

Chapter One



MY TESTIMONY

AS A CHILD, I was raised in Beachwood, a suburb of Cleveland, Ohio, in the heart of the Jewish community. Cleveland has one of the strongest Jewish populations in the country, although it isn't as big as New York City or Los Angeles. When I was growing up, Beachwood was approximately 90-95 percent Jewish; consequently, all my friends were Jewish. It wasn't that I sought to be friends with only Jewish people, it's just that we tend to gravitate toward those who are like ourselves.

Both my parents are Jewish, and they immersed me in the Jewish culture as a child. In Judaism, boys have a bar mitzvah at the age of 13, which is considered the age of accountability. They go through a ceremony at the temple in which they read from the Torah (the first five books of the Bible). The word *bar* means son, and *mitzvah* means commandment. So when a boy reaches the age of 13, he accepts the responsibility to become a son of the commandments.

Most Jewish people today are secular; for them, Judaism is not so much a religion as it is an identity, culture, and way of life. It's like being Italian or Catholic for some people. Although they identify themselves with the culture, it doesn't necessarily define their beliefs. For many Jewish people, it is very important to be

identified with the Jewish culture, though this doesn't necessarily define their belief in God.

Even though most Jewish men go through a bar mitzvah, they often stop attending synagogue on a regular basis afterward. You may hear a Jewish person say, "I'm Jewish from the top of my head to the bottom of my feet," but to them, being Jewish doesn't mean having a relationship with God. It's just a cultural identity and a connection to the Jewish community.

There are basically three branches of Judaism: Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform.

1. Orthodox: The orthodox branch strictly observes the Torah given to Moses at Mount Sinai.
2. Conservative: The conservative branch maintains the ideas in the Torah as coming from God, but believes the Law should adapt to the culture while remaining true to Judaic values.
3. Reform: The reform branch is the most liberal of the three branches. It doesn't accept the binding nature of the Law, but instead maintains a strong emphasis on supporting social causes and doing good works.

My bar mitzvah was held in a conservative temple; and in preparation for my bar mitzvah, I attended Hebrew school three times a week. The focus of my training was memorizing prayers, learning traditions, and reading Hebrew. I was never taught that I could have a personal relationship with God. My experience is not unique. Many temples do not teach the Jewish people that they can have a personal relationship with God. Their primary focus is on tradition and reading Hebrew. You will find a large population of Jewish people involved in cults, because their hunger for God often isn't satisfied through traditional Jewish education.

Not long ago, one of my family members attended temple, and as she spoke from the pulpit about having a relationship with God, she was rebuked by the rabbi who told her that Jews cannot intimately know God—they can only follow His commandments. As a result of this Jewish mindset, my Hebrew school experience was devoid of nurturing a personal relationship with God. I knew nothing about Jesus while growing up. I had received no Christian testimony or witness whatsoever in my life.

A CHAMPION GOAL

When I was in seventh grade, my family moved to a very wealthy area of Cleveland called Pepper Pike that had a large Jewish population, though it wasn't entirely Jewish. Again, all my close friends were Jews, except for one Italian friend who wore a big cross on a chain around his neck. Now you might think he was the person God used to bring the gospel message to me, but that isn't what happened. He wore the cross around his neck not because he was a Christian, but because the cross was an important symbol to him as an Italian. He was one of the toughest boys in school, and I used to follow him around just to watch him beat up other kids.

At the age of 13, I decided to get involved in the sport of wrestling. I had a cousin who wrestled, and I admired him. Because I was 5'6" I didn't have aspirations of becoming a great basketball or football star. But by the time I entered ninth grade, I was a pretty good wrestler. Wrestling became my identity. I was known as Kirt Schneider, the wrestler. Around my neck I wore a necklace with an image of a wrestler. I defined myself as a wrestler, and my goal was to become the Ohio State high school wrestling champion in my weight class.

