

Unexpected Opportunities

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How I became a Christian broadcaster, and then became a Christian.

Part 1

This week I'm going to give my personal testimony, in which I tell you how I became a Christian broadcaster, and then became a Christian. I realize now that God has guided my entire life through a series of unexpected opportunities.

I was raised an atheist by atheistic parents. In grade school I was a nerd. That was back in the days before Bill Gates made it cool to be a nerd, so I didn't have many friends. My only friend was science. I did all the experiments in my chemistry set before I finished 4th grade. In junior high I built an oscilloscope from a Heathkit, and then modified it to improve the design. Although I did not apply for the job, I was hired to help graduate students in the University of Nebraska Hydrodynamics Lab do research in bi-stable fluid amplifiers the summer before I became a freshman there. That was an unexpected opportunity.

Despite being a science freak, I never really believed in Darwinian evolution. I knew it was nonsense, but I accepted it because "scientists said" it was true, and the only other explanation was creation, which I thought was nonsense of a higher order. My teachers could not adequately defend evolution; but they assured me that when I got older I would understand it.

In my senior year of high school, we all took aptitude tests which were supposed to tell us seniors the three careers in which we would be most successful.

Career number 3 on my result sheet was musician. This was not surprising because I played in a rock band, had gotten a job teaching guitar at the local music store a few months earlier which I really enjoyed. I had gotten the job because Rick Evans had quit to record a song called, "In the Year 2525," with his friend Deny Zager. That was an unexpected opportunity.

Career number 2 was scientist. That was no surprise. because, although I loved making music, I was smart enough to know it is too hard to make a decent living playing the guitar, and was going to become an electrical engineer.

The aptitude test said the job I was most suited for was "minister," which invalidated the entire test in my mind. I was an atheist. How could I be happy being a minister? Clearly the test was flawed, and the two other correct career suggestions were just random flukes. But I wasn't going to base my career decisions on some silly test anyway. I was going to go to the University of Nebraska and become an electrical engineer, just like I had always planned to do.

While working at Dietze Music, teaching guitar, I could not help but notice the lovely girl who taught organ in the studio two doors away from me. I didn't ask her out on a date for more than a year for three reasons. First of all, I was a nerd, and I knew she would turn me down. Second, she had an identical twin sister who also worked there, and I wasn't about to get involved with either of them until I could definitely tell them apart. Third, he father owned the music store. There is an inherent danger in dating the boss' daughter. If things go bad, I might lose my job as well as the girl.

One night, 46 years ago, all my students unexpectedly cancelled, and none of her students showed up. So, I worked up the courage to take advantage of the unexpected opportunity, and asked her to go to the teen night club down the street with me. She did, and we've been together ever since.

Besides teaching organ at Dietze, Susie had another job. Ever since she was 15 years old she had been making \$1,000/year playing the organ Sunday mornings at First Lutheran Church. So, this atheist started going to church every Sunday morning; but not because I loved Jesus.

We got married in 1969. Then, in 1971, I graduated and got a job at the Naval Weapons Center, China Lake. We quit our jobs and moved out here.

That was the end of my music career. I had a full time engineering job, a baby on the way, and no band mates to play with. So, I became a responsible husband and father.

Being new in town, we also had no friends. So, we went to church. Church is where you meet nice friendly people, even if you don't believe in God. Listening to a boring sermon is a small price to pay for friendship.

Susie really did believe in God, and had been a Lutheran all her life, so we gave Grace Lutheran a try. That particular Sunday morning Shirley Helmick played her harpsichord, and we knew that was the church for us. We immediately joined by profession of faith. I lied and said I believed because I wanted to be part of the group. I figured there was no harm in lying to a God who didn't exist.

Susie was quickly added to the volunteer organist rotation, and it seemed like it was her turn to play nearly every week. That meant that when the baby came, I was stuck in the Mothers' Room with our daughter nearly every week.

