

## I Corinthians 6:9-11

“Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.”

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Paso Robles, CA

### Early Oak Park memories:

I was born in Atascadero, CA on November 5, 1946 at either 1:46 or 1:54p.m. The sun rose at 6:31a.m.; John F. Kennedy was first elected to Congress; and both the House and Senate were flooded with a Democrat majority. Times were changing and the Baby Boomers would change the world.

Our family lived in government housing, a development created at the north end of town, bordered by the water treatment plant and Southern Pacific railroad tracks. We moved from a two bedroom single level duplex into a two story unit that held three families side by side when I was born. My brother Marty came into the world eleven months later to the surprise of my parents. My sister Ginnie was the firstborn, five years older than myself. Most memories come from others telling me what happened, like when I was a toddler and tried to pick up a hot frying pan my mother had accidentally dropped. My hands were badly burned and wrapped for awhile, but that didn't stop me from sticking them in the toilet.

I do remember running from my dad because of something bad I'd done. I was so proud that I had outrun him, little knowing that I gave up the chase or I would have had my bottom scorched. I remember the little yellow duck we had won at the county fair that didn't survive long. The picture of death shocked my young senses. The neighborhood was filled with kids, of course, so there was a non-stop adventure of getting into trouble, exploring, going to school with them, and learning social skills.

I remember my first kiss when I was probably five years-old — Lukey Stokke who lived two doors down from us. She was the quintessential little blonde with the cute smile. I don't remember Marty and I taking my dad's wallet after pay day and throwing all the cash out the second story window.

Then there was the time a neighbor's mentally disabled relative came to visit them. All of us kids were making fun of her. I was the cute little loveable kid who went along with the crowd, got into trouble with the rest of them, but always thought I was that perfect little urchin in a world of the mean kids on the block.

And where was God and gospel? Church was a grandparent sponsored event and sporadic. We kids were taken to church, but I don't know how often. We enjoyed the flannel graph stories and singing, but that was about it.

### Creston Park memories:

Creston Park was a new development east of town where people could finally have an affordable home. My dad purchased a home at 621 Tucker Avenue, and our family left the stigma of Oak Park. Here, our new home would be surrounded by the established and the respectable. Here, we could climb the social ladder and be surrounded by school teachers, business owners, police officers and the hoi polloi of the city. We had it made.

But the big divorce rocked our little world around 1954. Mom moved us back to the underworld of Oak Park, into a little hovel on the far north end. Here, my brother and I became the little terrors once again, snaking our way through the fatherless home life that we shared with so many around us. There were the neighborhood boys dirt clod fights, soap-in-the-mouth rewards for using words Mom used, crossing the tracks to explore the city dump and climbing the fence to ride the spray pipes at the water works (Marty fell off and got a mid-winter drenching once).

My grandmother knew one of the train engineers who lived in San Luis Obispo. He would throw us kids a bag of Grandma's candy at a scheduled time. How cool was that! We were kings in Flunkydom!

Soon, our first step-father entered the picture, and we moved back into the house in Creston Park. I would be in 5<sup>th</sup> grade, going to a new school called Winifred Pifer School. She was my teacher in my old school downtown (Georgia Brown). But after my 4<sup>th</sup> grade, she had become sick and left teaching.

It would be here that my half-brothers, Monte and Kenny, would be born, along with a half-sister, Melissa. Now it was six kids in a three bedroom house. Needless to say, we had become the bane of the neighborhood — too many kids and little supervision. Mom would divorce this man as well and raise us on her waitressing wages and tips. There was a lot of help by the grandparents, of course. What a mess this turned out to be.

Church going was still sporadic as I headed into my teen years. There were few thoughts of God when the world was spinning all around me. I still believed I was the most moral member of the household, and had no desire to know the God I was hearing about in church and Sunday School. Most of the family in Paso Robles were fully involved in worship, teaching, and serving at church — but not the Skinner family. We were the proverbial black sheep who received all the prayers of the godly. Let me note here of the importance of the extended family who truly love their nieces, nephews and grandkids and pray for them, show them love and care, and live their lives without hypocrisy. I could see family members who practiced what they preached — nor perfectly, but consistently. I think God answered those prayers.

## Psalm 10:4

“The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts.”

Even with a strong family influence of following the Lord Jesus, my self-righteous pride was the master of my soul. I saw my brother Marty reaping the rewards of disobeying my mom, getting into trouble with his friends, acting like the tough guy at school and with the neighborhood kids. I steered clear of that whole scene, got good grades, maintained a respectable social stability at school, and usually tried to stay out of trouble, or at least getting caught.

My sister Ginnie got married before she graduated. Home life was too much stress, and I never blamed her for leaving it. The chaos became too much, especially through Mom's next divorce and remarriage. This time we moved to Fresno for four months as I started ninth grade. Yet another divorce found us moving back to Paso Robles when my freshman year was starting.

When I was a senior, Mom remarried again. I had started college in San Francisco, but couldn't find a job, so I dropped out, called my dad in El Paso and asked if I could go to school there. Thankfully, he said 'yes' and another chapter started in my mixed up life. This would be three years of 'without God and without hope' — no godly family influence — no going to church — complete rejection of the Creation account and the Bible — and the start of life of atheism and hedonism. I still liked the social life in school and made friends with the muckety mucks. I even became the Dance Committee Chairman for the university of all things. But inside, I was a lost sinner going to a Christless eternity.