Wrestling became so important to me that every night, as I was getting ready to go to sleep, I would turn the record player on and listen to the song *Southern Man* by Crosby, Stills, Nash, and

Young. While laying in bed listening to the music, I envisioned myself with my hand raised as the state champion. As I did that, chills would go through my body. In my young mind, becoming the state champion would be like conquering the world. I believed, once I had won, I would spend the rest of my life basking in the sunshine of my victory. I would celebrate the glory of it—and the rest of my life would be a piece of cake.

Up to this point in my life, I had never truly thought of life beyond wrestling; all I thought about was becoming the state champion. So when I walked off the wrestling mat after my last match as a high school senior, it was as if my world had been instantaneously pulled out from under my feet. Suddenly I realized I would be entering a world that was much bigger than people who wrestled 119 pounds and that wrestling didn't mean much in the real world. I lost my identity and purpose in life. I went from believing that I was on top of the world, to feeling very small. I was completely lost, and it was absolutely terrifying.

IDENTITY CRISIS

Although I never became the state champion, I did receive a small wrestling scholarship to the University of Tampa. My grades were okay, but I continued to suffer and struggle with my loss of identity and purpose. I spent as much time as possible sleeping just to escape the mental and emotional pain. Nothing excited me anymore. I longed for that feeling of contentment, the sense of power and control, and the identity and purpose that wrestling had given me during my high school years.

As I contemplated my future, I considered becoming a doctor, but I knew I didn't possess the necessary aptitude. I also considered becoming a lawyer, because I had good communication skills. I thought to myself, *I could be Kirt Schneider, the lawyer*; but then I considered, *What would happen if I became a successful lawyer*

and the time came when I would have to retire? Would I feel as lost as I did when wrestling ended? I couldn't get excited about becoming a lawyer, because I knew my life would be built on something, once again, that would eventually end—and I didn't want that to happen. I needed something in my life that would be permanent.

Yeshua spoke about building our lives on something permanent. He illustrated this principle by comparing two people: one who built his house on the Rock and the other who built his house on the sand.

Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash (Matthew 7:24-27).

When the wind and waves came, the person's house built on the Rock stood firm, but the person's house built on the sand stood firm for only awhile—then its foundation was washed away. If you are to stand firm when the wind and waves of life come against you, then you must build your life on a firm foundation. That foundation is Yeshua, the Rock of life.

At the time, I didn't know my thoughts were based on the words of Yeshua; I just knew I didn't want my life built on something that would be washed away again. I needed something in my life I could count on, something permanent; but I had no idea what it would be or where I would find it. I hadn't thought of God as the answer, because my experience growing up in the synagogue

hadn't nurtured or taught me about having a personal relationship with Him.

During this phase of my life, I believed if I became financially successful, it would help ease my pain and make me feel better about myself. Frankly, I knew wealth wasn't the answer. After all, I had grown up in an affluent neighborhood and observed that wealthy people still had problems like anyone else. They may not have had the same problems, but they still had problems. Even though I knew money didn't guarantee happiness and wouldn't solve my problems, I didn't know what else to do; so I dropped out of college in my second year to pursue the goal of becoming financially successful by opening a discotheque.

DISCOS AND ENCYCLOPEDIAS

It was 1978, and discos were really hot. You may remember John Travolta dancing in *Saturday Night Fever* under the crystal disco ball. People stood in lines a quarter mile long in Cleveland to get into a discotheque. I figured if I could start a disco in a fairly large community that didn't already have one, they would line up at the doors to get in.

To open the discotheque, I would need financing, and my plan was to obtain the necessary finances through friends of our family, who lived in the neighborhood. Once the finances were obtained, I would be part owner and be in charge of running the business. The main obstacle I encountered was securing investors. No one would invest in the disco, because they said I didn't have a solid business plan.

I knew that finding the right location would be the key to having a solid business plan, so I sold encyclopedias door to door to make money. That way I could travel throughout the Midwest looking for the perfect location for my discotheque.