Two and a half years later, our son was born. I was stuck in the Mothers' Room again, and was reminded of what a bad situation that was. The problem was the church audio system. There were just two microphones. One was the pastor's lavalier microphone. The other was a microphone on a stand for the lay reader which was only turned on for the reading of the Old Testament and New Testament lessons. So, all that could be heard in the Mothers' Room was the sound picked up by the microphone hanging from the pastor's neck.

There is a lot of singing in a Lutheran church service. That's one of the reasons we joined Grace Lutheran. The pastor at the time had many wonderful talents; but singing certainly wasn't one of them. So, most of the time, the only thing the mothers in the Mothers' Room could hear was terrible, off-key singing that drowned out the organ and congregation. It made the tortures of Hell pale in comparison.

Being a compassionate electronic engineer, I decided to do all future mothers a favor by designing a new audio system for the Mothers' Room. I added a microphone in the sanctuary ceiling to pick up congregational singing. Then I built an audio mixer with three inputs. The ceiling microphone went into the first input. The PA signal went to the second input. The third input went to a microphone mounted on the audio mixer. There was a special switch that cut out the speaker whenever this microphone was on to prevent feedback. I did this so that the Mothers' Room could double as a radio studio if, in the distant future, we ever decided to do a radio broadcast.

When it was all done and installed, I showed it to the pastor. Since I didn't want to say that it was because of his terrible singing, I told him that it was so that we would have the capability of doing a radio broadcast if we ever wanted to. Later that week, a salesman from KZIQ just happened to drop by the

pastor's office and tell him that the church could have the half-hour 11 o'clock time slot every Sunday morning for just \$40 a month. The pastor immediately signed the contract. Then the pastor called me to tell me I had my radio broadcast.

I really didn't want to do a radio broadcast. I had just added that capability to the mixer board because engineers tend to get carried away and add extra cool features to the things they design, just because they can. Now, because I had the tool, God gave me the unexpected opportunity to use it.

I decided to call the program, "Sunday Morning Worship at Grace." The idea was to make it possible for people who could not make it to church to hear the church service. The fundamental problem, of course, was that the one hour church service would not fit into a half-hour slot. My solution was to record the 8:30 service, editing it in real time down to half an hour, and get the cassette tape to KZIQ by 11 AM. This would make it appear to the listeners that they were hearing the 11 AM worship service, when they were actually hearing just half of the 8:30 service.

It occurred to me that people who attended the service in person could read the bulletin and see how the service all fit together. People listening on the radio would not have a bulletin. So, I started the broadcast with the opening hymn. During the second verse I would fade the music down and briefly introduce the broadcast by saying, "Welcome to Sunday Morning Worship at Grace. Today is [date], the [nth] Sunday of [whatever season]. Today's Gospel is taken from [chapter and verse]. The sermon title is [...] in which the pastor will tell us [something]." Then I would bring the music back up and cut the hymn off at the end of the second verse. The pastor's sermon was usually about 10 minutes, so I had time to include the scripture text, sermon, special music, and finish out the broadcast recording as much of the closing hymn as needed to make the tape one half hour long.

To do this, I would have to call the pastor up Saturday night to find out the sermon title, and get a summary of the sermon, and the scripture text. This was really the first time I had ever read any part of the Bible. It was kind of confusing because what the pastor said about the Bible text often didn't really agree with what the Bible text actually said. That particular pastor was very much into secular psychology, and tried to twist the scripture verses to agree with science. This made it hard for me to write the opening in which I explained how the sermon related to what the Bible said.

Remember, at this time I didn't believe in God or the Bible. I didn't really care what the Bible said. But I didn't want to look like a fool saying that Bible said what the pastor said it said, when anyone who listened to the Bible reading could hear that it didn't.

I produced Sunday Morning Worship at Grace from 1975 until the end of 1977. Something happened in 1977 that made it impossible for me continue the broadcast. God was guiding me. I'll tell you how after my wife plays, Guide Me O Thou Great Jehovah.

