my knees I gave Him full control of my life. The only thing He indicated I needed to do, was to "not make provision for the flesh."

14 But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof. Roman's 13:14.

I immediately rounded up all the videos and games that had a hold on my life. I asked the lord that when I had gotten rid of all those things that I was hooked on, that He would take away my love of the wickedness they entertained and restore a Love for spiritual material. It took about a week to round up all these items.

Please understand that I had been reading the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy material, but I was pushing myself to do it, I did not love it and I was still watching the devils films and playing games that were designed to take away Love for God and truth. One day I was in the basement, where my "little man cave" was and I said, "Lord, I think I've fulfilled my part of the bargain, and I think it's your turn. As I spoke these words, my gaze directed to a shelf where I had a very special series that I loved to watch, having watched it at least 6 times, and was looking forward to a 7th time. I told myself that they were good, in that they taught good morals, had no bad language in them, or impure activities, but I had forgotten that they had spiritualism throughout them, as well as much violence. You've probably heard of the classic known as "The Lord of the Rings". In a moment the Holy Spirit brought forth from my heart the deception that I had held regarding these videos. I saw that I loved them more than I loved Jesus. I had cherished these films that were full of deception, fantasy, war, and violence, which had always been a problem with me. They were nothing but an escape from reality. This actually was the hardest thing that I gave up at that time, but when I did, I felt a wonderful relief. Then I said, Lord it's your turn. I heard another voice. "You can always get them back." I shouted out, "I don't ever want to go back." Immediately I felt something in my chest, not a pain but an ache like something had just been pulled out of me. It wasn't that unpleasant and gradually it disappeared in a couple of hours. The next time I went by the TV in the living room, I had no desire to turn it on and start clicking through the channels. The Lord kept His promise and I have lost my desire to watch the garbage I once filled my

mind with. I love His word, both the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy writings, and it has been thirteen years now since that miracle took place. The truth, I have found, is much more interesting than fiction.

I don't claim to be perfect, however, I know that God continues to cleanse my soul temple as I cooperate with His Holy Spirit, and just imagine that Jesus had been waiting for me all that time. I knew that Jesus was the one that came to me and opened my spiritual eyes regarding my great need. It was He that healed me of my demonic connection. I praise Him all the time and will never forget what He has done for me. I knew that this was just the start of my relationship with Christ and my desire is that it will be for eternity.

Why am I telling this experience? Because it has everything to do with the understanding of God, His Son and the Holy Spirit, and I hope it will be clear as this narrative continues. I began to understand that God had blessed me by giving me time to Study, and learn from His word, and I saw things with different lenses. The Word began to open up to me as never before. Prayer, Bible study, worship, and reading the books of the Spirit of Prophecy, all came alive to me. Secular media no longer had any interest for me. I found that there was a wealth of spiritual material including sermons to be found on YouTube and I took advantage of that. This was the only media that I cared for. I began to search for sermons on YouTube and found many. Most were from sites like Doug Batchelor and Stephen Bohr and other self supporting groups with evangelistic out-reach, but I began to notice that there were others, on the internet, that seemed to have a vendetta with the organized SDA church and I avoided watching those.

One day I discovered a study video on YouTube, and since I recognized one of the individuals, involved in the study, as one who had previously been at my church a couple of years, in the past, to give a weekend series on the book of Esther, as a type of last day events, which I had found very interesting. I listened in on this study and realized that I had never heard anything like this before, and it necessitated further study which included me looking up all the Spirit of Prophecy statements to see if they were in context, and correctly quoted, etc. My personal study lasted at least 8 months, and I finally decided that it was truth. The subject was "Who God is", and what does the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy have to say about it. It sounds simple doesn't it? The more I read and studied this, the more I found on this subject. It has changed my life.

I will try to keep my words to a minimum as I go through this partial study, (there is much more available). First

of all, Who is God? And why should it matter that we know ?

(John 17:3) 3 And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.

So if in (John 17:3), Jesus said, "There is **one true God**," and

Paul, in (1 Corinthians 8:6,) 6 But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ,

and (Ephesians 4:6), says: 6 One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

and if Paul taught, in (1 Timothy 1:5): 5 For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;

If James said (In James 2:19) that the fallen angels believe that there is **one God** and they tremble.

If the demons knew that "Jesus was the Son of the Most High God" as it says in (Mark 3: 11-12) and (Luke 8:28).

If the scribes knew there was **one God** which brought commendation from Christ, Himself, (Mark 12:32-34)

And if Malachi said that **One God** created us. (Malachi 2:10), and if Moses agreed, laying the foundation many years before in (Deuteronomy 6:4): "4 Hear, O Israel: The **LORD our God is one LORD**."

I think it would be fair if we would believe the same thing. There is a lot of scripture that I've mentioned, but this is only touching the surface of the subject.

Why, you might say, do you even care about writing about this subject? First, I would say that, **until 2018, I didn't really care anything about it.** I did not know anything about there being any issues concerning who God is, the Sonship of Christ and who is the Holy Spirit, but in that moment I knew that, by faith, Jesus came into my heart and mind in 2007 and it was necessary, if I was ever to be victorious over the sins in my life, to be able to accept His righteousness.

I started this study with some texts about the one True God, which Israel believed in, and Jesus believed in. In fact Jesus worships His Father, who is also His God. Here are several texts showing this to be a fact.

5 And from **Jesus Christ**, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,

6 And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. (Revelation 1:5-6)

Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God. (John 20:17)

Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of **my God**, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of **my God**, and the name of the city of **my God**, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from **my God**: and I will write upon him my new name. (Revelation 3:12)

So far we've learned that there is one true God, the Highest, the Father of all, the fallen angels know this, the demons know this and tremble, and that Jesus is the Son of God. We know the scribes knew there was **one God**, and that **Malachi said there is one God**, Moses said there is **one God**. Jesus, Himself, said "This is Life eternal that they, (the disciples), might know thee, the **only true God** and **Jesus Christ whom thou has sent.**" Jesus said that with His own mouth, in the most sacred place we could be on Earth, in prayer. So, if all these witnesses, to the fact that there is one God, saying this in concert, **what business do human beings have the right to say that God is three in one and one in three, as James White would say, scoffingly.**

Paul is one of the best sources concerning the Godhead. Let's look at a few texts.

3 But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God. (1 Corinthians 11:3)

6 But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him. 1 Corinthians 8:6)

22 And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. (Revelation 21:22)

All through the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy God the Father and His only begotten Son are the ones that are worshiped for ever and ever and **the Father is the Almighty God**. There are many more Bible verses but lets move on.

Testimonies for the Church volume 9. page 19.

In a special sense Seventh-day Adventists have been set in the world as watchmen and light bearers. To them has been entrusted the last warning for a perishing world. On them is shining wonderful light from the word of God. They have been given a work of the