I did fairly well selling encyclopedias; at the same time, I continued researching my disco venture. As I continued researching, I came to the realization that I lacked the necessary business knowledge and savvy to be successful at starting a discotheque, so I continued selling encyclopedias as I contemplated my future.

Eventually, I was promoted to sales manager and was given a team of people to train. One evening, I went to a meeting where six sales managers were to be in attendance. When I arrived, there was only one other sales manager there. As he and I waited for the others to arrive, he began to tell me about a book he had been reading called *Autobiography of a Yogi*. It sounded fascinating to me! He told me there was a yogi from India who could beat up tigers with his bare hands. I was so intrigued by the fantastic feats he said the yogi performed, that I went and bought the book. It was the first book I ever bought with my own money.

As I read the book, I was fascinated with all the miraculous and supernatural things this yogi claimed to do. There were even pictures of him supposedly levitating supernaturally above the ground. I didn't know if the pictures were done with trick photography or if he really was levitating.

As I was in awe of the pictures, I said, "God, if this is real, if he can really levitate off the ground, this is what I want to do with the rest of my life." Even though I did not have a faith that was established by any specific set of doctrines, I still had a strong faith that there was a God, even from childhood. I said to myself, *I will spend the rest of my life doing whatever I need to do so I can get to the place where I can levitate off the ground. This will be my new wrestling.* I knew if I could levitate my body, I would have tremendous bliss. This now became the focus of my life and a higher priority than making money.

OVERCOMING SPIRITUAL DARKNESS

One summer night in 1978, the Lord put a stop to my searching for the miraculous and supernatural in *Autobiography of a Yogi*. As I slept in my bed that night at Bremerton Road in Pepper Pike, Ohio, the Lord awoke me from my sleep. Even though my eyes were closed, I was aware I wasn't sleeping. I was in a state of conscious awareness, and it was as if I was being translated into another realm. I had not been drinking or taking drugs.

In an instant, Jesus Christ (Yeshua HaMashiach) appeared on the cross. The terrain was in color, and there were people in the distance looking at Him. Suddenly a ray of red light from the sky beamed straight down onto His head. I knew it was coming from God, since it was coming from above.

I had never experienced a vision before and never even thought about what a vision was, but I knew, somehow, that God had just revealed Himself to me and had shown me that Jesus (Yeshua) was the way to Him. No one had ever witnessed to me about Jesus, and I had never read the New Testament. As a Jew, I had been taught that Jesus was not for Jews; but as an American, I knew enough to know the person on the cross was Jesus.

When the vision ended, I got out of bed and looked at my clock radio. It was 3:30 in the morning. Again, I had never considered what a vision was, but I somehow knew I had just experienced one. Even though it only lasted a few seconds, I was so excited. I was 20 years old and had been so lost, searching for meaning and purpose in my life and trying to escape my fears. Now God had revealed Himself to me, showing me the answer!

As time went on, I came to realize that God had literally translated me 2,000 years back in time to visibly witness Yeshua being crucified. I came to this understanding while reading Luke 23:49, which describes the people who were watching

Him being crucified from “a distance.” In my vision, I specifically saw not only the color of the terrain in which the cross was staked, but also the people who were watching His crucifixion from “a distance.”

But all those who knew him, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things (Luke 23:49).

Since I had never been exposed to faith in Jesus, I didn't understand how He was the way to God, but eventually God would show me. In my excitement, I started telling everyone about the vision. Later, someone told me I should buy a New Testament. I did, and I began devouring it. It was like fire to me. As I read it, I realized the teaching was different from the book *Autobiography of a Yogi*, so I threw away the *Autobiography of a Yogi* and continued reading the New Testament. Praise God!

I realized the victory I had sought in life through wrestling is found in Yeshua. I started overcoming the spiritual darkness in my life; and as I pressed on in Him, I was continually strengthened. I began to ascend out of the darkness and into the light. I still have a long way to go, but He became my source of life, a river of living water within me.

Jesus answered, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life” (John 4:13-14).

