

Fathers on Display

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- [0 : 00] Good morning. Happy Father's Day. Let's have all the fathers and grandfathers and great-grandfathers!
- maybe raise their hands. Just look around.! We have a very full morning.
- We'll plan a short Father's Day message and then the acceptance of members, as was mentioned. We have six testimonies. And seeing as they're all a bit further along in life, some of their testimonies are longer.
- And so it'll be really, really good to hear how God has worked in their life. And so looking forward to that. But as we maybe begin, as the Church of God, I want us to call attention to the activities in the world this week.
- We talked in Sunday School about Israel's place in the end, about replacement theology, a teaching that God is done with Israel and there is no more purpose.
- [1 : 40] God setting back a country, a leader, who was very, very vocal how he would annihilate Israel.
- Israel. And that country is Iran. And boasting that they had ten nukes ready to go.
- Missiles with nuclear warheads to wipe off the country Israel. This little country of Israel managed to send their special agents, the Mossad, the CIA of Israel, into Iran and prepare weeks ahead of time to prepare for this battle that happened this week.
- And we have watched as Israel attacked Iran and caught them totally off guard and defenseless.
- And yes, they have fired some of their missiles, the regular ones, after, but they were caught, so to speak, with their pants down. Literally.
- [3 : 14] And they were shamed in front of the whole world. Now, we know from Scripture that Iran is going to be part of a coalition of countries going against Israel in the Ezekiel 38 war.
- You know what happened this week? Those leaders of Iran that weren't annihilated, that weren't killed, what did they do? Where did they go?
- They fled to Russia. And Russia will be leading the pack against Israel in the Ezekiel war.
- You know, earlier in the year, or within the past year, Syria was weakened by Israel where did their leaders go? Russia.
- Russia. And Russia has become a haven for evil. As they brought in leaders that have been characterized by evil.
- [4 : 26] So that's, you know, we are instructed to be aware of the seasons and the times that we're in. and here, here, this little country Israel accomplished what was humanly impossible.
- And we see the power of God. We see the power of God. And it ought to catch our attention. We need to know what's going on.
- So, I thought I'd share a few thoughts on that. God is not done with Israel. In fact, He's gearing them up for the end.

And so, we see it coming together even in our lifetime. So, it's exciting and yet perplexing as we hate warfare, right?

but, nonetheless, the axis of evil in this world will continue to climax till the tribulation period, till the return of Christ.

[5 : 37] But in the midst of all of that, our God is in control. Let's never, never, ever lose sight of that. And with that, all of us can go to bed and sleep in peace, knowing God is in control. Father's Day. I'm just going to take a few minutes, share a few thoughts on Father's Day. Father's Day. Fathers, you have a great impact on your families, on your spouse, and on your children.

Never, never let go of that. And never undermine your role as a dad. don't let anyone tell you that your role is not important.

For it's critical. In fact, it's so critical, it's God ordained that fathers are in the home leading their families.

[7 : 11] And Ben mentioned a few reasons, critical ones, why they're there. you know, as fathers, perhaps as older fathers, some of us might look back or be tempted to look back and see some of our failures with regrets.

and yet, we are encouraged to forget what's behind and to move on with the Lord.

So I want to encourage us this morning with that. Because as dads, we all start at ground zero, inexperienced.

Amen? We start there. And we will and do make mistakes as the Lord matures us and grows us.

So children, be forgiving and graceful with your dads, acknowledging that God has placed them in your life.

[8 : 25] Now, I think of the book Love and Respect. Many of you will know about that book or perhaps have read it.

And it speaks in a few words. It speaks of the wife's, the woman's inner need to be loved.

That's her security. God given, God made. The man, the husbands, need to be respected.

Also given by God. And when the wife is not loved, there are struggles. And when the husband or the dad is not respected, either by children or by the wife, there are struggles.

Because it goes against how God ordained it. And so we ought to take heed to that. So the father carries a role of respect to his children.

[9 : 46] And children look at their dad as role models to be looked up to. How many times do children go to their fathers for advice, for confirmation, for encouragement, and even companionship.

There's nothing like spending time with our children and having those moments of togetherness, a bond.

These are not only privileges, they are necessary for relationships to blossom. And so in our passage, I'm just going to use that as a backdrop to bounce off.

Paul writing here to the Corinthians, and the context is in the spiritual. For though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet you do not have many fathers, fathers, for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.

And Paul is reminding them, there may be a ton of external teachers, but I led you to the Lord. Fathers, there may be other voices, there are other voices speaking into your children's lives, but you fathered them, and you with your spouse love them like no one else here on earth.

- [11 : 42] And so your voice is far above the other voices. Right? We need to remember that. God has enabled and gifted us that way. so no one cares as deeply for you children as your mom and dad. And this morning, highlighting your dad.
- Paul says, imitate me. Those are strong words, right?
- Imitate me. fathers, can we say to our children, do as I do, or do as I say, or both?
- Paul is saying, do as I do. And when we look at imitation, our children imitate us regardless of whether we invite them to or not.
- [13 : 08] They do. And if there is a positive role model, the children will imitate positive traits.
- and if there's less than positive ones, children grow up imitating that. And sometimes when we watch our children, especially when they're very young, and they're imitating their dad, sometimes it makes us laugh, and other times it makes us cry, because we get to see ourselves.
- And so what example are we leaving? I want to speak as well here to those that are not fathers physically to children.
- Like Paul was a father to the Corinthians, he was a spiritual father to Timothy, speaking to our youth.
- Can you and are you a spiritual father to someone? The opportunity is there, and it would be right to do that.
- [14 : 39] And so I would encourage, look for opportunities to encourage one another, to be that role in someone else's life. And so it does not only apply to human fathers, but in the spiritual sense, we can all in the church help one another.
- And I would like to just take this further over to the ladies as well. Not only to the mothers, but to the young unmarrieds. there's opportunity to be a spiritual influence to those around.
- And often they are younger than us, those that we influence, but not always. And God uses us. So let's take heart with that. Paul in verse 17 says, And so Paul is sending Timothy to the Corinthians, who will again reiterate Paul's teachings.
- He will remind them. But he describes Timothy as a beloved, my beloved and faithful son.
- And so dads, as we sometimes look back and we struggle, how do I move forward?
- [16 : 22] What's the one qualification that enables us to go forward? God. And in Timothy, the description was a faithful son.
- Not faithful to Paul, but faithful to God. And so that is the recipe, as perhaps we do have some regrets.
- How do we do better? God to God. It is only in the Lord as we are faithful to the Lord, as we allow God to lead us.
- That way I can be the father that my children need. To love the Lord with all my heart. To love the Lord more than my children.
- is the secret behind it. as we disclose these thoughts.
- [17 : 39] Fathers, children need to hear some of these words. well done. Is that true?
- Our children need to hear, well done. Well done. Our children need to hear sometimes, I'm sorry.
- will you forgive me? This is strength, not weakness. And they may be the hardest words off of dad's lips to his children.
- I'm sorry. What I did was wrong. Will you forgive me? I love you.