I was reclassified from a 1-Y student deferment to a 1-A status on my draft card. Dropping out of school and enlisting was the only option that made sense, so I tried to join the army in El Paso. Torn and deformed knee cartilage kept me out of the war. A run in with my dad convinced me that I needed to move back home to California. God's providential hand was at work in my journey to hearing His voice — in His time.

My career in printing began at Ennis Business Forms in Paso Robles in April, 1968. This is where I learned the trade, became a star worker, had a few not so serious dates with the local girls, bought a '67 Mustang fastback, partied with the boys, played guitar and started smoking a little pot. This is where I met Barbara for the second time, worked with her, started dating her, started living with her, and moved to a farmhouse out in the country until 1972. One of our co-workers on the swing shift would preach to us: “You're all going to hell unless you repent!” but we wouldn't listen. God was speaking, but we were deaf.

## I Timothy 1:12-15

“And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting *me* into the ministry, although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did *it* ignorantly in

unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.”

### Psalm 14:1

“The fool has said in his heart, “*There is no God.*” They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none who does good.” -- Echoed by Paul in Romans.

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Mom and her newest husband, Jim, started going to church in Paso Robles. She had given me a new Scofield bible where she penned a mother’s loving plea for her son to be saved. My reaction? “Where’s the nearest shelf in the darkest closet we have?” The book was never opened, my mother’s God rejected, and my life of darkness and rebellion continued without a blink. At this same time, Barb had secretly gone to church with them, but wouldn’t trade living with me for the Savior.

Barb and I enjoyed the pleasures of the day, antique shopping, traveling here and there, visiting family and friends. I played guitar with my local pot smoking buddies, took a lot of pictures with my camera, didn’t get involved in national news or politics, liked X-rated movies, and honed my atheism skills. I read Philip Wylie’s book, *The Magic Animal* in which he disparages any notion of their being a supernatural anything, including God Himself. I bought extra copies to give away, so I could echo the sentiment that “explains how insane Christians really are.”

But a few friends started interacting with others at work. Lots of questions about the Bible were being brought up and discussed. A “Bible study” was even started at Doug Purdom’s home to hash out the ‘truth.’ But I wasn’t really interested in the end.

Blind to my sin and self-righteousness and totally self-centered, I didn’t realize that Barb was ready to leave me. We had been living together for a few years, and I hadn’t really loved her or told her so or wanted to get married. She threatened to leave if we didn’t, so off to the county courthouse we went, signed on the dotted lines and became husband and wife — all before going to work the same afternoon. We didn’t tell anyone we were married, not even family. What a mistake that was! My unthinking and uncaring heart was exposed for all to see. I didn’t care. The word, “love,” wasn’t in my vocabulary.

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### Ephesians 2:1-3

“And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.”

## Stockton, CA

In 1972, we had the opportunity to work in Stockton, CA. We would make a lot more money and not feel the stress of Barb's mom being jealous over our time spent with her and her husband, Bud. We interviewed and moved in August.

Work was fabulous. I was the star player who turned two shifts on my machine to one. The bosses didn't mind my hippy long hair and bell bottom jeans, as long as I could perform above their expectations.

That first Christmas, we drove to San Luis Obispo to stay at Barb's step-sister's for the holiday. It would prove to be life changing. Janet and Neil shared the Gospel with us, and God opened our eyes to believe His word. Neil answered some long standing questions I had about creation and the Bible. He had just been to a local Creation Science Research conference and showed me the material. This was the first time in my life that I had the faith to believe God's word, even if I didn't understand it fully. I was convinced that the Bible was true.

Back in Stockton, we learned that one of the pressmen was a Christian, and we started going to the local Free Methodist Church. The scriptures were devoured at home. We both attended Stockton's James Robison Crusade in April of 1973 and made a public profession of faith. Many young people were worshiping and fellowshiping at a home on Friday nights, so we started enjoying their worship and teaching times. This would later evolve into Church in the Park, led by Jack Earl and others. It was a Jesus Movement atmosphere of quirky young believers that emphasized sound doctrine and evangelism. I remember preaching at a packed American Legion Park in 1976 where a number of us would declare the Word in different areas of the park. This was the new me that God had brought from atheism to Himself along a most winding road.

In a few years, this little church split over doctrinal issues, and Grace Reformed Church was formed with 9 folks, including me and Barb. There were various pastors, and even though the teaching was orthodox, there was little evangelistic life and a lot of strife over personalities. I'm pleading guilty to all charges and feel I was part of the problem. But it was time to ask forgiveness and move on.

Barb and I started attending Quail Lakes Baptist Church in Stockton in 1984. Fred Jantz was the senior pastor, and the other pastors were godly servants as well. I didn't totally agree with every point of doctrine, but could see this was the place God wanted us at the time.

We visited Les Cook's Grace Class for Sunday School. Les was a no nonsense expository teacher, and that appealed to both of us. When he needed a break, I agreed to take the teaching position. We eventually renamed the class to 'The Seekers,' and I continued to teach through the 90's. Les had started the Grace Class up again, so I took a break from teaching and came back to his class, where I now teach when needed. To God alone be the glory.