Those of us who press on in Yeshua will be strengthened and will ascend to new heights by His Spirit. The spiritual darkness over our lives will break up, and one day we will sit on the clouds of glory with Yeshua HaMashiach, the King of glory, and we will reign with Him forever and ever and ever.

INITIAL REJECTION

On the morning I received the vision of Yeshua, I was so excited that God had revealed Himself to me that I started telling my entire family about the vision. Aside from my mom and dad, I have a brother who is one year younger and a sister who is four years younger. In my initial excitement and naivety, I believed they would be as excited as I was. I couldn't perceive Yeshua from any other point of view but my own.

My parents had faced anti-Semitism growing up, something I had never encountered. For this reason, I had no concept of what I would experience when I began to tell them about Jesus. At first, they didn't have much of a reaction. They probably figured it was only a dream and my excitement would subside in a couple of days. Instead, I started telling everyone about Jesus. I started pointing out certain Bible verses to my dad. Again, in my ignorance, I thought he would be as excited as I was. I was so eager and hungry to learn more about Jesus that I began attending churches throughout the city of Cleveland.

My parents were stricken with panic. In their minds, it was a shameful and terrible thing to have their son running all over the place talking about Jesus. Although Yeshua proclaimed that all people will know His followers by their love, what the Jewish people have experienced over the years from some in the Christian community is hatred and persecution—not love. Now their Jewish son was walking around their Jewish neighborhood telling all the neighbors about Jesus. I was a traitor to the Jewish community, a shameful and hard thing for my family to bear.

When my parents realized how serious I was about Yeshua and that this wasn't a passing phase, they hired the most famous deprogrammer in the country to kidnap and deprogram me. One day my dad invited me to go with him to a hotel to talk to a gentleman

about opening a restaurant. My dad said, “Maybe we’ll be in business together. Come with me to discuss opening a restaurant.”

That Sunday we drove to a hotel in the Beachwood area of Cleveland. As we walked into the hotel room, there were three people in the room. There was a short, distinguished-looking gentleman dressed in a three-piece suit who was in his 50s, and there were two other men, both over 6 feet tall and 200 pounds.

After we walked into the room, the door closed behind us, and the short distinguished-looking man, who I later learned was the head deprogrammer, said to me, “Kirt, we’re going to talk about cults.” Immediately, he turned on a projector that had been set up in the room and showed me a video about Hare Krishnas. He pointed to a four-year-old child in the movie and said, “You see that kid? There’s nothing I can do for him. All he’s known is Hare Krishna, and I can’t snap him out of it.”

He said to me, “You’ve been living for twenty years as a normal person, but now you’re constantly talking about Jesus, giving all your money to the church, and reading the most dangerous book in the world...the Bible. I’m going to snap you out of this.”

I said to him, “I’m not programmed by anyone; I just believe that Yeshua is the Messiah.”

He said, “Then you’ve got nothing to worry about.”

I asked him, “Can I leave?”

One of the big men said, “Sit down!”

I was trapped in the room. They allowed me to go to the bathroom; I got down on my knees and with my face on the floor, prayed, “Lord, I don’t know what’s ahead of me or what I’m about to go through, but please keep me as I go through it.”

We eventually left the hotel room, and one of the big men accompanied me to our house. He stayed with me continuously, even sleeping in my bedroom that night, so I couldn’t get away. The next day I was taken to a rehabilitation house in California. I

was there for two weeks. At the time, I felt badly for my parents, because I was sure it cost them a lot of money.

The rehabilitation house was run by the deprogrammer's son. My rehabilitation consisted of being taken to the beach every day and to the bars at night. After two weeks of this, I was allowed to go back home. The deprogrammers and my parents had hoped that, by getting me away from the environment that they believed was programming me to follow Jesus, I would snap out of it and come back to my senses.