I love you. Very simple, right? And yet so critical.

[18 : 58] I love you. Fathers, when we provide the love and security for our daughters growing up, did you know that when they hit that age where they start looking, they don't need to find love in the wrong places because dad has provided it.

your daughters need you, not just your sons. It's stability.

It provides the basis for their relationships that follow. And they won't be looking for love in the wrong places. one more.

Don't give up. Keep going. Or don't give up. Let me show you. Words that instill confidence in our children's gifts.

And so the list could go on. I realize that. But I'm going to just stop at that.

[20 : 26] So fathers, as we close with that, remember, remember your role is God given. Be there for your family.

And be that example that God wants you to be. So may you take courage. May you take courage in the Lord. We're going to close this portion of our service just to hear the testimonies.

And we have six testimonies and it was brought to my attention that that is a lot to hear.

and so and I realize that as well with that. So from now on when we have a number, we're going to seek to have a couple at a time for the month before.

So just to allow us to absorb it better. But this time we're going to go ahead with all six. And so endure, not endure in joy. Endure as then it'll be a length of time.

[21 : 42] But it'll be a blessing. I know that. And so we're going to ask them to share their testimonies. And then after that we're going to have some questions for them.

And then they will sign the membership covenant, which I will go over after the sharing of their testimonies. So let's just pray before they come up.

Father, it is a beautiful thing to hear your work in our lives. It is miraculous. As each new birth is a miracle.

And so Father, as these three couples come up to share, may you give them boldness, courage, but above all, Lord, joy in sharing, not about themselves, but what you have done in their life.

And we trust, Father, you will be glorified this morning. So we commit these individuals to you, Lord, and just knowing you will be with giving that assurance.

[23 : 01] In Jesus' name. Amen. And so we're going to start with Peter and Margaret, if you would like to come up, and then followed by Diederik and Betty and Jacob and Esther, right?

Thank you. Thank you. Good morning, and Margaret Zacharias, Good morning, everyone.

So, we're Peter and Margaret Zacharias, and so we get to go first. It was good for us, I think both of us, healthy for us to think back and think of our journey so far in the middle of life.

So, I'm part of a family of 15. I'm number 8 in the family. And so I had seven older siblings and five younger than me growing up.

We grew up in the old colony Mennonite church. And we grew up with no cars in the colony. And there's one phone in the community by the store.

[24 : 38] And for some reason, it was tradition where we went to church that you start going to church at age 13.

And before that, we would learn whatever we learned from Bible, we would learn in school. And for church, we would always take turns as family to have the family we'd head to church.

The other half would babysit and do chores at home on the farm. And as one of the middle children in a big family like that, I think this is probably common.

I grew up watching what I thought was a lot of conflict in the home, just generally speaking. And that led to me feeling mostly invisible in the family and with very little sense of belonging.

And that led to a lot of attention-seeking behavior that only drove me further into isolation. And this was a very confusing time in my life.

[26 : 00] I felt like the only way to get attention from those over me was to serve them and serve them really well.

And find ways to have a bid for connection with them. I had a very real desire to honor my parents and to serve them.

And yet, it seemed to be like we lived in a family where we all misunderstood each other. And looking back, it was a simple desire to be visible, to be wanted, to feel loved as a young person.

And when I was about 14 years old, something unique happened in our community. Up until this point, I had, from age 7 until 14, I was very sick.

And I had sores all over my body, so I didn't get much of anything out of school. And I had a tapeworm.

[27 : 17] And I resorted to all kinds of things, even drinking gasoline, to try to kill the tapeworm. And finally, one day, when I was around 14, then my parents saw this was getting out of hand.

So I went to the doctor. And six hours later, it was all over. And a lot of emotional healing to do after that.

But anyway, something unique happened in our community during that time. One of the older pastors from our church, it wasn't normal that we had Bible study at church.

But one of the older pastors noticed, and there was a big confusion going on in the church. Whenever he would preach, they would always rotate between, I think, six or seven churches.

The church was packed, like, all the way. And you went to church, like, 5 a.m. to be there so that you found a spot sometimes. And so there was jealousy going on among the leaders, whatever.

[28 : 35] So they made it unpredictable where we can go so that we don't know where he's going to be teaching. And then he started a Bible study. And then that Bible study, it was a school room.

It was maybe about half the size of this area. And by the windows, there were sometimes up to five youth by each window standing there listening in to the Bible study. And that's how hungry they were.

But that man, he took time for us. He listened to us. And he wouldn't just tell us things. He listened to our questions.

And he spent time answering the questions that we had. I felt as though I was finally getting the love and attention that I needed.

And so I held on to every word he said. And I was only at about four Bible studies by the time the community shut him down.

