

When Playing With Matches Brought Great Blessings

(The Story of How Glenn Warner and Jerry Falk Came To Know the Truth)

One uneventful day, in Highland Park, New Jersey, a mischievous boy was playing a dangerous game with matches. Glenn Warner's father passed away in 1964, leaving his mother, Rita, to raise Glenn and his little brother, Jim, on her own. This was not an easy task, especially considering the boys' keen eye for getting into trouble. Glenn was fascinated by how the matches would ignite the dust on the floor in one of their closets, only to go out in a puff of smoke. One of those matches, however, fared better than the rest and set the apartment ablaze.

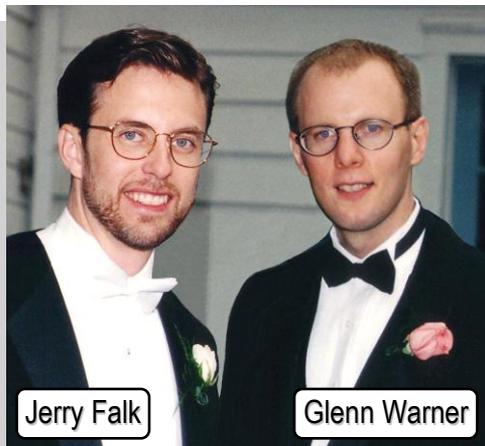
When a woman living nearby learned of Rita's misfortune, she and other members of the Piscataway church of Christ generously helped the young widow. Rita had already become intrigued by the kind neighbor when she returned some money after babysitting her two boys. Rita had overpaid the babysitter by a small amount and wondered why she felt compelled to return the difference. By means of this seemingly insignificant act, an unnamed servant of God gently tilled the soil of Rita's heart, thus preparing it to receive the seed of the Word (Luke 8:11).

She also invited Rita, who was half Jewish, to attend a Bible study at the Piscataway church of Christ, a twenty-minute drive from Highland Park. This anonymous Christian planted and watered the seed that had been sown in Rita's tender heart... and it bore fruit! Around 1968, Rita believed in Christ and was baptized (immersed in water) for the forgiveness of her sins, in accordance with Mark 16:16, Acts 2:38, and other passages of the New Testament.



In the years to follow, Rita would bring her children with her to Bible study in Piscataway, even though she may have wondered if it was doing them any good. Her sons continued to get into trouble, so much so that Rita enrolled Glenn in a special school for boys with behavioral problems. By high school, Glenn became known as "The Scam" by several of his classmates, a reference to his dishonest tendencies. However, God's word had been sown in his heart at young age; it was only waiting for the right moment to create new life.

Around the middle of his junior year, Glenn befriended an equally-mischievous Catholic boy by the name of Jerry Falk in their chemistry class. Glenn and Jerry would later come up with several deceitful schemes, one of which included staying at school until after it had closed and stealing the answers to an upcoming math exam. Silent alarms alerted Highland Park police of the boys' presence in the school and both were treated to a ride to the station in the back of a squad car. Despite this and other wake-up calls, the boys continued in ignorance and rebellion.



Deep down, Jerry felt empty on the inside. To cover up his feelings of inadequacy and lack of true purpose in life, he later began to experiment with alcohol. Jerry would look for opportunities to drink, whether at a fraternity party, with friends, or alone. Perhaps he was trying to boost his self-esteem or simply forget how out of place he felt in the world. Like his friend Glenn, Jerry knew how to cheat others out of their hard-earned money.

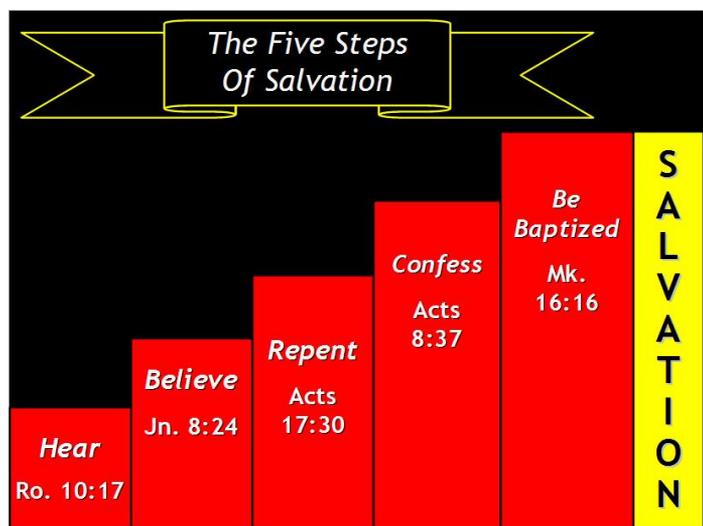
It would not be hard to convince either of these boys that they were guilty of disobeying God in their lives. Both knew full well that they were sinners!