It was obvious to me that my faith in Yeshua was not rooted in someone programming me. It was rooted in a personal, supernatural revelation from the Father, so it couldn't be shaken. My faith was built on a personal revelation from the Lord—just like the faith of Peter (Kepha), one of Yeshua's disciples.

When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets." "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven" (Matthew 16:13-17).

THE PSYCHIATRIC WARD

When I returned home from the deprogramming experience, I decided I needed to be a little less vocal about my faith. Apparently I wasn't less vocal enough, because not long afterward my parents hired a psychiatrist to come to the house to evaluate me. The psychiatrist was a very short, frail, sickly-looking man with balding

red hair. My parents and I sat down with him at the dining room table, and he started asking me questions.

I began by telling him how Yeshua had appeared to me in a vision. I testified of Yeshua's greatness and of all the things He had done for me. I also explained what my life would be like if Yeshua hadn't delivered me. The psychiatrist sat there quietly listening, not saying a word, and after an hour he left. After he left, I went to see one of my Christian friends. I don't say this proudly, because I was very young and immature, but I told my friend how I had made mincemeat out of the psychiatrist. I boasted of how boldly I had witnessed to him about Yeshua.

Later, I realized the psychiatrist was actually baiting me. He wanted me to tell him about my vision of Yeshua so he could diagnosis me as delusional and have me committed to a psychiatric ward. This was the reason my parents had hired him. They were hopeful I could be treated by a psychiatrist, come to my senses, and renounce my faith in Yeshua.

The psychiatrist went through the court system and was successful in committing me to a hospital psychiatric ward. There I was, a young man in my twenties, locked up with absolutely no place to go and nothing to do. I woke up every morning full of energy, with no way to release it; and each day I became increasingly difficult to handle. Before this had happened, I had come to a point in my life where I was starting to feel good again. I had started a new life for myself, building it in Yeshua; but then I was locked up, basically imprisoned for my belief in Him.

After a few days, I was placed in a group therapy session. A lady in this group was having a difficult time coping with the loss of her husband who had recently passed away. She started telling the group how her late husband was the most wonderful man who had ever lived and how he was now in heaven. I asked her if he had known Jesus, and she replied, "No, we're both Jewish." I said

to her, in a less than tactful manner, “If he didn’t know Jesus, he isn’t in heaven. It’s heaven with Jesus or hell without Him.”

After I made that statement, I was told that I would be receiving medication to control my behavior, because I was disturbing the equilibrium of the group. I was also informed that if I didn’t voluntarily take the medication, I would be strapped down and injected with it; so I decided to take it “voluntarily.” The medication made me feel very uncomfortable. Because I had so much energy trapped inside me with no way to release it, every time I sat down in a chair, my legs would continuously bob up and down.

At the time, there was a state law that if a psychiatrist probated you to a psychiatric ward, you had to stay there for a period of two months, after which a court hearing was held to determine if you needed to stay longer. Well, after two months, I was interviewed by a team of psychiatrists who recognized that I didn’t need to be there, so I was released.

PERSECUTED FOR MY FAITH IN YESHUA

After being released from the psychiatric ward, it took me several months to recuperate and get back on my feet. God, in His faithfulness, strengthened me and led me onward and upward. I continued being less vocal about Yeshua, but difficulties and problems still persisted. I ended up being thrown out of my parents’ house, and I lost all my friends. Despite all of these things, I found comfort in what Yeshua promised to those who are persecuted for His sake.

“I tell you the truth,” Jesus replied, “no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age (homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields—and

with them, persecutions) *and in the age to come, eternal life*” (Mark 10:29-30).

Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you (Matthew 5:10-12).

My faith in Yeshua has continued to create struggles and division in our family throughout the years. One example of this is when my niece had her bat mitzvah, the Jewish female version of a boy's bar mitzvah. They had a special ceremony for her, but I was not invited to participate because of my faith in Yeshua.

Yeshua told His followers that because He chose them out of the world, they were not of the world, and the world would hate them.

If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you (John 15:19).

