

It Pays to Go out in the Street Witnessing to Lost Souls



David Wilkerson November 1, 1980

Here are just three of the many testimonies of those who were saved during our recent San Francisco outreach. These converts left that city and are now surrounded by Christians in a godly environment. Some are going through our Teen Challenge program in various centers throughout the United States. Please read their testimonies - study their pictures - and pray much for their continued growth in Christ.

Billie Burnette

[Billie is the young lady Mrs. Wilkerson won to Christ. She was once belligerent and hardened to the Gospel. Today, Billie is living with Christian friends - preparing to enter school to finish her education.]

She writes: "I thank the Lord for pulling me out of the horrible life I was living - the gay scene of San Francisco. I searched everywhere for love; I longed to be loved and needed. My heart was so full of love to give, but I could never find a way to release my heart from its prison. I felt unloved and unneeded. I was always hurting when I was on the streets. There was never any true love.

"I tried so hard to change. I wanted so much to know God and to love Him. But I always felt so unworthy, and I became afraid that God could never forgive me or love me, in spite of all my sins. I tried so many human ways to show God I loved Him, but fear would overpower me, and I'd only feel worse. I know now that all the while God really did want to love me and change me into a worthy child of His.

"When Mrs. Wilkerson and all the World Challenge people came to our streets, they showed me a God who really seemed to understand my deepest needs. So I discovered He wanted me to quit struggling and stop trying to please Him in my own puny way. He wanted only my faith to set me free – faith in what He did at Calvary.

I have found the pure love I've been looking for. I am so thankful God sent someone down into the Tenderloin to find me. He didn't have to do that – but He did - and how grateful I am.

"Now I want to give Him all my life. After all He has done for me, that isn't too much. I need the prayers of brothers and sisters in Christ."

Billie

Gene Hopkins

[Just weeks ago, Gene was a lonely, lost gay - getting drunk and stoned with homosexual friends. Today he is serving Christ as a student in our Los Angeles Teen Challenge Center. They report that he is growing spiritually and has a call on his life for the ministry.]

Gene writes from Los Angeles: "By the ninth grade, I was getting drunk a lot and began smoking marijuana with

friends. I hardly ever got caught by my parents. To them, I was well behaved.

"I continued living this double life until the age of nineteen. The Gene my parents knew was now going to college full time at night and working during the day. The side of my personality they didn't see, however, was beginning to take control of my life.

"By this time, I was experimenting with acid, pills, angel dust, and a few other drugs. I was continually trying to see what I could get away with. My parents began to see me smashed more and more. They thought their all-American boy just had a few too many drinks once in a while. Soon I was getting messed up at least twice a week. They didn't know that a lot of times it wasn't alcohol, but downers or angel dust or some other drug that I experimented with. Up to this point, I had already had three homosexual experiences that no one knew about. I didn't even tell my best friend about these. I don't know who I had the encounters with because they took place in a dark X-rated theater, and I didn't bother to ask for names. Then one day I decided that I couldn't and didn't want to continue the game of pretending to be someone I wasn't. The battle inside was so intense that I came very close to killing myself. But before doing that, I let the darker side of me take over. I ran to San Francisco.

"I got off the bus in San Francisco with \$1,200 in savings. A week later I had a job with Bank of America, but two months after that I quit and got a job in a gay restaurant on Castro Street. My home was a room in a hotel in the Tenderloin district of San Francisco. It all seemed so exciting. I got drunk, took drugs, and had sex whenever I wanted and with whatever sex I wanted. I loved the freedom and independence which made up for the occasional loneliness.

"Three months after I arrived in San Francisco, my parents located me through some kind of detective agency. I had disappeared and at the time couldn't care less about how worried they were. After they found me I told them I was gay.

"Now that my family knew what I was doing, I felt even more free to take part in the drug and sex scene around me. I did take part for the next year and a half. The sin in my life just kept getting heavier and heavier. The drugs, which at first gave me a fantastic feeling, began to lose their kick. I was constantly searching for a new kind of high. The same thing happened with sex. At first it was so great. But too much of anything can get boring, and I started feeling guilty afterwards.

"After two years of constant partying, I was burned out and just a shell of who I used to be. I was depressed more and more. Even though I was surrounded by friends and potential lovers, a part of me felt totally alone. I started isolating myself from friends who wanted me to do still crazier things. The battle inside my brain started to intensify again, and thoughts of suicide, which never really left, came back even stronger. I went to a psychiatrist and told him about the two different sides of my personality that were literally tearing me apart.

"During this time I must have been handed thirty different tracts telling me about Jesus. Somehow He didn't seem real to me. I bought a Bible and began to read it, then just threw it away.

"Then one day a man from the coffeehouse on Taylor Street gave me a book called TWO OF ME. After reading it, I realized that God was reaching out to me. I went back to the coffeehouse the next day and prayed the sinners' prayer with another person and asked Jesus to come into my life. I quit my job at the gay restaurant and week later was at the Los Angeles Teen Challenge Center. That's where I am today.

"There are still some old desires that tempt me at times, but Jesus has filled me with a much stronger desire – that is, to serve Him and walk in His love. (Please pray for my family. None of them have been saved yet.)"

Ephraim Shapiro

[Ephraim is Jewish. Two months ago he walked into our coffeehouse in the Tenderloin section of San Francisco - a homosexual rock singer with ambitions to be a star. Today he is serving Christ, growing in the Spirit, and studying the Bible at the Teen Challenge Center in Houston.]

Ephraim Shapiro writes: "Ten minutes outside of Houston, and I was scared. For all practical purposes, alone. One

week before, I had left everything behind in San Francisco: my friends, my goals, my dreams - everything! In both jazz and rock circles, I was gaining prominence. I finally had what I had been working for all my life - acclaim!

"Being Jewish, I decided as a youth to excel in the study of Judaism. It was always assumed by the Jewish community that I would enter Rabbinical school but Jewishness lost its appeal to me. The cost of acclaim as a scholar is, purely and simply, discipline, so I left theology and pursued my selfish goals. Oh, I was doing my own thing, but I was paying the devil's price - two near suicides, the death of a close friend, and a period of silence and confusion lasting for almost two years.

"As a plane began to land, I pondered what my psychiatrist had recommended just one week earlier - to go to a sadomasochist bar and experiment. I just wasn't sure that what I really needed was an experiment with enjoying pain. The captain's voice interrupted my thoughts announcing our arrival, and within a couple of hours I was at the Teen Challenge Center in Hungerford, Texas. So this is why I had cancelled concerts and left San Francisco with David Wilkerson's people. So this is where my life was supposed to change.

"Well, it's two months later, and there has been a change, praise God, what a change. The Lord has shown me that just like everything else, this change in my life costs. But, this is the first time that I did not have to pay. Jesus paid the cost. He told me that when He died on the cross, everything that I ever was before I knew Him died on that same cross. Jesus died for Ephraim Shapiro so that this person who never knew how to stand on his own two feet could walk with Jesus. Jesus died for Ephraim Shapiro so that this person who, for 29 years, was frightened and angered by love could love divinely and perfectly.

"Praise God for Teen Challenge. There is a genuine ministry of the Holy Spirit here, because and only because there is a genuine hungering for holiness and a true love for lost souls."

Ephraim

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