Several months later, while eating at a college cafeteria, Jerry asked Glenn, “What are you? ...a Presbyterian?” Glenn responded, “No. I’m nothing right now, but one day I’d like to become a Christian. ...just a Christian.” As the days passed, Jerry mulled over the idea of being “just a Christian,” without owing allegiance to the Vatican or any other man-made religious system.

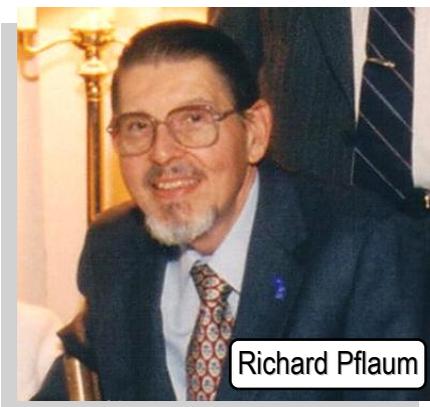
As the boys continued to talk about being “just a Christian,” the seed planted in Glenn’s heart by his mother years earlier began to germinate. Jerry had been christened as a baby and began to wonder about the validity of such a practice.

He was especially surprised to learn that there is not a single example in the New Testament of infant baptism and that biblical baptism is by immersion, not sprinkling or pouring. He also learned that faith in Jesus as the Son of God (John 8:24) is essential BEFORE being baptized. Jesus Himself said, shortly before ascending to heaven, “He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved...” (Mark 16:16). As Glenn showed Jerry this verse and others, he was reinforcing the things that he had learned as a child.

About thirteen years after Rita Warner became a Christian, Glenn and Jerry decided to visit the Piscataway church of Christ together. One evening, in July of 1981, they attended a special series of Bible lessons presented by a preacher from Houston, Texas. That night, James Evans gave a very simple lesson that Jerry would never forget. He drew five steps on the chalkboard. In the bottom step he wrote the word “**HEAR**,” while referring to Romans 10:17 (“So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God”). In the remaining steps, he wrote the words, “**BELIEVE**,” “**REPENT**,” “**CONFESS**,” and “**BE BAPTIZED**.” Glenn and Jerry learned that each of these “steps” in God’s plan of salvation is found on the pages of the New Testament (John 8:24; Acts 17:30; 8:37; Mark 16:16; 1 Peter 3:21).



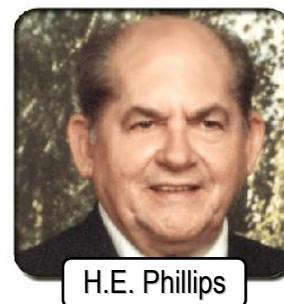
As Glenn and Jerry began to examine certain verses in the New Testament, they found out that there is no biblical authority for the religious divisions that exist in “Christendom,” with its different names, different teachings, different forms of worship, different organizations, and different founders. They later found out that Jesus prayed while He was still on the earth that there would be **no divisions** among His followers (John 17:20,21).



On another occasion, while visiting the Piscataway church, a Christian by the name of Richard Pflaum gave Glenn a stack of back issues of “Searching the Scriptures,” a monthly periodical written by Christians. The magazines went all the way back to the early 70’s and had developed a musty smell, but Glenn didn’t have the heart to throw them out.

At that time, Jerry was working at a parking lot in New Brunswick from 7:00 A.M. to 6:00 P.M., six days a week. It was an easy job. There were always plenty of opportunities to read and study after all the cars were parked. It was Glenn’s idea to bring the magazines to the little collection shack on the lot so that he and Jerry could read them on their free time.

One day, Jerry noticed an article with the words “Let him who stole steal no longer...” (Ephesians 4:28). This article had a strong impact on him, since he wasn’t honest with the money he collected from customers. Jerry later determined in his mind that he would never again take that which did not belong to him. Glenn took more time to read the magazines than Jerry. He seemed especially impressed by what H.E. Phillips, a preacher in Florida, had to say in his articles.