Yeshua also told His followers that a servant isn't greater than his master; if He was persecuted, they also would be persecuted, *“Remember the words I spoke to you: ‘No servant is greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also’”* (John 15:20a).

Since receiving the supernatural vision of Yeshua from God in 1978, I have withstood tremendous rejection and hostility from the Jewish community for my faith, but my faith has never wavered. Don't ever shrink away from testifying of your faith in Yeshua to anyone. If you're rejected and suffer for Him, consider it a privilege. You will be rewarded, and God will strengthen you,

affirming your identity in Him. In fact, it has been appointed for us not just to reign with Him, but to suffer with Him as well. We are called to fill up the sufferings of Messiah.

Now I rejoice in my sufferings...in my flesh I do my share on behalf of His body, which is the church, in filling up what is lacking in [Messiah's] afflictions (Colossians 1:24 NASB).

If we suffer, we shall also reign with him (2 Timothy 2:12a King James Version).

MY FAITH JOURNEY

After losing my family and friends, I decided there was nothing left for me in Cleveland. I therefore decided to leave everything behind and start my life over, just the Lord and me. I imagined being like Abraham, who left his home to follow God, not knowing where he was going.

The LORD had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you" (Genesis 12:1).

What I did next, I would not recommend to anyone—even though the Lord used it in my life. I took a map of the United States, laid it on the ground, and then closing my eyes, I flipped a coin and said, "Lord, wherever this coin lands, that's where I'm going to go, just You and me. I'm not going to tell anyone where I'm going. I'm going to start my life over, just You and me."

When I flipped the coin, it landed on Park Rapids, Minnesota. The next day I packed up my orange AMC Gremlin and headed toward Park Rapids. I was elated! The Lord and I were starting over, just the two of us. I just knew it would be glorious! I even envisioned myself pastoring a church when I got there.

When I arrived in Park Rapids, I discovered it to be an Indian reservation. It was a ghost town; hardly anyone was even living there. The only job available in the whole town was working on a ski slope. I would have had to invest \$200 in ski equipment and clothing to work there, and then the job wouldn't have started for another two months. On top of that, I didn't even know how to ski.

At this point, I knew I couldn't stay in Park Rapids. I thought, *What am I going to do?* I knew I had to get someplace warm, so when I ran out of money, I wouldn't freeze to death. I counted the money I had left in my wallet and calculated how many miles I could travel with that money. I looked at a map and figured I had just enough for one last meal and enough to get me to Corpus Christi, Texas. I had never been there before, but I assumed, *It must be warm because it's on the ocean.* Even though I'd be out of money when I arrived, I hoped it would be warm enough there to survive.

On the way to Corpus Christi, I stopped for my last meal at a restaurant in Kansas City, Missouri. After finishing the meal, I got back in my Gremlin, but it wouldn't start. I didn't have enough money to get my car fixed and get to Corpus Christi. I thought, *What am I going to do?* I ended up giving my car to the waitress at the restaurant.

I then went into the restaurant's restroom and threw my wallet and glasses into the trash can and said, "Lord, I'm going to rely on You alone." I know this sounds unstable and radical, but God used this time in my life to teach me to trust and rely only upon Him. It became the grounding of my manhood in the Lord. I learned to be confident in Him, as I ventured out with nothing to rely on but Him.

Because I had given my car away, I needed a change of plans. I decided to head to California where I would fast in the northern woods. I started hitchhiking in that direction. The first two days, no one picked me up. The first night I slept on the side of the road

in the weeds. The next night I slept on a bench in an all-night sports coliseum. Those were very lonely days.

On the third day, someone finally offered me a ride; however, he wasn't going to California, but was on his way to Amarillo, Texas, to visit a friend. He told me that his friend owned a Tex-Mex restaurant and he would give me a job working there. When I got to Amarillo, I started working at the restaurant as a line cook. I ran into difficulty because I was having trouble seeing, since I had thrown away my glasses in Kansas City. The orders were spun around on a wheel, and I couldn't see them without walking from one end of the kitchen back to the wheel on the other side of the kitchen. This slowed down the production line considerably. Eventually, I was released from the job because of my vision problems.

