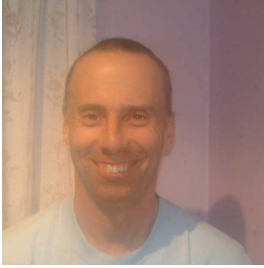


Testimony of Geoff Baker



I come from a totally non-Christian family. My only contact with a church would be weddings, funerals and christenings. I always thought Christians were very odd people and most of the those I had met were either pompous or very sad. If anybody knocked on my door to talk about religion, they were told where to go. I often looked at the Bible on Sunday mornings although it was only to get an answer to the crossword.

My wife then started to go to church, which was fine as long as she did not want me to be involved. She knew not to push me towards religion or I would go the opposite direction. Then a friend of ours told me she'd got a present for me, great I thought. Then she gave me a leaflet for an Alpha course, I just told her where she could stuff her leaflet and her God. I didn't need God, didn't want God. Little did I know.

My wife Gill and I had decided to renew our marriage vows, but due to her working shifts it never worked out. So I decided I would organise it. To me it had to be in church, not for my belief but Gill and what it would mean to her. So my hardest task ever was to see the vicar in the vicarage!!!!!! Horror of all horrors. However, he was nice and the day was organised, I was taken to church on a pretext of my daughter acting.

The vows were exchanged and I just felt so full of love. All I wanted was to be cuddled or to cuddle. I think Gill thought I had flipped.

Well, all during the following week, I kept getting this thought of going to church, must have been something I ate. On Sunday morning Gill says she's going to church. Suddenly my mouth moves like a ventriloquist's dummy, I asked if I could go to church, I don't know who was gobsmacked most, Gill or I. We went to church which was great, but it was just to help the vicar out, another bum on the pew as he had done me a favour.

The following week Gill was on nights, I went by myself with the aid of my daughter. Suddenly my life turned upside down, Jesus, for no other reason than love had become so vital. I went on any course I could find. But the odd thing was that if my mates asked I was just doing it for Gill. What a cop out!!

After four months this was making me so miserable. I didn't just want Jesus I craved Him. I just felt God telling me one day I had to make my mind up and get off the fence. The next day I fully gave my life to Jesus, so what else was there to do but walk into the pub with a cross on. After a long pause between conversation, I asked the question for everybody "Why are you wearing a cross?". One of the best days of my life. I had come alive.

I eventually applied to be an evangelist. But this meant doing courses, but it seemed every time I did a course we had another baby. So we already had Ian and Jenny our older pair, after 15 years we had Elizabeth and then 15 months later Alice. Both were God's miracles but that's another story.

I was commissioned in 2000, a great omen. Not only did God send His Holy Spirit for me to get up and talk, He also sent us a grandson who was two weeks old. A great moment to show you're an evangelist but to also to parade my grandson up the aisle of the Cathedral.

Although times as an evangelist have been tough and involving moving to another church and even when I thought of giving up, God sent someone to intervene and keep me as an evangelist. At this time I have the immense privilege to be at a great church with a really encouraging vicar,

curate and congregation. It is a really pleasure to serve God ,the church and community. Although there have been numerous events in the middle, God has always been at the heart.

Geoff Baker

Parish Evangelist to the Southborough Team Ministry attached to Christ Church.