

Would you like to hear the Good News?

God still loves you. He never stopped loving you. He loved you so much that He sent His Son Jesus to bring you back. All you have to do is let Him bring you back. Will you pray with me?

"Lord Jesus... I want to stop trusting in myself...and what I can do...and start trusting in you...and what you have already done...when you died for me on the cross. I know that! am a sinner...and I am sorry for my sins. I ask you to forgive me...I believe you rose again...and I invite you to come and live inside of me. I want you to be my Savior and Lord...which means being #1 in my life. I want to repent and turn away...from everything you and the Bible call sin...and I totally commit myself... to obeying you...every day, for the rest of my life. Lord Jesus baptize me in your precious Holy Spirit. Thank you Jesus."

Now that you have made peace with God, He is ready for you to begin to grow in a personal relationship with Him.

Receiving More of Jesus? "The Baptism in the Holy Spirit"

Who is the Holy Spirit? He is God. You might ask, "If the Holy Spirit is God, and Jesus is God, and the Heavenly Father is God, are there three Gods?" No. There is only one God as stated earlier. But God is unified as One and exists in the three Persons of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This threefold nature of God is exhibited even in creation. Humans have a body, a mind, and an eternal spirit. Our mind is not our body. Our spirit is not our mind. Are we then three people? No. We are just one person with three manifestations.

After we receive eternal life through confessing Jesus as Lord and Savior, we can also receive what the Bible calls the Baptism in the Holy Spirit. The purpose of this Baptism is to be anointed like Jesus and do the works that He did. Through this Baptism we receive the power of God, the supernatural fruit of the Holy Spirit, and the supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit.

The fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23). We receive these supernatural capabilities in our lives when we receive the Baptism in the Holy Spirit.

Some of the gifts of the Holy Spirit are listed in 1 Corinthians 12. Through the Baptism in the Holy Spirit, God distributes these great gifts to each one individually as He wills for each situation (1 Corinthians 12:8-11).

Would you like to receive this great gift? Yes No

Throughout the New Testament, the Bible shows the manifestations of the gifts that may be received after receiving the Baptism in the Holy Spirit. Initially the gift of utterance, a language not previously known to the person may be received, or interpretation of tongues, or prophecy. The gifts of power are faith, healings, or miracles. The gifts of revelation are also available: word of knowledge, word of wisdom, or discernment of spirits, or any combinations of these gifts. The Holy Spirit will manifest His presence differently at different times depending on which gift or gifts are needed at that time.

Do you believe these things? Yes No

The Baptism in the Holy Spirit is received by faith just as salvation is received. Pray the following prayer or one similar to it.

Dear Heavenly Father. I believe You are the source of all love and power. I ask right now for the gift of the Holy Spirit. I have faith in You, and that You will give me this great gift. Because I have asked, I believe I have now received the Power of God, the fruit of the Holy Spirit, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit in my life. I have received all these wonderful gifts by faith. I also ask that You will show me how to use these gifts for Your glory by Christ Jesus. I pray now thanking you in the name of my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen. Luke 11:13

Do you believe you have received these great gifts? Yes No

You have received these gifts. You should begin to use these gifts now that God has given you.



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Hearing His Voice

"They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony." Revelations 12:11

GOD'S HOT PURSUIT OF AN ARMED BANK ROBBER



Shon Hopwood

It may terrify some Christianity Today (CT) readers to know that I grew up in a Christian home in rural Nebraska with parents who had started a local church. When my high school basketball career faded and college and the military fell through, I was left with a complete lack of purpose; susceptible to addiction and depression. When my equally adrift best friend suggested we rob a bank, it struck me as a legitimate idea.

We robbed five banks with guns and scared the tellers and patrons half to death. I knew it was wrong. Still, I couldn't stop the easy money and party lifestyle that large sums of unearned money brought me. It didn't stop until the FBI tackled me inside the lobby of a DoubleTree Hotel in Omaha. After I surrendered to the FBI,

I also surrendered to the Holy Spirit. A year later I stood with shaky legs and a trembling spirit before a federal judge, who sentenced me to more than 12 years in federal prison. I was 23.

Learning to Love the Law

Prison is not a place for personal growth, but there were small graces. To escape the men around me, I took a job in the prison law library. When I wasn't shelving books, I began learning the law. What I found was that I really enjoyed the process of solving legal puzzles for my friends. Over the years, I took on fellow prisoners' cases and writing petitions they would file in federal courts across the country, including the U.S. Supreme Court.

And yet, the Court granted two petitions I prepared for my friends. Fellow prisoners began calling me a "jailhouse lawyer." The odds of the Supreme Court hearing a case brought by a prisoner is less than 1 percent of 1 percent.

While in prison I started corresponding with Annie, a girl I had a secret crush all through high school. She began sending letters to me; and through hundreds of letters, phone calls, and visits, we became close friends.