From there, I went to California. I lived with one of my relatives and worked as a graveyard dishwasher in a Sambo's Restaurant. I had left home to seek the Lord, believing it would be a glorious experience; but two months later I was working in a restaurant as a graveyard dishwasher. I had no car, and I was riding my little cousin's bicycle to work every day—while my brother and sister were on their way to success. I began to feel like a real loser, especially because the Jewish community tends to be very focused on education, with many becoming doctors, lawyers, or successful business owners. Here I was, without a college degree, working as a dishwasher, and riding a borrowed bicycle to work. It felt like I was on the road to nowhere.

I said, "Lord, I really am beginning to feel badly about myself. If I ever make \$100,000 in a single year, it will be a miracle!" It wasn't that I was seeking riches; I just wanted to feel better about myself and was measuring myself by the affluent Jewish community in which I had grown up. It was only a few years after praying this prayer to God that He put me in a position where I made \$111,000 in one year. The Lord is awesome! I'm not bragging about how

much I made, since all that money meant nothing to me. I am testifying to the goodness and loving-kindness of my Father God.

BACK HOME

Eventually the Lord brought me back home to Cleveland. The journey He had taken me on shaped me into a new man. I was like one who enlisted in the Marines, and after finishing boot camp is a new person because he's been through an experience that imparted something important within. The Lord used my experiences to impart His strength within me and build a strong faith and trust in Him.

After returning to Cleveland, it wasn't long before many things in my life started changing. Within a month, I met my future wife, Cynthia, who also became a follower of Jesus. We were married in 1983. Bringing Cynthia into my life was the Lord's way of straightening me out and getting me on track in many ways. Without her love and influence in my life, I would not be where I am today.

I also enrolled in Toccoa Falls, a fully accredited Bible college. This college was very good for me; I learned a great many things, and I truly enjoyed my time there. Looking back on those days, I am thankful that they didn't throw me out of Bible college. Almost all of the students had come from Christian homes, and they knew what was acceptable or unacceptable behavior in a Christian setting. As for me, I came right out of the world; and looking back, I cringe at some of the things that came out of my mouth, not knowing any better. One professor told me that he thought I was like Peter, "a diamond in the rough." I believe they put up with me because I was Jewish, and they saw potential in me.

Although this college was very strong and committed to most aspects of the Word of God, it discouraged seeking the supernatural and many types of ministry associated with the spiritual gifts.

I recall one student from Bible college who was very charismatic. One evening I invited him and his wife to my home to have dinner with Cynthia and me. As the evening went on, he began sharing with us how he was able to speak in tongues, something I had never done. In fact, one of my professors had the class listen to a cassette tape in which an evangelist cast a demon out of someone. The professor claimed that the demon entered when this individual sought to speak in tongues. As a result, I was afraid to seek this gift.

Now, here in my house was a fellow student and friend telling me he had spoken in tongues. As he talked about the fact that God gives believers this gift as a prayer language, the Lord clearly bore witness with my spirit that this friend was telling me the truth. It was shocking to me that at the very instant God's Spirit was bearing witness to me that what my friend was telling me was the truth, my friend said to me, "What are you feeling right now?" I am ashamed to say that I said, "Oh, I'm not feeling anything." I covered up the truth and suppressed the witness of the Holy Spirit within me.

It's been many years since then, and now God has released me into a much fuller walk with the Holy Spirit, including all the gifts of the Spirit—but I'll never forget that moment. The Lord had clearly spoken to me, and I'm so ashamed to think back on how I suppressed His Spirit. My hope is that you won't suppress God's Spirit in your life. The Lord wants to lead you into a richer and fuller experience of His Ruach HaKodesh (Holy Spirit).