Around this time, the same Christian who gave Glenn and Jerry the magazines began encouraging them to continue their schooling at Florida College (near Tampa), where they would have opportunities to meet more Christians their age. In August of 1982, Glenn and Jerry decided to leave New Jersey and follow Richard’s advice. However, they didn’t know anyone in the Tampa area and were totally unfamiliar with churches there.

After driving for about twenty-three hours, Glenn told Jerry to take an exit off of Interstate 275 that he thought would be relatively close to their final destination in Temple Terrace. They were not familiar with the area, but they knew they were somewhere in Tampa. As they came to a stop at a red light, Glenn looked to his right and a sign on the side of the road caught his attention. It said, “Fletcher Avenue Church of Christ – Evangelists: H.E. Phillips [and] Lowell Sallee.” At that moment Glenn said enthusiastically, “Look, Jerry! H.E. Phillips! That’s the man who writes for those magazines that Richard gave us!” He added, “I want to go there on Sunday.” Glenn and Jerry ended up meeting with the Fletcher Ave. church the following Sunday.

Several days later, Jerry asked Glenn, “Why do we keep putting it off?” He added, “Don’t you think it’s time we started getting serious about God?” Upon hearing this, Glenn immediately called H.E. Phillips from a phone booth at Florida College. The boys already knew what they had to do in order to become Christians, but they needed to hear it one more time from a reliable person whom they had learned to trust by means of the things he had written.

That evening, Glenn and Jerry spoke with H.E. in his home for almost four hours. Among other things, he told the boys about Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch in the eighth chapter of Acts and mentioned that the very same thing that happened almost two thousand years earlier was about to occur that very night in Tampa, Florida. And he was right! On September 5, 1982, at 1:15 in the morning, H.E. immersed Jerry and Glenn into Christ. Upon coming up out of that watery grave of baptism, they were both shaking like a leaf (probably the result of nervousness and the chilled water), but they both knew that they had done the right thing.

Some might say that this story is mere coincidence, but Glenn and Jerry are convinced that it was God’s wonderful providence.

Rita Warner had no idea that something as tragic as her own son burning down their apartment in Highland Park could lead to such great blessings and Rita’s babysitter never imagined that returning a small amount of money would create a chain reaction resulting in the conversion of others many years later.

Rita Warner passed away in 1984, when Glenn was still in college. Glenn and Jerry never found out the name of Rita’s babysitter. If you ask them who she was, they might tell you that she was “*just a Christian*” ...and, in the end, that’s all that really matters.

3/3/2012

WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?

PROTESTANTISM SAYS: “If you simply accept Jesus in your heart as Lord and Savior, you will be saved.” “Salvation is by faith alone.” “You should be baptized for a public testimony, NOT for salvation.” “Baptism does not save.”

BELIEVE = SAVED + BE BAPTIZED

↓
“faith alone,”
“mental acceptance
of Christ’s redemptive death”

↓
for a “public testimony”
days, weeks, months, or
years after “accepting” Christ

CATHOLICISM SAYS: “A newborn child should be baptized as soon as possible because he/she has inherited ‘Original Sin’ committed by Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden.”

BE BAPTIZED = SAVED + BELIEVE

↓
“applies to infants,”
“to take away Original Sin”

↓
when he/she gets
older (Confirmation?)

JESUS HIMSELF SAYS: “He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned” (Mark 16:16).

BELIEVE + BE BAPTIZED = SAVED

↓
John 8:24

↓
“for the forgiveness of sins,”
Acts 2:38; 22:16

↓
1 Peter 3:21

**NEW TESTAMENT
WRITERS SAY:**

“Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins...” (the apostle Peter, Acts 2:38).

REPENT + BE BAPTIZED = FORGIVEN

↓
change of mind
(turn FROM sin
and turn TO God)

↓
in order to be “saved,”
Acts 2:38,47

↓
or “saved”
1 Peter 3:21

THE COMPLETE PLAN OF GOD TO SAVE MAN

HEAR + BELIEVE + REPENT + CONFESS + BE BAPTIZED = SAVED

Rom.
10:17

John 8:24

Acts 17:30

Acts 8:36,37

Mark 16:16

1 Cor. 15:1,2
“if you hold firmly
to the word”

(Other verses: Acts 8:5,12,13,26-39; 9:1-9; 22:16; 16:14,15,25-34; Romans 6:3-7,17,18; Galatians 3:26,27; Colossians 2:12; 1 Peter 3:21)