[music – Susan Pogge, "Guide Me O Thou Great Jehovah"]

Part 2

In the first segment of our broadcast, I told you about the unexpected opportunities that led me to become a Christian broadcaster, even though I wasn't a Christian. I was producing a program called, "Sunday Morning Worship at Grace," which was an abbreviated version of that morning's worship service. I was struggling with my weekly introduction to the broadcast, in which I had to explain how the pastor's sermon fit with that morning's Bible text, when it often didn't. At the time, I didn't realize that many Christian beliefs aren't based on the Bible or the teachings of Jesus; but have roots in pagan mythology and anti-Semitism.

The church offered a class on what the other Christian denominations believe. Susie and I decided to take the class. It quickly became apparent that the class should have been titled, "Why all the other denominations are wrong." Susie was busy playing the organ every Sunday morning, and I was busy doing the radio broadcast every Sunday morning, so we could not visit the Baptist, Methodist, or Presbyterian churches to see for ourselves if what the class said wrong with the other denominations was true or not. But we were free on Saturday morning, when the Seventh-day Adventists meet, so we decided to visit their church and be able to participate in our class discussion by telling what we saw and heard first hand.

The Gospel text for the previous Sunday's broadcast had been 1 Thessalonians, chapter 4. In it Paul assures the Thessalonians that the righteous dead will sleep in the grave until the second coming, at which time they will be resurrected and taken to heaven. But the pastor's sermon had been all about how Christians go straight to heaven when they die, and are watching over their loved ones on Earth. This had been particularly troubling to me because what the pastor said clearly contradicted what the Bible said. Not only that, what the pastor said didn't make any sense. What's the point of the judgment at the second coming if most of the people are already in Heaven or Hell? Is God going to bring someone from Hell before the throne of judgment, decide that the person didn't really belong in Hell, and apologize for the mistake?

When Susie and I visited the Adventist church the next Saturday morning, God had arranged for the Adventist preacher to talk about 1 Thessalonians, chapter 4. The Adventist preacher's sermon agreed perfectly with what the Bible said. I later learned that notion that people go straight to Heaven or Hell when they die actually comes from Greek mythology, not the Bible. The doctrine was adopted by the Roman Catholic Church in order to sell Indulgences.

Unfortunately, this false doctrine still remains in many Protestant denominations today. It was a stumbling block to me 45 years ago because it made me think the Bible was contradictory. I thought the Bible said in some places that people go to Heaven or Hell when they die, and said they sleep in the grave until the resurrection in other places. How could I believe two opposite things were true? Now that I have read the entire Bible multiple times, I know that the Bible is consistent with itself. Contradictions only arise when the church tries to incorporate non-Biblical doctrines.

The next Sunday, the broadcast was about Sabbath. The Bible clearly says that Sabbath begins at sundown Friday and lasts until sunset Saturday. But the pastor said that Jesus abolished the Ten Commandments, and we should worship on Sunday to honor Jesus' resurrection instead of the Jewish Sabbath. The following Saturday morning, we visited the Adventist church. God inspired the preacher to give a sermon about the importance of obeying God to the best of our ability, and the importance of dedicating the entire Sabbath, from sunset Friday until sunset Saturday, to God.

As the weeks went on, Susie and I continued to visit the Adventist church and heard sermons straight from the Bible. I still didn't believe, but I could appreciate the fact that the Adventist doctrines were consistent with the Bible. I became more and more uncomfortable broadcasting programs in which the pastor tried to harmonize pagan doctrines and secular ideas with clearly incompatible Biblical truth. So, at the end of 1977, I found someone else to produce Sunday Morning Worship at Grace.

In 1978, our family went to the Adventist church on Saturday morning, and the Lutheran church on Sunday. Susie had been a life-long Lutheran, with nearly perfect attendance at church since got the job as church organist when she was 15 years old. She was hearing things in the Adventist church that she had never heard in church before. When she checked these new doctrines out in the Bible, she was amazed to

find out they were correct. She was angry that things she had been told in church all her life obviously weren't true.

