

Pieter: New Life in Christ. Does your life mean anything? I had to ask myself that question and I can say that now although it wasn't like that always. This is my story:

I was raised in a good Christian home with good values and discipline. We were very regular church goers although I always felt forced and didn't do it because I had the need.

When I was 15 I basically fell from a roof, face first into a concrete floor. I tore my C1 neck vertebra's ligaments. The specialist that put me through the CAT scan said that this was too specialized for her and that she would contact the specialist from the big city. At that stage my older brother was involved with a mission group and after hearing the news he started a prayer chain and a bunch of teenagers prayed for me and between a cat scan and a MRI, my neck was completely healed.

Having a concussion, I can't remember much. The whole experience was like a dream and I can only remember puzzle pieces in the whole experience. One of the puzzle pieces was this; I was in a place with intense white light. I tried to look at my hand but I couldn't see it. I panicked... I don't know if the light was too intense that I couldn't see or if my body wasn't there. Then I started to prod around trying to sense this unfamiliar place. I felt/ experienced love, peace... I thought to myself that I wanted to stay in this place. The next thought that popped into my mind was that I needed to go back for my work was not finished. Then I woke up in ICU.

After I heard what had happened I felt compelled to give my heart to Jesus. A couple of weeks later I prayed the sinner's prayer as my brother attempted to lead me to Christ. This only lasted for a few weeks... there after I started to smoke and drink. My path crossed inhalants (benzene/ petrol/ thinners, anything to put you on a high) and also weed (luckily weed was the strongest thing I could get my hands on). Although I had no desire to live for Christ, I could see his grace. For instance; we would smoke weed the one day at a friend's house and the next day when I wasn't there, the cops would have a bust, catching my friends and I would not even be suspected. My life would continue like this until I had finished school.

When I was 19 I met a girl that was very involved in youth ministry and I changed my life for this girl... I was quickly made a leader and got to know the Lord in different ways than what I was used to (being a different denomination). Her mother had multiple personalities and she was in counselling at that time. I got to know a lot about the spiritual realm through her testimonies and through the time she had her struggles. Eph 6 started to make more sense to me because the denomination I was brought up in did not discuss/ teach anything about the spiritual realm. When the relationship between me and the girlfriend broke up due to pressure from her mother and due to sin, I backslid and found myself in my old lifestyle again. It is truly sad how we can so easily build our lives around the people or things we love. If those people or things are taken away, we will grab onto the first crutch we can find. My foundation wasn't in Christ yet, so I fell back to smoking, drinking and clubbing...

I really felt the urge to move on with my life and instead of moving on and working through the motions life has dealt me, I decided to move away from them. I got the opportunity to do some contract work in the big city. A family member needed to sort out there storage facility so I took the chance. The week contract was extended to a 6 month contract. As the contract drew closer to the end, I started to pray to God to supply me with a more stable job. I still had the attitude of "if You, then I would," that just confirmed that I still considered my life to be my own. Well, the Lord being gracious and compassionate, decided to give me a job that later on evolved into an IT manager's position.

Now I was sitting in a good place but I was not giving God any glory. Although there was still some church involvement, I never got involved serving in the church because it was still a feel good motion. My brother involved me in a cell group that I enjoyed thoroughly. The money was good, and I believed I was living a balanced life. I would go out clubbing with colleagues and friends, popping some E's and drinking profusely on the weekends and still show up for our weekly cell group meeting. After one of these heavy weekends, I got to cell group (still buzzing from the weekends endeavours). While we were engaged in a heated debate, one of

the cell members started to talk in a strange language that spoke directly to my heart. Although none of the cell attendance knew what was going on, I knew that the lie I was living was exposed. I realised for the first time in my life that what I was saying and what I was doing didn't match and it bugged me. For a few weeks I walked around feeling condemned. I decided I needed to change...

How does one change oneself not even asking the question what to change to? It is a very difficult thing if you do not have objectivity and knowledge. At least I knew where I could find some answer even if I couldn't ask the questions; the church. One of my friends asked me to go with him on a mission trip to Zambia. For the first time in my life I did something without expecting anything in return. I also decided to take the step of obedience and be baptized. This public declaration was very needed in my life and since then I can say that the ups and downs of life has changed into, "from glory to glory". I still make mistakes and it might look to other people that I backslide, but the Lord shows me what I do wrong and by grace I can repent and return to a Godly way. In this season I change from a self centred life to a Christ centred life.

I was tested immediately on this newly acquired Christ centred lifestyle on my return from the mission trip. I learned that the company I was IT Manager for was being liquidated and I was retrenched. I was immediately returned to my old ways and before the night was over, I returned to God on my knees. I started to a weeklong fast and prayer and felt that the Lord was sending me back to my home town, back to my parent's home. After 3 months I was involved in a drug ministry where I worked as a drug crisis intervention counsellor for 2 years. Ever since then I have been actively involved in ministry in some way or another and whenever I wasn't serving the body of Christ and furthering His kingdom I was miserable and returned to do His will instead of mine.

I can say; for me to live is Christ, to die is gain. Although I still struggle with a lot of issues, I know that through the help of the Holy Spirit I will conquer all that is put in front of me. I know that everything will work together for the good in my life, even if it doesn't seem that way at first or if I can never see it at all, because I love Jesus Christ with all my heart and I endeavour to see His will for my life to happen. I want my life to have everlasting value and the only way is in Christ.

I hope and pray that this may have an everlasting impact on your life. Jesus Christ saved me from a self destructive life; He is also mighty to save you...