[29 : 44] But I got enough answers to know where to go from there. I wanted to be under God's leading.

And it was during this time that God convicted me of my sin. And I went into our barn one day. And I knelt down.

And we were always taught to just pray prayers that were off of memory. But this time it was different. And I needed to own my fault.

And I needed to confess my sins. And I asked God for forgiveness. And for God to lead me. And I left that barn with a huge weight lifted off my back.

And at that time the Bible passage that stood out to me the most. And growing up we were taught not to read the Bible. We could read the catechism but not the Bible.

[30 : 45] And that was because in our community there's a language barrier. Your Bible was in high German. And you're speaking in low German.

And my grandfather was very sincere. And he wanted to read the Bible. And he got all confused because of the language barrier. And he committed suicide. So for us we were told, we were asked not to read our Bibles.

Because to prevent that confusion. So, but then I read.

So I had this struggle to honor my parents. And yet I read my Bible secretly. And this is the passage that I landed on.

And I always wondered if they knew that it was here. So it's in John 14. Verse 15 through 24. It says, If you love me, keep my commandments.

[31 : 50] And I will pray to the Father. And he will give you another helper. That he may abide with you forever. And the spirit of truth whom the world cannot receive.

Because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him. For he dwells with you. And he will be in you. And I will not leave you orphans.

I will come to you. Yet a little while longer. And the world will see me no more. But you will see me.

Because I live. You will live also. At that day. You will know that I am in my Father. And you in me.

And I in you. And he who has my commandments. And keeps them. It is he who loves me. And he who loves me.

[32 : 50] Will be loved by my Father. And I will love him. And manifest myself to him. And then Judas not Iscariot.

Said unto him. Said unto him. Lord how is it that you will manifest yourself to us. And not to the world. Jesus answered and said to him. If anyone loves me. He will keep my word.

And my Father will love him. And we will come. We will come and make our home with him. He who does. He who does not love me.

Does not keep my words. Thank you. And the word which I.

Which you hear. Is not mine. But the Father's who sent me. And to me. In that whole scenario. And everything. This was just so extremely comforting. That I just could never forget this verse.

[33 : 58] And after. After that Bible study was shut down. I found. Out how lost I was.

Without the pastor. To lean on. And so I spent a fair amount of time. In prayer. And reading. Reading my Bible. Because I had so many things to work through.

Because I had seen from him. What a leader should look like. What he should be doing. And. After several years. I began to understand.

Ephesians chapter. Ephesians chapter 1 verse 13.

[35 : 12] Heard the word of truth. The gospel of your salvation. In whom also having believed. You were sealed with the Holy Spirit. Of promise. And that helped me to understand. That in spite of my confusion.

My relationship to my parents. And what it means to be. Served. By Jesus. Through forgiveness. And through his leadership. And.

[36 : 17] On our journey. But one thing that we have found. As. As very needful. On. On our journey.

Verse 19 through 25. It says. Therefore brethren. Having boldness. To enter the. Enter the holiest. By the blood of Jesus.

[illegible]

So I was born during one of those times. When I was around two years old, my parents both got excommunicated from the Old Colony Church for bringing a vehicle, which they were using to travel back and forth to Canada.

But my dad read his Bible a lot, and he started seeing that that was not biblical, so they decided to move on. And so my parents started going to a Mennonite conference church, and they went there for a few years, and we went to school there.

Her mom did not agree with this, and didn't know where to go, so she went back to the Old Colony. And then, so we went to school there yet for the remainder.

And when I was 11 years old, my dad, my dad had an accident with a hang glider.

And they took it to the back of the field, and pulled it with a truck, and it was supposed to go up, and then he was going to try using it, I guess.

[40 : 44] It didn't work properly. And then, anyway, he fell, crashed, fell 120 feet, and was unconscious. And then he was rushed to the hospital, but he never woke up again.

He lived in a coma for two weeks before he passed away. I remember living in a lot of confusion and fear for a few years.

We were now without a dad, and mom wasn't sure what to do with church. She tried her best to raise us.

By this time, she had three married children and eight children still at home. And I remember mom getting very sick a few times shortly after that, and I was so terrified that we would lose her as well.

And in the colony, we didn't really have anybody to lean on, because we got rejected very much, because my parents had left the old colony.

[42 : 16] And through all that, we were considered the rebellious ones, I guess. And we were one of the few people that still had a vehicle in the colony.

And I guess through all that, I didn't really have any close friends growing up until Peter and I met in 1999.

And then I knew that he was my best friend. And he was, after that, other friends didn't matter to me.

Yeah, I had a friend now. And we got married two years later, just before I turned 18. But I had a lot of fears, and they came with me into our marriage.

Even though back then I didn't realize it, but I was always afraid of being abandoned and rejected. And I didn't know how to let go of that.

[43 : 19] That has come with me for many years, and to this day I struggle with it at times. We moved to Alberta in 2008.

And 2011, I started realizing that I had a lot of problems that I couldn't deal with on my own. So I started reading my Bible a lot.

And I read a lot of sermons by Charles Spurgeon. And I always would pray that God would give me understanding as I was reading. And one day I came across a passage in Mark.

Mark 8, verse 3 and 4. Then Jesus put out his hand and touched him, saying, I am willing to be cleansed.

Immediately his leprosy was cleansed. I'll start at verse 1. When he had come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him.

[44 : 29] And behold, a leper came and worshipped him, saying, Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean. Then Jesus put out his hand and touched him, saying, I am willing to be cleansed.

And immediately his leprosy was cleansed. And that is what I felt like. I was asking, if you are willing, can you heal me? And he did. And I prayed that God would forgive me and save me.

And as I was reading the Charles Spurgeon sermons, the one I was reading, the one day I was called Looking Unto Jesus. And there I also learned I need to look to Jesus.

And then I can be set free. And soon one day after that, I came across another passage in Mark.

