

ME? A CHRISTIAN? DON'T COUNT ON IT!

"If God exists, I dare him to sit down in front of me right now and be interviewed!"
(Pause)

"Well, apparently God doesn't exist or maybe he's under the weather today (chuckle)."

The year was 1970. I was at my peak as the most hated radio talk show host in our area and I loved it! People called me blasphemous, filthy, disgusting. Things couldn't have been better. I was young, hot and on my way to the top. But it didn't start out that way.

I was born to Christian parents who loved God and served Him with all their hearts. I grew up in churches. I participated in the children and youth programs. I made a profession of faith in Christ as a boy. I sang in the choir. I was a teen leader. I gave my testimony in church. I won Bible drills. I worked at a national denominational summer camp. The only problem was, I wasn't saved. My religion was dry and useless. I was dead in trespasses and sins.

I became more and more disenchanted with church and the Christians in it as I became an older teenager. I went to church less and less. We changed churches but that didn't change me. I moved away from the influence of my parents and began doing what "I" wanted to do. I drifted further and further away from what I had known to be right and wrong. I began living a wilder lifestyle. I got deeper and deeper into what the world had to offer.

By 1969, I was heavily involved in sin. It brought me great, though temporary, pleasure. I needed to sin more and more. I thirsted and hungered for sin. My lust for sin and disgust for the church led me to a belief that God did not and could not exist. It is certainly easier to live a life of sin if you don't believe in God. If there is no God, there is no sin and no punishment.

I started as a radio talk show host and newsman in a small market. I moved to a larger market the next year and quickly became a well-known talk show host. I used the airwaves to promote my atheistic beliefs. The Christian community bombarded me with phone calls. They couldn't stand the things I said about their God. They hated my views on almost everything. I found it easy to move Christians away from intellectual discussions about God to emotional reactions to things I said. I would get Christians

angry enough to say some unloving thing about me and then cut them off the air. I would say things like, "Well, there's another example of a loving Christian (sneer)." That would anger other Christians who would call me on the air and we'd repeat the pattern. I enjoyed making Christians sound bad. Pastors would call me and finally lose their cool because of how I could manipulate the conversation to make their arguments seem silly and frivolous. The Christians who called were no match. I thought I had them all whipped.

My parents lived in the same area and heard my blasphemous remarks. They knew what people were saying about me. What did they do? They loved me and prayed. They never stopped praying. One day, I remember it very well, my mother told me she was praying for me. I told her not to waste her time. She told me she was confident I would soon receive Christ as my Savior. I laughed, placed my arm around her and said: "Me? A Christian? Don't count on it!" She smiled and gave me a knowing hug.

Something very strange happened a few months later. The owner of our station told us he was changing the format from News/Talk Radio to Religious programming. Religious? He had to be kidding! I was between a rock and a hard place. I had to have a job but I didn't want to start doing religious radio. The need for money won out and I stayed. I ended up playing gospel music and religious programs during my on-air shift.

I was able to keep a weekly two-hour interview program, even though the topics had to be about religion. I looked for the most off-beat religious topics I could find. I interviewed the leader of a Satanic church, witches, and pastors of a gay-lesbian church, to name a few. I heard about a man who was going to lead an expedition to Turkey to search for the remains of Noah's Ark. I thought it would be a hoot to interview this guy and make fun of his plans. But God had other plans. He was about to get the best of me!

I got to the studio early to arrange everything for the interview. I set up two Ampex quarter-inch, reel-to-reel tape machines to record the interview. I set up the cart machines to play commercial breaks during the interview. I placed records on the two turntables and cued up the music I'd use in and out of each interview segment. I was ready and waiting. I had done a little research about the man I was going to interview. I read he believed in a world-wide flood that killed the dinosaurs, only a few thousand years ago. He really believed God had saved the human race by putting a man, his family and a whole lot of animals on a boat. He was actually going to climb a mountain and look for the remains! I also read he believed God had created the earth in six days. I was going to have a lot of fun with this guy! Everybody knew it took millions of years for life to evolve. He believed the human race had started with one

man and one woman in a garden and that a snake had duped them into ruining it for everybody by tricking them into eating an apple. I was going to make mincemeat of this guy!

