Becoming Christian

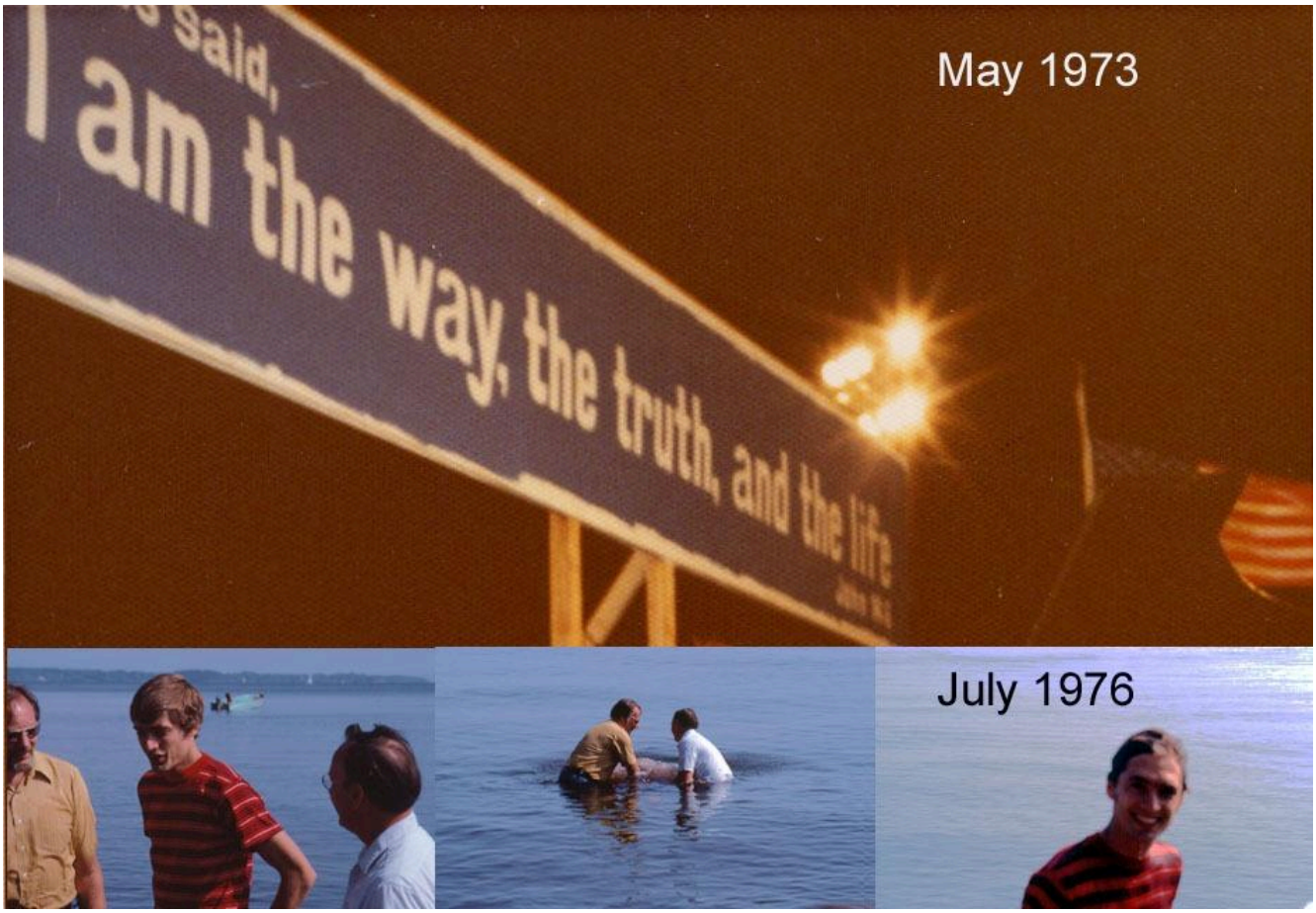
Until first grade, I was “Catholic,” because my father was. After he died, I was “Methodist” because my parents went to a Methodist church. After high school, I was a “nothing” and questioning. It wasn’t until my time at Navy Officer Candidate School that both my wife (of 2 years) and I were getting signs (separately) that we should look into what it really meant to be a Christian. We both had backgrounds of growing up in the Methodist church and thought we were “Christian.” But we began to realize that there must be more to this Christian thing than going to church and being religious. (Sadly, many “Christians” never make it beyond this stage.)

Turns out my first tour of duty was to replace a Supply officer at the Navy Public Works Center on Guam. (I was not a Supply officer, but a Civil Engineer Corps officer, and my job was to be the Assistant Operations Officer of the PWC.) Well, surprise! The Supply officer was a Christian leading a Bible study. Both Pat and I started attending. The study continued after the Supply officer left and eventually Pat realized her need for Christ and accepted His will for her life.

Me? Well, it took a little longer. Initially, during the group study, I hid another book that interested me, inside the Bible I was holding. I didn’t understand the Bible enough for its words to make sense to me. Besides, how would I know if what it was saying was true? Plus, all this stuff about turning away from your sinful life and freeing yourself from guilt or the consequences of your sins definitely didn’t make sense. For one, I didn’t have a sinful life. (I didn’t know until later what my sins were.) And second, I didn’t feel guilty about anything. So what “works” for those who understand their need, especially those who’ve reached a low point in their life or are sorry for their past, didn’t work for me.

As I searched for other reasons to believe, one thing that stood out was the Resurrection. (The Resurrection is what sets the Christian religion apart from all the other world religions.) Surely anyone that can rise from the dead must be from a “creator” level of existence – from the same source as the God who created us. But, you can’t believe that just because the Bible says it’s true. So I started reading anything I could find to validate the Resurrection. Everything I read was stories about those who tried to disprove it and ended up believing it; including scientists and doctors using historical data. I was convinced it happened. So in May 1973, I publicly declared my faith at a Grady Wilson crusade on Guam.

This photo of the Grady Wilson crusade on Guam and my later baptism in Lake Champlain (along with its caption) have been on my bulletin board for over 25 years. (I just realized that this is the 50th anniversary of my baptism.)



"There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death." Proverbs 14:12
"Jesus answered, 'I am the way and the truth and the life.'" John 14:6

Okay, now I believed, but what do I believe? The Bible became the source of my knowledge about God. The more I read about Jesus, the more I saw his superhuman insight and love. His thoughts were beyond mortal. After more Bible study, I began to see the big picture woven throughout the Bible: how God created us to love him and others, and what our response should be. I'm still learning and growing. Every day I am amazed at and so thankful for what God did and is doing in my life.

The words of the song "Pass It On" make more sense now as *"I wish for you, my friend, this happiness that I've found."* Funny that the reason many people aren't interested in hearing this "good news" is because of what they think a Christian is or stands for (based on bad examples) or incorrectly assuming what a Christian has to do. After Pat died and I moved back to Vermont, I began to jot down some of my thoughts regarding being a Christian. What is that central theme running through the Bible? How might this theme play out? How do we love? Perhaps my thoughts could be useful to someone else wondering like I did back at OCS: *There must be more to this Christian thing than going to church and being religious.* Check out the verse on my website (vtpierces.net) to read my thoughts.

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