

Micah Wharrie

I grew up in the church and was blessed to have parents who valued Biblical knowledge. I went to Sunday school, various Christian schools, I even went to a Baptist University. I knew what the Bible said but that knowledge never really became a reality for me. Five years ago I was invited to Gulf Coast while playing volleyball at the beach and later that week and again the following week. Within two weeks I had gotten three separate invitations to the same church, I decided to visit. The first time I met Jerry I told him the story about how I came to visit his church and then jokingly I said that I think God may be calling his church to grow. Jerry just stared at me. Well.. I began attending here unless something more important came up on Sunday but I think I did more boating than church-going. After leaving to go to college I moved back to St. Pete and started attending more regularly. Then I was accepted into the missions field on a two-year term in Kenya, Africa doing Bible translations. I sought the approval of the pastoral team because after all, I would need funding. Although I had been attending Gulf Coast for four most of time I was away at college or on a boat with a beer in my hand so Daryn and I met so that he could get to know me better. Any of you who have met with Daryn know that it doesn't take him long to get to the really piercing questions. He asked me questions like; "Gun to your head, do you know you are going to heaven." Talking to Daryn brought to the surface many questions I had been struggling with most of my life. How could I know I was going to heaven? Is there really a God? Could I actually give up everything I have or would ever want to have to be a Christian? It is so clear to me now but at the time I didn't know that God was working on my heart in so many different ways. I was able to come to two conclusions: there must be a God and that my way of living wasn't working. The truth is that I always felt like something was missing. There was a void and my whole life consisted of trying to fill it with things I thought would make me happy. I was worn out from this constant struggle to attain happiness. The emptiness of everything that I was trying to fit into the God-shaped hole in my heart was revealed to me and I was willing to give them up for the possibility of something better. Sometime in November of last year I can remember thinking to myself, "Ok, I'm done, You take it." I did not know it at the time but I was submitting my life to Christ. I said similar prayers a couple of times throughout the week and I think I even got on my knees once but my point is not the prayer, my point is the change that occurred in my heart. I began to notice things were different. Before reading the Bible was a chore that I rarely got around to doing but now the word was opened up to me and terms and verses I had heard my whole life took on new meaning. I was given a strong desire to know who God is. I began read and study and know the Bible. I met with religious leaders of local mosques, Jehovah Witnesses, Mormon Missionaries and so not but I was always led to back to Jesus Christ and Gulf Coast Community Church. I was freed from sins that bound me for over ten years. Guilt and shame were gone and I felt comfortable worshiping God. I can see now God is shaping into the man that I desperately wanted and tried to be but no matter how hard I tried I couldn't. So looking back to that week in November, what happened? What did I do to cause this change? Well, I didn't even know I was submitting my life to Christ so it certainly wasn't any intellectual choice on my part. What about the prayer? I already said the change was in my heart and surely that seemingly uneventful and mundane prayer is not the cause of all this. The truth is that everything was already done for me and the only thing that I to do was accept this free gift. It's like God paid for me to have all these wonderful things and there is nothing I can do to earn it because, well, it is too wonderful for me to ever deserve it and because if I earned it, it wouldn't be a gift. I think that's what people mean when they say Grace. So where does Jesus fit in? Jesus Christ died on the cross so that I could be given this gift. Every day I learn more about what

happened that week in November. I don't think I will ever fully understand God's grace in my life or how Jesus paid for me to have it but oh, am I thankful for what has been done for me. Because of His crucifixion I have gained everything and being a Christian, following Christ, is so much more than I ever imagined it would be.