In 1979, we decided to go down to Los Angeles to hear George Vandeman give a day-long lecture on the book of Revelation. We had seen George Vandeman a couple of times on his TV program, *It Is Written*. He clearly explained how history showed that most of the prophecies in the Bible had been perfectly fulfilled, and that we must be living in the last days when the final few prophecies would be fulfilled. Susie had never heard any of these things, and was amazed. I was most impressed by the Messianic prophecies, which proved Jesus must be the Messiah. I was finally convinced that the Bible really is the infallible word of God.

We rode back from Los Angeles meeting in the Adventist pastor's car, and the topic of radio evangelism came up. I told him that I had done Sunday Morning Worship at Grace for 3 years, and that if I had the opportunity I would do something different. Simply broadcasting the morning worship service certainly had some merit. It allowed people who happened to be sick that day to hear the sermon. But listening to a worship service on the radio is no substitute for actual church worship; and I really didn't want people to get into the habit of skipping church to listen to the radio. I said that, if I had it to do all over again, I would do a Christian variety program, mixing personal testimonies of lay people with inspirational readings, sermons, and music.

Later that week, a salesman from KZIQ dropped by the Adventist pastor's office and offered him the half-hour slot from 10:30 to 11 AM on Sunday morning for \$50 a month. He immediately accepted, and called to give me the good news.

I didn't say I wanted to go back into Christian broadcasting. I had just said that, if I had it to do all over again, I would do it differently. But now I suddenly had the unexpected opportunity to do what I said I thought should be done.

Producing *The Word With Us* took a lot more work than Sunday Morning Worship at Grace did. It took me about 10 hours per week to produce a 30 minute broadcast. It was all done using a couple of reel-to-reel tape recorders to edit everything together into a single program that could be copied to a cassette tape. After producing a new program every week for 3 years, I began to run out of material. I had covered the entire life of Christ, and interviewed everyone I could think of. Then it occurred to me that Jesus taught everything He felt He needed to teach in 3 years. What's more, I realized that anything worth saying once was worth saying twice. So, for the next two years we broadcast reruns.

Then the church board evaluated all the evangelistic programs, and came to the conclusion that after five years of broadcasting the church had not gained a single new member because of *The Word With Us*, and decided to terminate the program. Honestly, I was rather glad to be relieved of the responsibility. Even producing reruns was taking up a considerable amount of time.

I thought I was done with broadcasting, but, obviously, God had other plans for me. I'll tell you about them after Becky Richardson sings, "I Have Decided to Follow Jesus," accompanied by Susan Pogge.

[music – Becky Richardson and Susan Pogge, "I Have Decided to Follow Jesus"]

Part 3

In the first two segments, I told you how unexpected opportunities resulted in me being given a radio program that I wasn't really trying to get. In each case, the opportunity arose, and I was the only man for

the job. Both times it turned out to be an unexpected blessing. I thought I was out of the radio business for good in 1984; but God had other ideas. First, God had a detour planned.

As I told you in the first segment, even as an atheist I just could not believe in evolution. Darwinian evolution is patently unscientific. There was no way I could reconcile the Darwinian fables with real, experimentally verifiable science. But, as an atheist, I had no choice but to accept it. The creationist explanation was out of the question.

After the historic fulfillment of prophecies had convinced me that the Bible is of supernatural origin. And the personal experience of having God working in my life had convinced me that God really does exist, and was correctly described in the Bible. So now there was no longer any need for me to even pretend to believe the irrational notion of Darwinian evolution. But I realized that many people, with a minimal understanding of science, accepted evolution because they had been told it was true all their lives. They accepted it without question.

