

My parents were both from a little town in the thumb of Michigan named Port Hope. In the late 1950's, after they were married, they moved to California. Everyone was moving to California, the land of opportunity. My brother and I were born there. My parents were what I call nominal Lutherans. What I mean by that is, if you asked them what church they were a part of, they would have told you the Lutheran Church, but the truth is, our family only went on Easter and Christmas Eve.

My mother always told me that I was baptized as an infant in the Lutheran Church, but something happened recently that told me that wasn't exactly true. My mom gave me an envelope of old photographs and newspaper articles that she thought I would like to have. Among the items was a newspaper clipping telling how my brother, Ed Johnson, age 5, and Dean Johnson, age 4, had been baptized on the same Tuesday afternoon at the Port Hope Lutheran Church. Dean Johnson, age 4...? Baptized on a Tuesday afternoon...?

So I called my mom and said, "You always told me I was baptized as an infant in the Lutheran Church! We lived in California! What was going on?" So my mom spilled the beans. She said, "When Ed was 5 and you were 4, we took you kids on a train ride back to visit your grandparents in Michigan. When we got there, your grandparents asked me if you'd ever been properly baptized. When I said no, they immediately got on the phone to the local Lutheran pastor. On that Tuesday afternoon we took you both over to the church, and you were sprinkled at the same time."

So now we were good Lutherans. Except we still never went to church!

Well, when I was 5, my parents gave up on the California dream and moved back to Michigan. We moved to Berkley, the suburb north of Detroit, where my dad got a job as a fireman.

Soon a family named Knue moved in next door to us, and they were one of those Christian families who invited everyone in the neighborhood to ride with them to attend their church. For some

reason, I took them up on their offer. I was the only one in my family who went. It was the Memorial Baptist Church, on Lincoln Avenue in Royal Oak. There was an older lady named Mrs. Paul who was my Sunday School teacher. I don't know how old she was--she could have been only 50, but she seemed old to me at the time!

At the end of every Sunday School lesson--no matter what the lesson had been about--she would tell us how the Bible says we have all sinned, but Jesus died on the cross to pay for our sins, and he invites us to accept him and to believe in him as our savior. Then every Sunday, Mrs. Paul would say, "I'm going to stay after class. If you would like to accept Jesus as your savior, please stay after class and I will pray with you." Then she would dismiss the class.

I don't know why, but suddenly one Sunday when I was 10, it all made sense. I decided to stay after class and pray with Mrs. Paul. On that Sunday morning, praying with Mrs. Paul in that upstairs Sunday School classroom, I trusted Jesus as my savior. I didn't know all the Biblical theology at the time, but the Bible would say at that moment I passed from "death" to "life", from "darkness" to "light." I went from being lost in my sins to being what the Bible calls "saved."

I love Ephesians 2:8 & 9, "For by grace you are saved through faith. And that is not of yourself, it is a gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast."

There is a Jewish holiday called Yom Kippur, which means "The Day of Atonement." It was a religious observance where the priest took a goat and symbolically laid all the people's sins on it, then sent the goat out into the wilderness. It was a picture of what God would eventually do for his people, bearing all their sins. When I think about that day in my Sunday School class, it seems that that was my Yom Kippur, my "Day of Atonement."

Let me quickly tell you a bit more about myself and how I became pastor here at Lake Pointe Bible Church. I went to Cedarville University in Ohio, where in 1983 I received my

Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science, with minors in Bible, Greek, cross-country and girls. OK, those last two aren't true. But I was--and still am--a runner, and I did meet my wife Crystal at Cedarville. She is a Physician Assistant (a PA).

We were married in 1986 while I was a student at Grand Rapids Baptist Seminary (now called Cornerstone Theological Seminary). In 1988, I received my Master's of Divinity degree from there, and then we moved to Peoria, Illinois, where for 6 years I was Youth Director at the South Side Mission. Then I was Associate Pastor of Youth and Outreach for 6 1/2 years at Mt. Olive Missionary Church.

In December of 2003 I completed my Doctor of Ministry degree through Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, north of Chicago.

We have 3 gorgeous, brilliant children: Quintanya, Tyrin, and Charissa. We live in Plymouth Township. I've been pastor of Lake Pointe since December of 2001.

Thanks for letting me share!