

# “The Road of Life”

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1 Peter 1: 3-9 & Proverbs 3: 5-12

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Last week I celebrated 12 years of working here at Wall Street. Some of you have known me all this time, a few even longer than that... but many of you are newer to the church and may not know much about me. So here's a condensed 'Coles notes' version of some of my life story.



In my early adult years I started up and ran a successful Disc Jockey business, playing music at every dance hall from Morrisburg to Mallorytown; from Smiths Falls to Kemptville –for every kind of party or celebration you can think of; and I did this for over 30 years before giving up those very late nights and lugging around all those vinyl records, cd's and heavy equipment.

My day job for 32 years was at the Hathaway Shirt Factory in Prescott. In 32 years I had many job duties there...all involving speed and pressure to perform. Then when they closed the factory... almost 13 years ago I was offered a retraining course which led to my starting a new career, working here as Office Manager. And I'm really hopeful that this will be the job I retire from.

As for my faith journey; I have been a member of Roebuck United Church all of my life. Roebuck is a little hamlet (or wide spot in the road) about 10 minutes North of Prescott and was always my home base until I moved to Prescott 4 years ago.



For many of those growing up and early adult years I have to admit that I really had no idea why I went to church; especially when I had to get up for 9:30 a.m. services after being out the night before until 2 or 3 a.m. as a DJ.

My attendance had nothing to do with my faith but was more because it was the expected thing for me to do. And mostly because of the good examples set by my parents and grandparents. I had good friends at

church and there has always been a strong sense of 'family' there... but if not for that I probably wouldn't have gone to church at all.

It hardly seems possible that this much time has flown by, but I'm happy to tell you that about 20 years ago I finally discovered a more meaningful reason for going to church.

Under the direction of our student minister, the Alpha course was offered in our church. If you haven't heard of it; Alpha is a video teaching series on the basics of Christianity.

I remember thinking I really wasn't that interested in 'Christianity', but being a "need to know everything that is going on" kind of person; I thought I would check it out.

We had fun at Alpha and I made some very good and lasting friendships there. Eventually I stayed awake long enough to see the videos, and absorb some of those basic teachings of our faith. Through the lessons in Alpha and the wise new friends God put around me, my life began to turn in a totally new direction with God and Jesus as a conscious part of my life for the very first time.

In the beginning I was very cautious. I didn't jump in right away. But I found that the more I learned and the more experiences I had ...well the more I recognized just how awesome believing in God, Jesus and Holy Spirit really is. I went from cautious, to developing an almost urgent need to learn and grow and experience more.

There were so many lessons to learn and that I could tell you about. But the topic I'd like to talk about today is learning to trust God.

For children it seems easy to trust. Children are not as jaded or cynical as adults seem to be. It seems almost automatic for kids to trust people; especially those who love them.

For adults who have faced some of the difficulties that this world can throw at us, we often have a way of putting up walls ...wanting to rely on our own devices and not depend or trust in anyone whose actions might determine the outcome of any part of our lives. Trusting often becomes a discipline that we have to work on and re-learn.

A good illustration of learning to trust is on a sports team. Whenever a baseball team gets a new manager or a hockey team gets a new coach there is a time of testing. The members of the team don't know this new person at all. The coach/manager might have some crazy new ideas in their play book. The players may be asked to do things differently than before. But as team members they have to accept the guidance of the coach, and they have to *learn* to trust him. If a player goes off on his own

agenda and doesn't take the signal of the coach...well it is rare that anything good will come of it.

The same principal is true of God. Many times the signals God gives us seem a little 'out' there and don't make much sense to us, and certainly take us out of our comfort zones; but if we don't follow through on God's directives then we are likely to be the ones left standing at the plate, wondering what better result would have happened *had* we followed through on that signal from God.

As players on a team learn to trust in their new coach as they get to know him, we too can learn to trust God as we get to know him better too.

Author, speaker Rick Warren says that *"Every time you trust God's wisdom and do whatever God says, even when you don't understand it, you deepen your friendship with God."*

As God led me into unknown and even uncomfortable places on my new faith journey, God gave me some pretty awesome personal examples of the benefits of putting your trust in God.

I had been working at Hathaways for 26 years and I had been off work or on light duties for what was diagnosed as a job injury. After several months you could say that my employer had lost patience with my lack of healing. In their frustration, conditions and ultimatums were put on my employment that I felt were not right or fair! I had my Drs. telling me not to return to these job duties because of fear of further injury, and 'work' saying that I would go back to this job ... or else. I was being "strong armed" and facing the very real possibility of being 'let go' from my job!

To say that I was stressed out over this was an understatement. I kept going over and over in my mind — How will I pay my bills? What about my benefits, my holidays, my seniority? This job is all I know! I was a real mess!

Some good friends had come together to pray and support me but I really wasn't functioning or hearing very well at that moment. And then through the fog of fear in my mind, the voice of one of my friends got through! She asked me quite firmly:

"Cathie! Do you believe in God?"

I said, "Yes I do!"

Then she asked me, "Do you trust God?"

I said, "ah yeah, I guess so!"