Mark 10, verse 46 through 52. Now they came to Jericho. And he went out of Jericho with his disciples. And a great multitude, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the road begging.

[45 : 41] And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me. Then many warned him to be quiet, but he cried out all the more, son of David, have mercy on me.

So Jesus stood still and commanded him to be called. Then they called the blind man, saying to him, be of good cheer, rise. He is calling you. And throwing aside his garment, he rose and came to Jesus.

So Jesus answered and said to him, what do you want me to do for you? The blind man said to him, Rabboni, that I may receive my sight. Then Jesus said to him, go your way.

Your faith has made you well. And immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus on the road. And then I understood that I had been forgiven.

And God filled my heart with joy like I had never known. But my struggles weren't over. I was still struggling with fear and rejection.

[46 : 48] And that affected our family life a lot. It often seems like we learn so slow. But I brought a lot of trouble in our marriage.

But slowly I'm learning to trust, bring my fears to Jesus. And the one verse that encourages me a lot. I don't have it here.

Philippians. Philippians 1, verse 6. Being confident of this very thing.

That he who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ. And I always know when I struggle. He has begun a good work and he will complete it.

And as I, as we went on and as I seen my husband take care of our children and leading our girls, teaching them how to be under a leader, I realized that I had never learned that.

[48 : 10] I've never learned how to be under a leader. I didn't learn how to serve and have a good relationship. And I've seen our girls have that with their dads.

And as I saw that, it made me so happy that they could have that. But I also realized that I never had that.

And I miss my dad more and more. I wished that I had a dad to go to when I had questions, when I needed encouragement, where I didn't know where to go.

And I didn't know how to be led.

And to me, through that, I guess I often felt like I don't know how to follow and I'm doing everything wrong.

[49 : 15] And I just felt rejected. I didn't know how to be there for my husband, what it meant to connect. And I miss my dad more and more. Anyway, this last winter, I was going through a very deep valley again.

And I missed my dad so much again. And I felt like I need an older man.

I need my dad to go and ask advice. And I also knew that I have a father, a father in heaven. But I felt like I couldn't quite let it go.

I knew I needed to let it go and let God be my father. But I felt like to do that, I needed to go to the grave and get closure. So I actually had a trip planned to go to Mexico.

I was going to go get some sunshine and go to the grave. And get closure. So a couple of days before I was supposed to leave, my flight was scheduled.

[50 : 29] Everything was ready. God had different plans for me. He allowed my husband to fall off the roof and he broke his foot.

God used broken feet to teach us. And so the same day that I was supposed to fly out, we actually went to Edmonton to get surgery on his foot.

And there was a couple of things that happened all in one day. Some of my flights got rearranged. And I was going to miss my one flight. And then his foot broke.

And my one sister-in-law told me, I wouldn't go. I wouldn't go alone if I were you. It all happened all in a row. And then I knew that God is trying to get my attention.

He wants to be my daddy. And I won't ever get true peace if I can't totally let it go. And so I let go.

[51 : 34] And God closed that chapter of my life and opened a new one for me. I was able to lay it down at his feet and leave it there. Let God take care of me. I didn't need closure at the grave anymore.

God gave me that closure. And so this verse, Jeremiah 29, 11.

For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord. Thoughts of peace and not of evil to give you a future and a hope. That has been an encouragement to me.

God has better plans for me. He has thoughts of peace. And he doesn't forget about me. He doesn't ever forsake me. I'm learning to rest in him and his promises.

And through that lesson, I also learned many times that I haven't trusted my husband either. Now that fear take hold of me when he was trying to lead me.

[52 : 40] And I had to realize through that that he also had thoughts of peace and not of evil. He was trying his best to give the best to me and the children.

But I had had a hard time trusting. And God is continuing to grow me and calm my fears when I ask him. I'm thankful for the heartache and the trials he has allowed in my life to bring me closer to him.

And for showing me how to be there for my husband and to be faithful and for teaching me how to be led. And for all the many friends that he has brought into my life to encourage me along the way.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[54 : 26] Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

falling asleep crying. I didn't dare to ask for help. I wish somebody would ask me if I was a believer and I would feel like I could trust that person and share my heart and ask for help.

In 1999, in February, we had a week of revival meetings at our church. Every evening's message felt like it was preached to me.

[56 : 24] I felt so convicted and I longed for peace in my heart. On Friday that week, they had an altar call and while they had the invitation, we were singing a song and this song said, Today God is calling you, but you don't know about tomorrow.

That's where I decided to give my life to Jesus, to just humble myself and accept him and I did and I finally found peace and a new journey started.

In June that same year, I got baptized upon my confession of faith. In the same year, in August, I became a teacher in school.

I was very, very young, but there was a shortage of teachers. School had actually already started and they asked me if I would be willing to teach and I loved children. And that class was very, very undisciplined.

It was very hard, something I had never seen, but I loved the children and I started teaching. Every morning, I would come to school rejoicing and ready for a new day and I was walking with Jesus and in the evening, I came home exhausted.

[57 : 47] I didn't know what to do. I prayed for my students a lot and many times during the day, I would cry out to the Lord for help and wisdom. And in September, exactly a month into teaching, I broke my knee while playing soccer and that was an answer to my prayer.

I didn't understand. But I learned that God's ways are way higher than ours and as Romans 8.28 says, all things work together for good to those that love the Lord.

After that, the students were different. They respected and obeyed me. That was a year of learning to trust the Lord and I got a very close relationship with my Lord and Savior through that hardship.

I felt very blessed, although I couldn't walk properly for several years. In 2002, I got married to Dietrich and we are blessed to be happily married and the Lord has richly blessed us with five children and our desire is to serve the Lord.

Thank you, sir. Thank you, sir, Thank you, sir, Thank you, sir, Thank you, sir, Thank you, sir, Thank you, sir, Thank you, sir, Thank you, sir, Thank you, sir, Thank you, sir, Well, good morning. My name is Diedrich.