Some Christians try to harmonize Christianity with evolution; but there is no way to do that. Christianity is based on the fact that man caused death through sin, the wages of sin is death, and Jesus died to pay the penalty for our sin so we can have eternal life. Evolution is based on the myth that the deaths of countless lower life forms eventually created man through natural selection. Since death caused man before he even existed, man's sin did not cause death, so there is no need for a savior to die to pay the penalty of sin. Furthermore, if one believes in evolution, one has to believe that creation story in Genesis is just a myth, and Paul's explanation in Romans about how Adam's sin caused death is just a myth. If those two foundational parts of the Bible aren't really true, how can one believe anything in the Bible?

In 1980, a new Cable News Network called CNN was born. In the early days, CNN broadcast nothing but Headline news. Every 30 minutes they reported what they felt were the most important current news stories, and repeated them over and over. One day I happened to see them broadcast a hit piece on a creationist group called the Institute for Creation Research. CNN was making fun of their creation museum in San Diego. Now it is easy to find information about ICR on the Internet; but in those days I had to find out where they were using just a telephone book. But I did manage to find their number, called them, and found out their address and operating hours.

I went down there, and was amazed at all the scientific information there was against the theory of evolution, and how much scientific information there was that supported Biblical creation. Once my eyes were opened to the possibility that there is scientific support for creation, I started reading the professional science journals, and was amazed that although scientists proclaimed evolution was a fact, the technical literature was filled with articles about scientific findings that were inconsistent with the theory. In 1996, I formed a secular, non-profit public benefit education corporation called Science Against Evolution which has been publishing a six-page monthly newsletter ever since, disclosing to the general public what scientists say in private about evolution. That work has been keeping me busy ever since. I thought that was all the work God had in mind for me.

Shortly after I retired from my job as an electronic engineer, the Federal Communications Commission opened a window for applications for new radio stations. This doesn't happen very often and the number of people who want licenses always exceeds the number licenses available. Many apply, but few are chosen. John Aitken was the pastor of the Seventh-day Adventist Church at the time. He was very enthusiastic about evangelism in general, and radio evangelism in particular. He got himself on the radio every chance he could. So, he encouraged the church to apply for a license; which they did. As God would have it, the license was granted.

But then, Pastor Aitken accepted a call to another city. When the church board realized how much it would cost to build a radio station, and how much labor it would take to keep it running, the church board decided against building and operating KRSF.

There was one devout couple, however, who have a relative who runs Radio 74 Internationale. They could not allow the license to expire and perhaps lose the only opportunity to have a conservative Christian radio station in Ridgecrest. They mortgaged their home to buy the equipment. But they needed someone with broadcast experience to run the station for them. So, once again, God put me back on the air.

My goal is now different that it was in my two previous forays into broadcasting. Sunday Morning Worship at Grace was intended to provide a substitute worship experience for those who could not attend church. But, in reality, there is no real substitute for worship. That program was better than nothing, but it was never more than second best.

The goal of the 1979 to 1984 version of The Word With Us was to get people to go to church—the Seventh-day Adventist Church. As far as anyone can tell, it failed to do that.

So, the goal of the 21st century version of The Word With Us is to strengthen all the local churches. The way we are trying to do that is by reminding the churches of their Protestant roots, and encouraging them not to forget their Great Commission. We want to remind them that the Bible is the only rule of faith for a true Christian. The Holy Spirit will be poured out, giving great power to those churches which reject the pagan, secular, and anti-Semitic doctrines which are crippling them. We want to encourage listeners to attend and give their support to churches which are striving to follow Jesus to the best of their ability. The closer the individual congregations in the Ridgecrest area come to Christ, the closer they will come to each other, and doctrinal unity will result. The churches can provide a united front against Satan, and be ready when Christ comes again to redeem His people.

Let's close our broadcast now as the Ridgecrest United Methodist Church Choir sings, "Lord, I Want to be a Christian."

[music – Ridgecrest United Methodist Church Choir, "Lord I Want to be a Christian"]