MINISTRY LIFE

When I graduated from Toccoa Falls College in 1985, I was awarded "The Preacher of the Year Award." The award was a blessing from God because it opened doors in ministry for me.

I began ministering in 1985 in a mainline denomination. I found my position very difficult to cope with because everything done in this congregation was by congregational vote. I had to

contend with church politics and all the tradition and culture that had been there prior to my arrival. Being young and immature, I found it very difficult to handle. After all, I still had a lot of issues in my own life that needed to be resolved. For personal reasons, I decided to take a sabbatical from ministry.

During my sabbatical from ministry, I worked in the business world in sales and motivational speaking. I started in the area of insurance and investments. In the first year, I won a national sales contest competing against other new agents, but I found it difficult to earn a good living.

From there, I began selling new residential homes and was the number one salesperson for the company I worked for last. During my years as a salesperson, I observed that many in the sales field did a very good job explaining their product, but they were afraid to ask for the sale. If they only would have had the courage to overcome their fears, their sales would have increased.

I decided to start presenting motivational talks to sales representatives to help them overcome their fears. In preparation, I did extensive research on the topic of fear. I ultimately knew the cause of fear was Satan and darkness, but I wanted to see what had been written by others and what studies had been done.

Although there were several theories on the origin of fear, there was nothing written on solutions for fear. I asked myself, *How have I overcome fear?* Instantly, I knew the answer. It was Yeshua! It was a eureka moment; immediately I knew I had to get out of business and back into ministry. The message I had to share was the message of Yeshua!

I began by traveling to churches teaching and preaching on the Jewish roots of the Christian faith. I worked out of my basement scheduling meetings, and then teaching in churches of all sizes and denominations on Sundays. My first message was entitled, "The Principle of the Sabbath and the Presence of God." In this message I shared how important it is to create boundaries with

our time in order to cultivate intimacy with God. Other early messages included “Discovering How the Old and New Testaments Connect” and “The Feasts of the Lord.” Within a year, I was preaching in a different church almost every weekend.

In 2002 I ministered in a Messianic congregation, Adat Adonai, which is Hebrew for Congregation of the Lord. A few months later I began to officially lead the congregation. We are presently located in Ottawa Lake, Michigan.¹ So now I was leading Adat Adonai on Friday nights, then traveling to a church on Saturday to minister there on Sunday. Sometimes I would take our Messianic dance and worship teams from Adat Adonai with me to minister in churches on Sundays. I still do that at times, and it is always fun!

While at Adat Adonai, someone in the congregation kept encouraging me about television—to have my own show. I talked with people at the local Christian television station, and they agreed to film and air a program. Yeshua gave me the title for this program: “Discovering the Jewish Jesus.” Initially, “Discovering the Jewish Jesus” was only aired locally—in the Toledo, Ohio, and southern Michigan area. Then, supernaturally, it went worldwide. This expansion happened in many different ways but three of the early miracles were:

1. A national religious station asked if they could air my program at no expense to me.
2. On my birthday, a Jewish man in California saw the broadcast, contacted me, and asked how he could help me. I told him that I wanted to assume financial responsibility for “Discovering the Jewish Jesus” in order to take it to a whole new level—and I needed money to do that. This Jewish man I had never met or talked to in my life gave me the money to do that, on my birthday—thank You, Daddy God!

3. Father God and Yeshua put together a support staff that makes the administration of a large television ministry possible. This might not sound like a miracle, but it is. Our staff truly has the heart of the Lord for this ministry. Praise God! “Discovering the Jewish Jesus” is now watched each week by both believers and seekers all around the earth.²

In the following pages, you will read about many of the things that the Lord has taught me and done in my life. I trust and hope that through sharing some of my experiences, you will be helped to find your true identity and have your own amazing testimony.

ENDNOTES

1. Visit www.AdatAdonai.com for more information.
2. For information about how you can watch “Discovering the Jewish Jesus,” visit www.DiscoveringTheJewishJesus.com and click on the Ways to Watch link.