[59 : 13] And I'm going to shift this whole thing a little bit now, because until now we had the testimonies that came from the old colony, and I'm from the Sommerfelder. So, but one thing I will say, if you are from the Sommerfelder background, you need Jesus as your Savior.

So I'm born also and raised in Mexico. And my parents had ten children, and I'm the third youngest. So, you know, I had many instructors, but I had only one father.

My childhood was normal. I went to the village school. I did fairly well in school, just not with math.

But I was normal. I was probably the last three years, I was the top student in school. So memorizing reading was not a problem.

I love reading. And I kept on reading even after school. And I guess that's why I'm still kind of able to read.

[60 : 25] My parents did not go to church. My dad said, you look at the neighbors, they go to church all the time and it doesn't make a difference at all. He was right. If you just hear and don't do, it doesn't do any good.

So that meant that I was not in public, very much at home. After school, I ended school at 14, which was a little high for the most of the children would end school earlier.

But I loved school, so it wasn't a big deal to me, even though I was looking forward to be out of school. Since I'm the third youngest, there was obviously older siblings.

And there was the youngest five are boys, so I was in the middle there. I have two older brothers that are quite a bit older. And as they went to youth and lived that life that the youth were living in alcohol and evil, my parents made the decision that the youngest boys would not go from that young age.

So that is where a separation kind of happened in my family, where basically have been kind of two families for most of the time. We youngest five boys were different.

[61 : 58] Because we were not out there with the youth as everybody else. In that young age, once we came to the age that my parents would allow us, we were not accepted, which is a great blessing.

Not at that time. We didn't like it. We were yelled at. I have been beaten upon, even though I had never done anybody anything. And I look back, and I marvel that God is working with unbelievers.

He's not limited. My parents did not believe. They were not born again when they made that decision. But they saw something. And that turned the youngest five away from that colony, away from those people, to a different church where we learned and where we were taught, where we had the gospel preached.

I joined the church when I was 18. So when I started going to church, I was about 16-ish. I had hardly been in church before that. I was reading at home.

I was reading missionary stories. And I loved especially testimonies where people were saved. And that was such an amazing thing to me. I saw that, but to me, somehow it didn't caught me that I could be the same.

[63 : 21] So I was 18 when I joined the church, but I struggled with salvation. I didn't have it clear. I wanted to be a good person, but, you know, it doesn't work.

And we got married in 2002. Moved to Canada in 2008 with two little boys. At first, we didn't have a church to go to because I did not know really any English at all.

But after a while, we looked around, and we came in contact with some people that are here. And we went to a couples night. And somewhere down the line, there was a brother that's sitting in the group here.

And he asked me a question, are you born again? And I did not like that question. I didn't know. If I would say yes, I would lie.

And if I'd say no, then he would ask, why not? Or do you want to? And so I don't know if I gave him an answer. So they came over, and he explained the gospel to me.

[64 : 30] But I had heard it all over. I knew it, but didn't do anything. Then it was in 2009. I worked together with the same brother and some others. And Fairview at the U of A, we were setting up those grain bins.

And we stayed there overnight because it was a long drive back and forth every day. And then we had a Bible study there at lunchtime. We were in 1 Corinthians, I believe.

And we were just talking there. And somehow I opened up. And there was a question that I asked that person. And he answered me so different that I was like, this is weird.

And that's where I saw that I was negative. My dad was negative, and so I was imitating him as we heard this message. Like, I had that role model as a negative.

I had never seen a beautiful rock, a stone, because we had to pick rocks and the field. And that was a curse. I had never seen anything like that. And that was actually starting to change when we got married, because Betty, she saw some beautiful things that I'd never seen.

[65 : 37] So that was negative and negative. And I was negative about myself. And that's the question I had. And he said, where do you get those thoughts from?

And that's where I saw I had listened to the wrong voice. I need to turn to a positive source of thoughts. So somehow God saw my heart there, and he changed my heart.

And which all of you that have experienced that, you know that you cannot hide that. You cannot hide the peace and the joy that you get once that burden is off of your back.

Doubting for years and years and struggling, and that is all gone. Victory is won. When I came home, my family noticed that there was something different.

That Sunday we had a small group coming together, and they didn't like me very much. Because they thought that I just imitated somebody else, because I was praising God.

[66 : 38] Because 2 Corinthians 5.17 says that there is a new creation. The old thing is gone. The old thing is gone. In 2010, I got baptized upon my faith.

And that's where I started learning. God opened my understanding to Scripture. But at that time, there was a small church in Highton. So we were there, part of that.

And that's where I started my journey as a Christian. And what I did is I did children's lessons. We didn't have Sunday school, so I did children's lessons, which was a very good start for a young Christian to study Bible stories and then telling it to children.

Children don't mind if you don't know everything. And so it was my journey. As a new believer, I did that for a while. And we have been active in church doing things with children, with youth, and also as preaching.

We came here just over a year ago, starting attending this church. We came with hurt. We came with disappointments and all kinds of stuff.

[67 : 57] But I would say thank you. We have been tremendously blessed by you all. And our desire is to take membership.

Not that we cannot be a blessing without it. But our desire is to pass on that blessing that you have been to us. We love you all. And God be with you all.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[69 : 50] Thank you. We are from the old Summerfowler too, not just you, Didi. As good as we could and got baptized, we were going to church almost every Sunday, but it wasn't sufficient.

After 10 years of marriage, we came at the point that everything broke down, and I ran away from home. I left my wife and our kids behind. I don't even know how I could do it.

I lost almost 7 years, my wife and our kids, to be with them, to be there for them when the kids were growing up, to play with them, spending time together, but I allowed Satan to steal it away.

A month later, I left. People catch me, and they took me to a Christian rehab, Luce Mi Camino, what means light in my way.

She also came to be there, but the first 10 days being there, I was so upset, because in my opinion, it wasn't the place for me to be.

