

### LIFE ACCORDING TO MICHAEL

My road that led me to the Lord started when I was in fourth grade. Our family owned Appliance Inc. My dad was going to open another business in Phoenix, Arizona. We were going to drive two station wagons from our home in Santee to Phoenix. I was riding with my mom when we made a stop outside of Yuma, Arizona. This is where my dad asked me if I would like to ride with him. I said, "Yes," and started to go toward his car. My dad stopped me and told me to put on shoes and socks since I was bare-footed. My child's response was to say no, so I ended up back in my mom's car.

After we all were back on the road for ten miles or so, I witnessed my dad's car and an International Scout collide head-on with no brakes applied. My mom's first words were, "Do you know how to pray?" Up to this point in my life, I had never gone to church and had only seen others pray during holiday meals. I said, "Yes, Mom." She then said, "Good, because you need to start saying one!" My mom also told me to stay there in the car. She ran out, looked at my dad's car, and started to put flares out in the road. It was early in the morning and the road was not busy. Being a child, I said a quick prayer. I don't remember the words. Then I got out of the car and walked to my dad's car.

What I saw is etched in my mind forever. From the bottom of my dad's nose on down was gone! There were no lips, teeth or jaw. His left leg was draped over his left shoulder with only a small piece of skin holding it on. The engine of the car was sitting in the

passenger seat -- where I should have been! My dad started to regain consciousness. I yelled for my mom who came running toward the car. She told me to get out of the road so I headed toward the side where the International Scout was. I looked in the cab. Nothing was there but I did hear a noise coming from the bed of the truck. I had to pull myself up over the side to look in because I wasn't tall enough. I saw a body with no head and the body was twitching. The next thing I remember was a man grabbing me and carrying me away. As he was walking, I saw the head on the side of the road. It took almost two hours to extract my dad from the car. They had to use three tow trucks and chains to pull apart my dad's car.

We were waiting in the emergency room when a doctor came out and said, "There is nothing we can do for your husband. It was only a matter of time before he would die!" At that point, my mom fainted and was admitted, as well, to the hospital. The hospital chaplain came and took me with him. After spending a couple of hours with him, I was allowed to see my mom. There was another doctor there. He was explaining to my mom that if they amputated my dad's left leg, he might just live a few more hours. My mom consented and they prepped my dad for surgery. As my dad was going under the anathesia, they found out he had pneumonia and could not be operated on because the anathesia would kill him.

My dad kept holding on and would not die. The doctors were all amazed he was still alive because nothing could be done for him. The Doctor finally told my mom, "There is a god; he is keeping your husband alive because we aren't." This was my introduction to God. He, alone, kept a fourth grader's dad alive.

My dad spent close to a year in the hospital, another year in a wheelchair, but his leg was never lost. Today it is close to being one-hundred percent normal.

My mom started taking me to Sunday School and church shortly after my dad's accident. I went out of loyalty, at first, since I didn't know about a personal relationship with Christ.

Then, when my dad was able to attend, we went as a family. We went to the First United Methodist Church of El Cajon. Our entire family got involved in different areas with the church. My mom was a member of choir, taught crafts, and was part of several study groups. My dad was head of the financial committee, participated in the weekly men's breakfast and Bible study, along with scripture readings during the Sunday services. I was a member of the youth group and not much more.

I was in eighth grade when I went with our youth group on a retreat during my Christmas break. That is where I learned about making Christ my Saviour. I accepted Christ at that retreat. Through my early high school years I was very much dedicated to the Lord. I organized on-campus Bible studies during lunch time, helping plan youth group activities and even participating in the church services.

At the end of my high school years, I started running with the wrong crowd. I turned my back on my family, started using drugs, and turned my back on God -- my WORST mistake!

Straight out of high school I went into the United States Air Force. My life continued on the road to destruction. There was a lot of wine, women and song. I had no room for God in my life. What I failed to realize is that it was not only myself I was hurting, but also God. I finally got so lonely I married a woman name Shelley

so I would not be alone and, in my own way, I thought this would straighten my life out. Again, my thinking was wrong.

I discharged from the Air Force, stopped drinking, and started using drugs again. I did have a one-way relationship with God, whenever I got into trouble, I expected God to get me out of it. My marriage fell apart after a couple of years, and my criminal life started.

Years of criminal activity landed me ten years in prison. This is when I realized Christ not only should be my saviour but also had to be the Lord of my life too. It took my coming to prison to realize what it is to have a personal relationship with God. My life is different now because I have put God first or at least try to put God first in my life.

My number one priority now is to learn as much as I can about my Lord and Saviour. I want to build a strong foundation for when I get released in three years. I read constantly, not only my Bible but also at least three to four other Christian-related books a month. I have enrolled in two correspondence Bible study courses. I worship at the Church on the Rock and have served on committees as well as give my testimony. I have recently gone through KAIROS which opened another door for me. I now am trying to start a pen pals with the church in El Cajon that I was brought up in. I am attaching a copy of that letter to this.

In closing, I can honestly say I have never been more free than I am right now.