"Then give it to Him!" she told me.

"Give it to Him?" I wasn't sure I knew what she meant. She said: "Give God your job! Give God your finances! Give God your benefits! Just give the whole situation to God! TRUST HIM!"

So right there, in that moment, I prayed to God in a way I never had before. As scared as I was, I asked God to take control of the situation... and I said out loud that I trusted Him to work it all out.

The next morning; even though I was still struggling with my fears; I was able to follow my heart and chose not to give in to the ultimatums that work was demanding.

As stressed as I was, I had to believe that whatever happened, God would help me.

That same afternoon I got a call from work, offering me a new, less physical and more suitable job, with absolutely no conditions whatsoever. It was a total, complete turnaround of the previous position they had taken!

I still remember the feeling that went through me when my friend said: "Well I guess God came through didn't he!"

What a revelation it was when I realized that I had trusted my 'mess' to God and God had come through and made the way to make things right! I heard a quote once... "Give your mess to God and let him make it your message."

About 5 years later it was announced that this same factory I had worked in all these years was going to close. In the past when closing the plant was threatened, I had been devastated. But because of the journey I was now on with God, and of my learning more and more to trust God, I was able to face this impending closure with much less anxiety than before. As it was becoming a reality that my time at Hathaway was coming to an end, I again put my future in God's hands and I asked him to help.

WSIB (Workers Safety Insurance Board) actually paid all the expenses; (course, salary, mileage) to send me back to school for a 5 month retraining course in Office Administration. I was able to drive back and forth to Ottawa everyday (without falling asleep). (A minor miracle in itself.) I went on a previously booked trip to the Holy Land in the middle of the course and at the end finished with an honours mark. Then I had two months left to get a job before my benefits would end.

There were a few resumes sent out but I only had 2 interviews ...and both were here at the church. Then the very day I got my last cheque in the mail from WSIB, was the exact same day I got the call offering me the job here at Wall Street.

On that day I could look back on the past few months and see how God had orchestrated and laid out the whole thing. Like one of our recent Celebrate Life speakers said: "there were just too many coincidences for it to have been a coincidence". And I'm still here (12 years later) and still very happy in the job God had planned for me.

This illustration is one of my favourites. My friend Joe Martelle refers to it as: "that damn bike story"...but if you were looking it up it's called the **Road of Life:**

*At first, I saw God as my observer, my judge, keeping track of things I did wrong, so as to know whether I merited heaven or hell when I die. He was sort of like a mighty ruler, I recognized His picture when I saw it, but I really didn't know Him.*

*But later on when I met Christ it seemed as though life were rather like a bike ride, but it was a tandem bike, and I noticed that Christ was in the back helping me pedal.*



*I don't know just when it was that He suggested we change places, but life has not been the same since.*

*When I had control, I knew the way. It was rather boring, but predictable...It was the shortest distance between two points.*

*But when He took the lead, he knew delightful long cuts, up mountains, and through rocky places at breakneck speeds, it was all I could do to hang on!*

*Even though it looked like madness, he said, Pedal! I worried and was anxious and asked, "Where are you taking me?" He laughed and didn't answer, and I started to learn to trust.*

*I forgot my boring life and entered into the adventure. And when I'd say "I'm scared," He'd lean back and touch my hand.*

*I did not trust God, at first, in control of my life. I thought He'd wreck it; but He knows bike secrets, knows how to make it bend to take sharp corners, knows how to jump to clear high rocks, knows how to fly to shorten scary passages. And I am learning to shut up and pedal in the strangest places, and I am beginning to enjoy the view and the cool breeze on my face with my delightful constant companion, Jesus Christ.*

*And when I'm sure I just can't do anymore, he just smiles and says... "Pedal!"*

There are many scriptures in the Bible encouraging us to trust God. Today we heard in 1 Peter Chapter 1:

*"You love him even though you have never seen him. Though you do not see him now, you trust him; and you rejoice with a glorious, inexpressible joy. The reward for trusting him will be the salvation of your souls."*

And from the well-known Proverbs Chapter 3:

*“Trust God from the bottom of your heart; don't try to figure out everything on your own. Listen for God's voice in everything you do, everywhere you go; he's the one who will keep you on track.”*

Many of us have a favourite scripture that means a lot to us; a go-to word that always gives us encouragement. Mine is Jeremiah 29:11

*“For I know the plans I have for you. Plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”*

Looking back, even before my Christian days, I can see how God was working and preparing me to serve. I often say that even those 30 years as a DJ were preparation for things like being up here today and being able to speak in front of a crowd.

Even on those days and years when ‘I was steering’ that tandem bike I know there were times when Jesus hit the brakes or pedaled faster to save me from trouble and harm. I can easily say that “only by the grace of God go I.”

As we learn to trust that God does have a plan for each of us, and for our futures; and we let him do the steering...then the trials and mountains and curves that life throws at us will seem a lot easier and less stressful to face.

I encourage each one of you to trust God with the circumstances in your life today, and just hold on tight to those handle bars and follow those new and exciting paths God will lead you on. ... and enjoy the ride.

Thanks be to God. Amen.