[71 : 16] Because I didn't have any problem with alcohol or drugs, that I wanted to break everything down, to get out of there. But I wasn't able to do it, because God didn't want me to leave.

He wanted me to get to know Him. And I learned lots out of the Bible, about salvation, and I had to realize and to recognize that I had never been a Christian.

It was hard to believe. It was so disappointing. I grew up thinking that we as Mennonites were Christians.

Until all days, my father was, he is, a pastor in that old Somerfelder church. And now to see that it wasn't so, but I came at the point that I, that I accept Jesus as my Lord and Savior.

By the time when we left the rehab, we had lots of hope that we would start a new life, and everything will be okay. So, leaving the rehab, that's where we were facing the trials.

[72 : 42] And somehow I couldn't handle it. I had too much doubts. We didn't really have a church where we could attend to get encouragement and to grow.

Somehow, or for some reason, I can overcome what had been happening in my life. Sometimes I think it might be that I didn't have the proper counseling to get healed, or maybe to let things go.

I don't know, but the thing is, I felt like everybody was against me, and nobody could understand me, and stuff like that.

I turned away from what I had learned, and turned into, and turned into my old life again. And so, I left again, and they excommunicated me from the church for a valid reason.

And I decided to start the process of the divorce, and they catch me again. But now they put me in a different rehab. It was really, really hard to be there.

[73 : 59] There was so much discipline. It was almost impossible to do it. And if we couldn't do it, then we got punished so bad.

And so on. And they didn't give us enough food. I really suffered hunger there. And to leave that rehab, I had to cancel the process of the divorce.

But leaving that rehab, I was even worse than before. I got so bitter against people that call themselves Christians, because they told me that God had sent them to put me in that rehab.

And I thought it wasn't lining up with what the Bible says. So I left again, and started again with the divorce. I hurt my wife so much, and I also hurt kids.

They didn't understand what was going on. I got the divorce. I got married with another lady. Now I would live my life how I wanted to.

[75 : 10] I thought it would be fun, but it wasn't. I fall on drugs. I hurt myself so much, and I really miss my family so much.

But pride, bitterness, and unforgiveness didn't allow to humble myself. I lost my documents to cross the border between Mexico and the United States.

I depended on those documents to work. I became almost homeless until I could stop drugging. After a couple years living so, I stopped drugging, and then I was able to get my documents again, and I started working again in the United States.

And I started to spend lots of time alone in the semi-truck. In the beginning, I still didn't want to know something from spiritual things.

Oftentimes, I felt that I should stop, that I should give up. I was scared oftentimes, often that when my phone would ring, it would be bad news that something happened to one of our kids.

[76 : 38] I would feel so guilty that I wasn't there for them. But I pushed away as good as I could. And I couldn't be happy anymore.

Well, I never could be truly happy. I pretended to be. And I had lots of time to think things through and ask myself why I'm doing what I'm doing.

And why did I make those bad decisions? Why? Why? Why?

And the time was going by. I was driving almost always by nighttime.

I was going through hard times. Lots of times I was crying and driving and wishing it was different.

[77 : 52] But it wasn't. I miss my family so much. They were alive. And so many people had lost their loved ones.

They couldn't have them back anymore. By that time I felt it was too late for me. And probably my family wouldn't want me back after so long living without me.

And their lives. I thought that I had lost everything. By that time I recognized already that the problem was me.

My pride, bitterness, and unforgiveness. And through listening to messages on the radio, watching some testimonies, I said to myself, I want to change my life.

And I would like to live for Jesus. With my family or without. And sadly, my brother, Johan, gave me a phone call.

[79 : 17] Sorry. Sorry. Sorry. and I told him that I was tired I was tired with my life and that I wanted to change it but I didn't want him to tell it to somebody because I felt so unsure if I would be able to do it and a couple of days later, Esther, my wife also gave me a phone call we had a long time but we didn't talk to each other the first thing what she was asking me how have you been doing how is it going and I couldn't hold it back

I also told her that I was tired of my life and I wanted to change it and she got so excited that she wanted to know when when it would happen and I didn't know what to say because I didn't want to disappoint her because that is what I had been doing for so long it was in April 2023 and in September 2023 I went to Manitoba for a week to visit her and our kids and that just gives me so much encouragement and strength to take another step I'm convinced that prayers are powerful my wife my wife and our kids and the church from Manitoba was praying for me when I went back to Mexico to start with divorce and to bring to an end everything what I had started over there it was something about

I had been thinking for so long how it would be and in my eyes it would it was going to be impossible and now it wasn't it was way easier than what I ever thought and in a short period of time I got the divorce and I just saw how God was answering prayers but I still didn't have peace and I didn't know what to do either because years before I had to accept Jesus and what should I do now I talked to my brother Johan he didn't exactly know what to say but one thing he said to me we have to be sure that we have Jesus I talked to Esther and she didn't know either how to help me but she said to me pray and God will show you and I did it and I was listening to evening service messages one after another and on the October 7th

Israel got attacked and October 10th 2023 in the morning I was in Tennessee the United States on my way to New York I was talking to Esther and we were talking about Israel's attack and she said it is a sign that Jesus is coming back soon and I'm so happy for that she said and I already was thinking just don't ask me how I feel about it and she asked me right away what about you how do you feel about it and I had to be honest I said to her that I didn't like it or I didn't I didn't feel feel good at all I still didn't know what to do to get peace and the end of the phone call and I started to listen to another message

Pastor Juanito Wolf from Mexico was doing the message and he also was talking about Israel and that that is a sign that Jesus is coming soon and he said there are many people what they're asking why wouldn't he come already and he said maybe the reason is that the amount of believers isn't complete yet maybe it is only you would have to come to the cross and surrender your life and commit it to Jesus and in that moment it was like it broke true I felt that this was the moment for what I was waiting so bad and in a couple of miles there was a truck stop and I just came there to stop and I fall on my knees and start begging for forgiveness forgiveness

