

Conversations with Byron

I want to thank the mothers who are here today; you are very important people who helped shape our lives for the better. I have always felt that a mother's love for her child is the closest thing we have that provides a glimpse of how much God loves us. Just watching my son Korban, go from being in the womb to being in my arms as a 21/2 year old makes me appreciate the amount of work, each of you did in raising your children.

My mom was a hard working mom who raised five children and still worked part or full time. She was very structured and made sure that we were always taken care of. I think the hardest part of raising us occurred when my father passed away when I was seven. My mom was a 29 year old, a foreigner who grew up in Munich Germany, and she was left to pick up the pieces, raising two devastated children, in a foreign country. She had no family here, few friends, and instead of bringing us back to Germany, she got remarried and raised us in the state of Washington, which I am very grateful for. You have to be strong to stick around here when the odds are against you. She really never received the credit she deserved.

My friend, Byron's, mom, had an equally difficult task. Her husband left her for another woman in her twenties, and she had to raise Byron and two girls all by herself. The thing I remembered about Byron's mom was that she was the best looking mom at the PTA meetings and had the latest fashions. She raised Byron and the two girls all by herself and never chose to remarry. Like I said, Byron's mom was really good looking and it was hard to believe she never remarried. Byron and I would laugh because Jerry the Milkman really liked her, but in the end, his efforts were futile. Byron's mom had been so hurt by men that she never wanted to experience that again.

So, Byron and I were similar in the fact that we did not experience the relationship that is so essential to a boy and his father. Much of how who we would become was shaped by our mothers. Unfortunately, our mothers were outcasts from their respected churches. Mine was excommunicated from the Roman Catholic Church in Munich for refusing to participate in confession with the priest, and Byron's mom, was like the black sheep of the Mormon Church because she had a child out of wedlock and her marriage failed. These experiences shaped the way our mothers viewed the corporate church, consequently, religion was never pushed on us growing up. Having a relationship with God was a personal and private issue. The reality is that there are a lot of people who have similar experiences when it comes to the corporate church. There is a bad taste in their mouths and a lot of children that have been left by themselves to find God. The only problem is that it will be that much more difficult for the children to discover that God is indeed valuable. Like I mentioned, Byron's path did not point him to God. I feel very fortunate that God captured my affections. Lookingback, here are the things that greatly aided me in coming to Christ.

1. Good Christian Witnesses

- a. **Bad witnesses:** It is so key that we exemplify the Christian lifestyle with a heavy dose of grace for others. I mentioned last week one of Byron's, co-workers, would him at work that God did not approve of him going to movies, listening to secular music, and dancing. Not surprisingly, Byron took the defensive because he found it hard to believe that God would judge him for that. This ultimately leads one to believe that before they can come to Christ that they have to change.
- b. **Good witnesses:** I was more fortunate. I had good witnesses in my life.
 1. Jill Mehlhaff
 2. Andreas: Went to church with him on Friday night
 3. Cornelius: Saw a major transformation
 4. Brian Tingley: Set a great example with integrity and showing grace

1 Timothy 1:5

5 I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well.

2. Christians immersing themselves in my world

a. Acts 1: 6: We are to go to them—not expect them to come to us

Acts 1:6-8

6 So when they had come together, they asked him, “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” 7 He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. 8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

b. Young Life: Basketball was my life

c. Use your skill or interests and get involved with unbelievers

1. Bunko
2. Craftsman work
3. Fishing
4. Music

d. Once in church, invest time with them outside: Steve Irwin

e. Northside Email

1. Visitation
2. Riding to studies together
3. Make bulletin names come to life

3. Recognizing that my Good Standing before God comes through Faith in Christ

a. Two Misconceptions

1. We have to better for God to Accept us
2. We have done too many bad things for God to accept us.

b. Ultimately God provides our righteousness based on faith in Christ's works

Romans 3:21-24

24 But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— 22 the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,

c. The Objection: It Seems to Easy

1. This objection fails to capture holiness of God
2. It also fails to grasp the magnitude of sin

4. Recognizing God Ultimately Opened my Heart to respond to the Gospel of Jesus

- a. By nature, we would rather depend on ourselves instead of Jesus
- b. Ultimately, when God does His work inside (Regeneration), we want to respond.

Acts 16:14

1 Corinthians 2:3-5: 3 One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul.