

above everyone else / I was rude and unkind to my mother / I had moments of anger when I wanted to kill somebody.

I knew God's forgiveness was there because I heard preachers read what Jesus said, "This is my blood of the new covenant shed for many for the forgiveness of sins." I did not know what covenant meant (and still don't for sure) but I did know what forgiveness meant.

From the Parable of the Prodigal Son I knew that if I came to Him for forgiveness and the help to be the right kind of person that He would, like a good Father, run to meet me, throw his arms around me and throw a party.

From my uncle I learned what a hypocrite is. He was the only person in our family who was active in a church and claimed to be a Christian. Every time we sat down to eat he made us say the blessing.

He was a closet alcoholic; he put his wife in the hospital with his fists; he got caught making whiskey. When my mother had a nervous breakdown and we had to go live with him he treated her and me with contempt.

He was a phony He was a phony [That is what a hypocrite is.] He went to church every Sunday; put a Bible in one coat pocket and a pint of whiskey in the other. After church he would go to a friend's house and get drunk.

[I met that friend and his two sons. The one my age had cigarette burns on his arms and when I asked him how he got them he said his daddy did it, he said, to make me tough.

{Folks I am not lying about this.}

He and his friends often had parties down at his lake in the woods and he told me and my cousins by marriage (young boys at that time) not to come down there. Of course we went down there one time, took a peek, and they were "Naked". *{Folks, I am not lying about this crazy stuff.}*

God used that man to help me. When I did walk down an aisle at age 22, I prayed before I went, "Dear God I don't want to be like Uncle _____. I want to be the real deal."

Growing up, the Baptist church near me had Vacation Bible School every summer and held us kids over the fires of hell to get us "saved" by scaring us into heaven. Everybody but me would "get saved". I wouldn't do it until I knew I meant it. [My friends who got saved every summer quit shooting (playing) marbles with me "for keeps" because that was Gambling [a sin]. In a couple of weeks they started back playing.]

I knew even as a young boy that if God forgave me I had to try and be the right kind of person. But I was mistaken about what that meant. I thought I had to *stop doing* those things that were wrong to be forgiven and I knew I couldn't stop doing some of them. The hardest was "cussing". Telling me not to curse when I got mad was like telling a dog not to bark or a rooster not to crow.

When I was thinking about becoming a Christian in my early twenties, I talked to a pastor and he told me repentance did not mean we had to stop doing bad things, it meant wanting to stop and asking God to help us do it. He asked me if I would do that and I said yes.

Two weeks later I thought of Jesus offering forgiveness to the people who crucified him (Luke 23) and said "Lord if you forgive them I believe you'll forgive me. Please help me to stop doing those things that are wrong."

I was instantly forgiven and changed into a person who wanted to obey God and who asked for forgiveness every time I didn't. And I was on the road to heaven.

Why don't you ask God to do that for you?

Why don't you do it right now? Romans 10:10 says, "Whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."