I think many parents would have forsaken someone like me. Mine continued to pray for me. My mom continued to send me Christian books even after I told her to stop. I'd read those books and then wonder if God had forgotten about me. I wasn't quite ready for God; but I also couldn't rationalize the transformation I'd seen in the lives of my fellow prisoners.

Many mornings I'd walk over to visit my next cell-door neighbor. Robert was serving a 20-year sentence for a nonviolent drug offense. We'd chat over a cup of instant coffee, which always seemed to have the consistency of sawdust and water. Robert would grumble about missing out on the lives of his children and how hard it was on his wife, who was trying to hold the family together through two decades without him. Worst of all, he ranted about one of his friends that turned against him and testified for the government at his trial. He said he

wished that guy would die. It was clear to me that the bitterness of life and prison had consumed him.

One day, I walked over to Robert's cell and watched as he smiled and danced around while sweeping the floor. My first thought was that he had scored some drugs. But when I asked why he seemed so different, I was unprepared for his response. "Shon, I'm with Jesus now," he said. Within days Robert had forgiven the man who had testified against him. Today Robert is back on his farm with his family and once a week he treks back into prison to lead a men's Bible study.

Robert was neither the first nor the last prisoner I saw experience a complete and utter life turnaround. These inmates had a great effect on me because I saw how grace can transform everyone even prisoners, perhaps especially prisoners.

I was finding it harder and harder to rationalize myself away from God.

Wise Counsel

I was released from prison in April of 2009 during the heart of the recession, when no one, let including a former inmate could find work. But within months, another grace arrived and I found a position at a leading printer of Supreme Court briefs in Omaha, helping attorneys perfect their briefs.

When Annie and I got engaged, we decided that we wanted my friend, Pastor Marty Barnhart, to officiate the ceremony. God bless him, but Marty wouldn't agree to do so until we had gone through his premarital counseling.

Our first counseling session was, in a word, memorable. Instead of discussing marriage, Marty asked what we believed about Jesus. When he talked about grace, that free gift of salvation, I listened, especially when he said that I could be forgiven. "Yeah, even you, Shon," he said.

The next day I couldn't escape the feeling that God had been pursuing me for a long time and that if I'd just abandon my stubbornness and selfishness and hand everything over to Him, I would find redemption.

What does it mean to be redeemed? And how do you redeem yourself after robbing five banks?

The answer is you don't. The answer is that you need some help.

In Ephesians 1:7-8, Paul writes that in Christ "we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us." To put it differently, because of our sins, none of us and surely no former prisoner like me can be redeemed on his own. We need the gospel of grace, which says that each of us matters and has worth because we're made in the image of God. Grace says we are not defined by our failures and our faults, but by a love without merit or condition.

God's grace was enough to redeem me.

Surrender

Nearly five years have passed since I made the most important decision of my life and surrender to this grace. Annie and I got married, and she too became a believer. We were baptized together at Christ Community Church in Omaha. We had a son we named Mark; after my father. A man of faith passed away after a long battle with cancer, while I was still incarcerated. A few years later we had a baby girl, whom we named Grace.

We moved from Nebraska to Seattle so I could attend the University of Washington Law School on a full-ride scholarship from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. During this time, I've volunteered and served toward a goal of ending mass incarceration in the United States. I'm motivated by the belief that prisoners are not beyond the grasp of God's redemption. We've been nourished by our church, Mars Hill in Seattle, where we have met Christians who live out their beliefs with grace and compassion.

After I graduated, we moved to Washington, D.C., where I began clerking for a judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit.

To say we have been blessed, doesn't begin to cover it.

Through it all, from the amazing to the mundane, God loves us. Through it all, God has given us a purpose. For me that purpose revolves around repentance, loving my wife and children, sharing the grace I've been given, and using my legal knowledge to assist those who cannot afford a decent attorney.

Looking back over the course of my life, I can see that although I rarely returned the favor, God pursued me.

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OUR VISION is based on a vision that God gave to a businessman- a dairy farmer. In that vision, he saw hundreds of despondent men who felt they had no chance of making it in the world. Then they heard a message of hope and they came alive! Their heads held high; they were transformed into productive men with dignity and purpose.

GOD'S PURPOSE FOR OUR FELLOWSHIP

- To reach men everywhere for Jesus Christ with the same social, cultural or business interests.
- To call men to God: to help men become born again, baptized in the Holy Spirit, operate in the Gifts of the Holy Spirit.
- To mentor young men who have never had a positive male role model by being a spiritual father to them.
- To provide a basis of fellowship among all men everywhere, regardless of church affiliation.
- To bring about a greater measure of unity and harmony in the Body of Christ.
- To train and equip men to succeed in the business world.

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Click on the tool bar "About Us." Then click on FGBMF in America.