

My Testimony

Charles Robert Williamson

I was born and raised in Southern Ontario in the city of Windsor, which borders with Detroit, Michigan. My family was involved in the golf-course business (owing and operating a championship course and later building our own) and this dominated my early life. There was not a lot of time for spiritual things, although my mother made several attempts to give me a Sunday School experience. Our attendance was sporadic and very little of the training “stuck”.

We moved to the state of Hawaii in 1977 to follow my father’s dream. He became deathly ill there and was hospitalized for four months. Alcohol had destroyed his pancreas. I began to pray to the Lord during those dark days, although it could hardly be said that I “knew the Lord”. My father eventually recovered from his sickness (this in itself was viewed as miraculous – the doctors in Hawaii simply did not know how to treat this illness at the time – no one had ever survived his condition and his case was eventually written up in text books!) but in order to pay the medical expenses, we were forced to return to Canada. I entered high school, just outside of Windsor and met what would become my best friend. He and his family were strong evangelical Christians and they gave me my first insight as to what a Christian family really looked like. Their relationships were genuine and their faith was manifested every day of the week. Ten years of this daily testimony would eventually soften my heart.

I entered the University Of Windsor bent on becoming an electrical engineer. However, I also learned here how to drink and like my father, alcohol quickly began to dominate my life. My university days were filled with depression. School was challenging and it took a great deal of focus to finally obtain my degree.

Prospects for an engineering job in Windsor were poor. I was working at a golf course after graduation, when I enter a week long period of deep despair. It was during this time that I finally cried out to God ... and told Him that if He were real, I wanted to know Him and serve Him. Immediately, there was a literal sense of weight being slid off my shoulders. My outlook changed. Within days of this, I received a call from one of my university professors who told me about a job in Windsor that was suited to my expertise and skills. I did not even realize that this professor knew my name. I still do not know how he managed to find my telephone number (only later, did I find out that he too was an evangelical Christian).

I was offered the job immediately and it was here that I met a man who invited me to a Pentecostal church. I wrestled with accepting the invitation but when I finally said yes, I was warmly received and within two services, I had committed my life to Christ. Not only did I have a great alter experience, but I then went home to my apartment and had a long talk with Christ. It was a glorious time.

I was painfully shy and occupied the back row of the church for months. Ministry began for me when I volunteered for work in the sound booth. I quickly learned the entire system and became head of the technology department at the church. I was invited to do the sound for a youth cantata and was then introduced to a group of young people that would radically challenge my walk with the Lord. A small group of us began to meet twice a week to study the Word and to pray. Prayer would last at least an hour and it would be passionate. It was here that I began to seek for the Baptism in the Holy Spirit. After several months, the Lord granted to me His presence and at a Sunday evening alter time, all alone, I was

blessed to speak in an unknown tongue. The manifestation that night lasted hours. Again, an incredible time with the Lord.

My personality changed that week. When the pastor asked for a testimony the following Sunday, I hung out the sound room window to tell the people what God had done for me. The introvert had become an extrovert! I was later invited to preach a youth group service. I knew nothing of preaching, and the message was poor. But a young man gave his heart to the Lord that night.

I eventually gave up my engineering job and took on the position of Youth Pastor/Associate Pastor in the Church of God in Windsor. I had opportunity to serve with three senior pastors over that time and learned much. I completed my MIP training in Flint Michigan. Eventually I would complete two levels of license with the Church of God, also completing a Youth Ministerial certification. Aside from my church duties, I worked part time and ran InterSchool Christian Fellowship (a branch of IVCF) for four years, where I got to be in a high school meeting every day of the week.

After seven years in Windsor, I felt that the Lord had told me to resign, and give notice on my apartment. I did these without knowing where things would lead. This was September 1, 1996 and by the middle of October, I still had no idea where I was going. While studying an atlas of Canada, I came across a place called Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. I had never been there before but something was causing me to pay attention. Suddenly, the phone rang and it was the senior pastor of the Saskatoon Church of God, offering me a position. My resume had made it into his hands, by the grace of God. After several days of prayer, I consented to come. I have pastored the Saskatoon Church of God ever since. It was here that I became an Ordained Bishop.

It was during this time that the Lord opened up a door for me to get to know a beautiful young lady living three hundred miles away. After many e-mails, phone conversations and visits, she consented to be my wife. The Lord has blessed us with two wonderful children.

Through-out this period in my life, the Lord has opened awesome doors of ministerial opportunity. I have had the honour of serving on five different leadership boards (IVCF, Youth For Christ, State Council, Saskatoon City-Wide Good Friday Service), worked closely with several community organizations and have been blessed to get to know hundreds of people in our city.

At the beginning of January (2009), my wife and I resigned our commission at the Saskatoon Church of God, believing that it was His will for us to move into a different direction. Since that time, I have been working at a Pentecostal Bible college in Saskatoon, and seeking the will of the Lord for our family.