

I pray mostly to God to ask for courage - courage to be bold enough to use my story to help bring others to the Lord - after all that is what we are asked to do as Christ's children. Born into a large Catholic family and only one generation from Ireland I guess you could say Christianity was in my blood - I was infant baptised, attended a Catholic school and went to mass several times a week, many stories of being an altar boy (getting to test the wine before a service etc.), many rituals but not much understanding of what I was really a part of. I just did what my father and his forefathers had done for generations - went through the motions. If you had asked me to quote the Lord's Prayer or a set of Rosary Prayers I could do it word for word (the nuns made sure of that! Bless them), but if you had asked me what it meant I could not have told you. When I was just 5 years old I remember standing in the front porch of my Grandmother's house in Thames and Father Fitzgerald squeezing my hand and telling me that 'mummy won't ever be coming home again as she is with the Lord' - my mother was tragically killed in a head on car accident driving back to Auckland; she was also 5 months pregnant with what would have been our 5th sibling. I was shattered and there's not a day that passes without me wondering what life would have been like had she lived. As a father of my own children now, and with a young son, I often watch him and his mother together and sometimes feel great loss; sometimes I remember to thank the Lord for giving back what he has taken away - always I remind myself that He has a purpose for everything, we just need to work our way through it in our own time. My Dad was naturally devastated by my mother's death and to this day I'm not sure he ever grieved properly - he is a proud man, a good man, but also very practical, his answer to us was that things happen in life and you just have to accept it and move on. I'm not sure he ever did, that's just the generation he was from. My father then met my step-mum (a Baptist would you believe!) and we moved away to begin a new life as a blended family of 6. Life was always going to be a challenge in this environment and it still is today. After a long period (some 15 years) away from any form of church I met and married a most wonderful lady that was more in touch with her spiritual beliefs than I. I was challenged to stand up for who I was and who I was going to be, both as a father and a husband - sometimes us guys need that head on challenge, too often we take the quiet road and say we will get there in our time but if you wait too long you may never make that decision to follow the Lord before you meet him! We were blessed with a beautiful daughter and I guess the forming of my new family gave me the motivation to get moving on my faith journey. We attended WPBC with Brian Winslade and I always thought of him as the spiritual dad I never had - Brian was real, he was totally believable and a man of great faith. I sat through so many sermons that really made me start thinking. Better still I really started to understand the meaning of true faith. When Brian left and Grant arrived I was equally drawn to another man of faith who was also very real and believable - it was so helpful to be guided by two pastors that are truly passionate about the Lord. At 42 I was baptised at WBPC at a Sunday morning service - I wanted it to be my public pledge to the Lord. I finally felt that I had accepted the Lord and felt so welcome and encouraged in a Church that has many great believers. The point of my story is simple - we are all different - many have had hardships in their faith journey - but as Joel Osteen once said - the giant (Goliath) only exists in your mind, there is nothing too powerful for our Lord - He can defeat all - we are all David's, we just need the courage to pick up that sling and face our giants!