[85 : 29] I said to Jesus I had run from you for so long but now I'm here from now on I will do what you may want to do but forgive me my sins and I start confessing all my sins one by one what I could remember the tears were just flowing and somehow I felt I couldn't get connection with Jesus until I asked for forgiveness for being so irresponsible to my wife and our kids with what he had blessed me and he had mercy with me and at that moment I felt a peace coming to my heart when I stood up from there I felt just so good that I started praising the Lord for what he had done for me and how he guided me to come to that point

I would like to read Psalm 32 verse 5 verse 4 and 5 day and night your hand of discipline was heavy on me my strength evaporated like water in the summer heat finally I confessed all my sins to you and stopped trying to hide my guilt I said to myself I will confess my rebellion to the Lord and you forgive me all my guilt is gone and has it been easy from there on no it hasn't but with God's help I can come forward I have to humble myself so often and go in prayer and God answers prayers and I was still smoking and had smoked for many years and I got to understand that that wasn't good that was not good because now

I am a temple of God the Holy Spirit and I should take care of my body and I decided to stop smoking and I kept a couple cigarettes for it if it would be too tough then I'll take one and it was so tough that I couldn't handle it for a couple days I just didn't know how to do it to come true and I talked again to Astor telling her how tough it was and her answer again was pray and God will help you okay and I I go in prayer again telling God how it was going and I said to him you know me you see me help me please and while I was praying came into my mind you left the door a little bit open for Satan okay

I said if that is so I will close the door completely and I did it and God stepped in and helped me from that moment on I've never again had a desire to smoke the next thing is we still weren't together I was in the United States and Astor and the kids were in Manitoba and we didn't still know where we want to go to live when we start to live together again as a marriage I had asked Johan before if here at the farm could be an opportunity to work and that seems like here wasn't and we start praying and asking God for opening a door for us and suddenly Johan gave me a phone call and he told me that now here was an opportunity oh we were so surprised we almost couldn't believe it and then in a couple days or in a week later

I got an opportunity in Seminole Texas so that was interesting so now what are we going to do now and we was and I was doubting and doubting and I didn't really know what to do in Seminole I might be make more money but there was other things what we didn't like it what we what we didn't like that much than here and the kids didn't have ears to go to Seminole that was hard I didn't really want to make a mistake and we was praying and praying for an answer suddenly I heard a short message or a devotion and it was about money that money shouldn't have the first place in our lives and there it was where I got a clear clear answer don't run after the money the first thing

[91 : 33] I did I gave Esther a phone call to tell her that I had a clear we were going to live where we where we are going to live and that we are going to Alberta so in December 2023 she and the kids came from Manitoba and we met us in El Paso Texas from there we went to Mexico to celebrate Christmas at her parents house and at my parents house and we got married again thank you and in January 2024 we came together to Canada first to Manitoba to pack everything up from Manitoba here to Alberta and start to live together again has it been easy no we were still sensitive we were still sensitive in many areas we got hurt so easy from each other but with Jesus

Christ our Lord and Savior in our midst everything is possible he helped us through and we had to learn how to bring things and hurt to the cross and leave it there and forgive each other so that we could be healed and I'm so thankful for my family thanks God for Esther forgiving me her and I'll it has been such a big blessing to attend at this church all this time what we are here we have made good friends we feel like home our wish and prayer is that we also could be a blessing for this church

Good morning everyone.

My name is Esther. I was born in Chihuahua, Mexico. I grew up in Colonia Manzanilla.

I had six siblings growing up with. I had a good childhood. In my youth I struggled. I broke my leg when I was 16.

[94 : 35] I got four surgeries from 16 till 19. But I am so glad I have my leg. I can walk. And at 21 I met my husband Jacob.

And we got married when I was 23. We lived together for around 10 years. God blessed us with three kids.

At that time he decided to leave me due to the deep bitterness and hurt. At the time we went in Central Lucemi Camino for help for our struggles.

We had several classes every day. Classes for our struggles and to help us to grow in our belief.

This is where I became a believer, a child of God. At the beginning of October 2016, one day late in the evening, I fell on my knees. I asked Jesus for forgiveness for my sin and asked him to come into my life.

[95 : 47] I was in a room with 20 ladies. Our evenings were not very quiet, so it was late when I finally got the privacy in my prayer time.

At this time, I kneeled in prayer, cried out to Jesus.

I fell into a deep sleep right there and then. I stayed in this deep sleep without stirring all night. I awoke rested in peace still.

Based on first round 5 verse 11 to 13. And this is the testimony that God has given us eternal life.

And this life is in his son. He who has the son has life. He who does not have the son of God does not have life.

[96 : 47] These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the son of God. That you may know that you have eternal life.

And that you may continue to believe in the name of the son of God. And first drawn 9, 1 verse 9. If you confess your sins, he is faithful just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

It became very important and clear to me that I am saved by faith and not by works. In December, we were done our time in Central.

We came home. And we were home from December to March. And then he left again. I stayed in our house with our kids.

People around me noticed that I had changed spiritually. I lived among religions, not believers. And my change was not welcome. It was judged.

[98 : 05] This was very hard for me. One difficult evening, a friend sent me a scripture. Psalm 37. And this was a huge help to me to look up to Jesus and not to the people around me.

My friends started laughing at me and mocking me. One day I was reading 1 Peter chapter 4.

And then verse 4. In regard to these, they think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipations, speaking evil of you.

This reminds me that this is normal for former friends to do this. I felt alone and as a burden to many places I went, whether to church or to weddings or any social gatherings.

Some people turned their back to me and did not wish to associate with me. This became so hard that it affected my mental health.

[99 : 24] To the point, I questioned where I should take my next step. I felt like they would take everything away from me, what I learned.

And the same through, I became a believer and all that. But I was, I keep on reading the Bible. And I was reading John chapter 10.