Dr. Henry M. Morris was a kind, soft-spoken man. He was extremely intellectual and scientific in his approach to my questions. Instead of making fun of him, I found myself amazed at his knowledge. I was actually talking with a Christian who knew something about science. In fact, he was a professor of science! He received his Ph.D. from the University of Minnesota and served on the faculties of five major universities. He was head of the Civil Engineering Department at the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University for 13 years. He was co-founder and President of Christian Heritage College. He was President of the Institute for Creation Research. Dr. Morris fended off my tough questions as if I were just a freshman in one of his basic college courses. His knowledge and kind spirit impressed me. He explained the purpose of his expedition to search for Noah's Ark in a way that made me almost believe it could be true. He showed me pictures and newspaper articles that supported the real possibility that a giant structure the size of the Ark might be on Mt. Ararat.

I thanked Dr. Morris profusely at the end of the interview and wished him luck in his search. He thanked me and wished me well. What was happening? How could I be so easily swayed to consider something I knew in my heart couldn't be true? I didn't know what, but something had happened to me that day.

God wasn't through answering prayers. I heard about a Christian ministry that ran Gospel films at a drive-in theater. I thought that might be an off-beat kind of interview. I called the director of the ministry and asked him if he would appear on my interview show. He said he would.

Terry Lytle was a kind, well-spoken, talented man. I didn't know it then, but later learned he was quite concerned about appearing on my show. Terry knew my reputation as an atheist and Christian-hater. He had heard me tear up Christians on the air. Terry depended on God to show him how to respond to me and my questions. I found Terry's stories about depending on God for his life and ministry fascinating. I don't know why, but I was nice to him, just like I was to Dr. Morris. I had made fools of other Christians I had interviewed, why not them?

I kept in touch with Terry after the interview. We went out to lunch. I stopped by his office from time to time. I advised him on his sound system at the drive-in theater. I met his family and found them very warm and loving people. I met Dr. Ed Hindson who worked with Terry. I spent hours asking Terry and Ed questions about the existence of God and proof that the Bible was real. They told me about Jesus Christ

and His love for me. They told me about how He died a cruel death for me. I knew the story, but I never "knew" the story. It never hit me that if the Son of God had died for me, that was the greatest love I had ever known.

They patiently dealt with me until one day Terry asked me a life-changing question. He asked me if I knew of any reason why I shouldn't receive Christ as my Savior. I thought for a moment and told him "no", I couldn't think of any reason. Terry and I went into his office. We sat down in chairs across from each other. He led me in a simple prayer. I told God I believed in Him. I told God I was a sinner and needed His forgiveness. I told God I believed He had sent His Son Jesus Christ to live a perfect life on earth and die on the cross for my sins. I asked God to forgive me my sins. I asked Jesus to come into my heart and give me eternal life. Terry prayed for me and my new life in Christ. I looked at Terry. He looked at me. We smiled and shook hands. That was my spiritual beginning.

It's been more than 40 years since I prayed that simple prayer in Terry's office. God has been very good to me. He's never let me down. He's kept all His promises. I know what the future holds because I know Who holds the future. I've tasted of the Love and Grace of God. I've seen the mountain top. I've been in the valley. I can say with no reservation that a life of following Christ is The Greatest Life. It is the wisest of many choices.

I thank God for sending Dr. Morris, Terry Lytle, and Dr. Hindson into my life. I thank God for giving me parents who loved me through good and bad and prayed for their wayward son.

If you are asking some of the tough questions about God and life right now, I understand. If you're an atheist, I understand. If you hate Christians and the Church, I understand. Been there...Done that. Truthfully, every question you have can be answered. Every pain you feel can be healed. God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life. It begins when you talk to God and tell Him you need Him. He's there for you. He will forgive you. He will comfort you. He'll love you every second of your life. God is what the world needs now. God meets my every need. He meets the needs of millions of other people. He'll meet your needs, too.

How do you get God's attention? How do you get Him to listen to you? By grace through faith. The Apostle Paul explained it well in Ephesians 2:8-9:

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast."

Speak to God right now. Tell Him your sorrows. Tell Him your pain. Tell Him your need. Tell Him your heart's deepest secrets. He knows you and loves you. Nothing you have ever done is too much for His Great, Forgiving Heart. He wants you to be with Him forever. Tell Him now. Ask His forgiveness. Receive His Free Gift of Salvation now. Trust Christ. Place your faith in Him. No need to wait any longer. God loves you now. He wants you to know His forgiveness now. His Grace will cover every sin.

If you want to know more, if you have tough questions, contact me at mmcgee4@tampabay.rr.com. I'd love to share more with you about what God wants to do for you. He wants to give you the best life has to offer. He wants to give you a fantastic life that lasts forever! Now I can say, "Me? A Christian? You bet!"

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