Verse 28 and 29. And I gave them eternal life. And they shall never perish, neither shall anyone snatch them out of my hand.

My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all. And no one is able to snatch them out of my Father's hand. This greatly encouraged me.

This reassured me that my salvation was secure. And no one could fear me away from the gift, no matter what they did.

[100 : 39] The kids and me moved two hours from our home. I worked at the cotton gin 12-hour days.

This was very hard for me, taking care of my kids and working six days a week for 12-hour days.

My husband asked for a divorce at this time. This was very hurtful. I could not understand why that would happen this way.

This was not what I had wanted. I truly struggled. Going to that office, I was praying the whole way when I was going there.

When I came to that door, I threw myself in God's hands. And I said to him, You should carry me.

[101 : 40] And after I was done working at the cotton gin, my parents bought me a little fabric store.

Many ladies came to visit my little fabric store. I could have spiritually lifting up conversations. That was a huge help for me.

But I realized I came short every day. My brother advised me to read 1 John 2, verse 1. My little children, these things I read to you so that you may know you may not sin.

And if anyone sins, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteousness. This gave me a lot more hope.

A church and revival meetings close by that I desire to attend. I could not attend due to the religion people around me.

[102 : 47] One morning, I quietly meet with the pastor and his wife of these revival meetings. To have told them my difficult story and my testimony.

He asked me many questions about my life and about my husband. If I still love him after all the hurt. I said, yes, I still love Jacob.

He advised me, praying for him and tried to get healed from the pain. After a while, my hurt deepened and Jacob got remarried.

My hope for his return was gone. Luke, chapter 1, verse 37. And God, all things are possible.

Trust in God, all things are possible. In my eyes, there was no hope.

[104 : 07] After a year, God opened doors for me and the kids that we could move to Manitoba.

That was a very exciting new start for me. We started attending church there, but I did feel not very welcome as a single mom there.

COVID came and the church closed. We had friends. I had friends from a different church who welcomed me warmly into their church.

I felt wanted and appreciated there. I lived in my aunt and uncle's house. One day I got bad news that my aunt died in an accident.

My uncle died five hours later due to the accident. Also due to the accident. It was a very dark time and I fell into a negative pattern.

[105 : 19] All my hurts, past hurts and bitterness resurfaced again. I could no longer feel my peace that I had found in Jesus.

I started spending lots more time asking God to show me where my peace went. I wanted it back.

One Sunday, the pastor said in his message that we should be always ready to have in our prayer what it says in Psalm 139 verse 23.

Search me, O God, and know my hurts. Try me and know my anxieties. That made my life even harder. I went to a lady for health care and she was a very nice lady.

I shared with her a lot of my story and hurts. One day she said to me, I can hear what you need. I know you are not a person who would like to hold a grudge against people on purpose.

[106:31] But since you got hurt this deeply, I would say to you that you should write down all the people's names who have hurt you and what they did to hurt you.

Then throw this in the fire pit and pray then to God. Give him this burden. Instead of writing it down, after I brought my kids to school, I brought these names and hurts to God in prayer.

I spent six hours that my children were in school in prayer with God. After this day, I had regained my peace in Jesus.

I felt so happy that I felt like jumping around and praising the Lord. People around me changed so much from that day on.

I could go to work, but that deep peace. I felt so glad that I had such a good place to work, such good friends to work with.

[107:40] I also had very good friends in church that are good friends to this day. I attend Bible study, which I really enjoyed.

In September of 2022, we started the Book of Revelations in a Bible study. In January, we continue our Bible study and revelations.

At the first study of the new year, 2023, the pastor's wife said how it is that we wish to either push or pull our loved ones into heaven, but that is not our work.

We are to give that work to God. I saw clearly that this is what I was doing. I wanted so badly that my whole family could be one day together in heaven.

When we were going home, I said to my kids, I had grasped something that day, and I said that we wanted to let Jacob go and give him into God's hands.

[108:56] Once we got home, and I was to myself, I said to God, that I gave my husband into your hands, not my will, but your will be done.

That made my life so much happier. I felt like I brought a big burden to the Lord and also brought joy to my kids.

We look forward to the future with joy and what it could bring. A lady asked me if I would join her in fasting and praying.

We fasted of certain things. For three weeks, we decided this time to pray. God made a big difference in her life.

And this was a big encouragement for me to do this again. In April, we did this again for three weeks. The first week of this fast on Tuesday, the Spirit started working hard on me.

[110:11] I was to call Jacob, ask him how he was doing. I was too proud. I had made up my mind that I never would call him and ask him how he was doing.

After a week, I asked my sister, who was married to Jacob's brother, if she had heard anything lately from Jacob. She said she only knows that he is not happy.

Then I humbled myself and sent him a message, asked if I could talk to him. He answered back immediately, yes, gladly.

Could I talk to him? I talked to him, and I told him that the Holy Spirit had worked in me and prompted me to reach out to him and ask him how he was doing.

He said he was completely tired of his life, what he was living. He would like to have his family back. He asked if there was a chance for him to regain his family.

[111:23] But he acknowledged that I had my full right to say no. As this was a part what he had done, I told him that no, that's perhaps what you think.

But I do not have the right. I and the kids, many people prayed so much for him, and God has heard our prayers.

He said that he would, he was welcome. He then said that if he was welcome, he might, he wanted, it might take till December, but I, but he would then come back, come home.

I thought that was a long time, but that is how it happens. The children and I went to Mexico, but we met in El Paso before we did go to Mexico to join there.

We remarried and we came back to Manitoba together as a family. We then packed our home in Manitoba and moved to Alberta in January 14th, 2024.

[112 : 56] This is where we now live, and we are very thankful for our job and for what God has done in our life.

Has life just been easy during this time? No, it hasn't. But I am so thankful that we are both children of God, and we can have a transparent relationship, and we can be there for each other.

We praise God for who he is and what he has done.