

50 Years on the Gospel Highway

The Personal Testimony of Al Hughes

1 Timothy 1:12-15

I have TWO birthdays—Both in December. Last December I turned 70 years old *a* and 50 years old *a* .

The Apostle Paul gave his testimony of salvation four times in the New Testament (Acts 22:3-15; 26:8-19; Philippians 3:4-9; 1 Tim. 1:12-16). Paul is the example of a Christian. Every Christian should always be ready to give their testimony of how they got saved. The Bible says, *B a L G*

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a a a ...” (1 Pet. 3:15).

Therefore, I'd like to testify how Jesus saved me and what He has done in my life.

[Two parts: **B.C.**=Before Conversion / Before Christ / **A.D.**=After Decision]

B.C.

My Dad met my Mom in England during WW2. He was in Army (7th Armor Division). They got married and settled in Detroit.

Shortly after I was born in 1947, my parents took me to a Presbyterian church in Detroit to be **sprinkled**. Although my folks were what some might call “good people,” they were not “church goers.” We only went to church on special occasions like Easter and Christmas.

Al Hughes with Mom (Pearl) &
Dad (Al, Sr.) - 1957

My parents were good to me. I never doubted they loved me. They disciplined me when I needed it. Being the only child in the home, I got most of what I wanted... Except one thing—A stable home.



Childhood home in Wayne, MI
(1957-1964)

My Dad worked nights as a motion picture projectionist. On weekends I would often go to work with my Dad and help him in the projection booth. My Mom worked days as a service representative for Michigan Bell Telephone. Consequently, they didn't see much of each other except on weekends.

As a teenager, I remember answering the phone in the evenings, while my Dad was at work, and some strange man asking for my Mom. I later realized my Mom was having an affair with this guy. I soon found out that my parents were going to divorce.

It was a difficult time. Divorces hurt everyone, especially kids.

December 7, 1962 was a fateful day in my life. I remember it well. That morning I was awakened by loud shouting outside my bedroom. My Mom was screaming and ranting at my Dad, "You've turned my own mother against me!" Dad said, "I only wrote your mother to let her know what was going on." My Mom's mother lived in England. Evidently, my Dad wrote her a letter to tell her about the divorce. My Mom assumed my Dad was trying to turn her mother against her. Neither of my parents knew I was awake and listening.

My mother was hysterical. Finally, she screamed at my Dad, "Why don't you DROP DEAD!" Then she stormed out of the house to go to work.

Finally it was quiet. My Dad went back to bed and I eventually got up and left for school.

When I came home from school that day, I immediately knew something was wrong. My mother was home. Normally she did not get home from work until about 5:00. It was only 3:00. As I entered the living room, I could tell she had been crying. Also, there was a man with an open Bible in his hand sitting on the couch. He was the pastor of a local Baptist Church. That was strange, because we were not Baptists.

Mom ran and hugged me. The preacher said, "Allan, your Dad died this morning of a heart attack." My Dad was only in his early 40's at the time.

I found out later that my mother had come home for lunch earlier that day. The phone rang and someone wanted to talk to my Dad. She went to his bedroom to wake him up. She found him stiff and cold. He was dead.

When the pastor told me my Dad was dead, I immediately remembered my Mom's last words to my Dad that morning, "Why don't you DROP DEAD!" She never knew I heard her say that. I was so angry with my mother for having an affair and wishing my Dad was dead. Now he was dead!

The pastor sat us down on the couch and explained from the Bible how we could be saved. My mother listened intently as he turned from verse-to-verse in the Bible showing how Jesus loved us and died for our sins at Calvary ("Roman's Road"). He told us that Jesus was buried and rose from the dead the third day. Then he said, "Jesus will save you if you will call on Him and receive Him as your Lord and Savior." He asked my mother, "Mrs. Hughes, would you like to be saved right now?" With tears she answered, "Oh yes!"

Then he turned to me, "Allan, would like to be saved with your mother right now?" I was angry... Angry at my mother... Angry at the man who was having an affair with my mother... Angry at God! My mother pleaded, "Oh, sweetheart, please get saved with me." The pastor urged me, "That's right son, you need to get saved today." The preacher was on one side of me and my Mom was on the other. Both were urging me to get saved.

Finally, just to get them off my case, I said, “OK! What do I need to do?” The pastor turned to a Bible verse referred to as “the sinner’s prayer”— *G a* .”¹ First, he lead my mother in prayer. She wept as she called on the Lord to save her.² After she prayed, the pastor lead me in a prayer to be saved. I prayed the words, but I didn’t mean it. I fooled my mother and the preacher. But I didn’t fool God. God knew I didn’t really mean what I prayed.

In the weeks that followed, I saw a genuine change in my mother. She was different.³ I would get up in the morning and find her reading her Bible. She wanted to go to church! Not the Presbyterian Church, however. She wanted to go to the Baptist Church where that preacher who lead her to Christ was the Pastor.

I wouldn’t go. I was still very bitter.

One evening about four months after my Dad died, my Mom suddenly she screamed in extreme pain, “My head! My head!” I ran to the phone and called a doctor. This was during the days doctors still made house calls. He came to our house and gave her a sedative. The doctor said she had a pinched nerve in her neck that was causing the pain. He said it would go away in a few days. But it did not go away.

Every day for the next couple of weeks, my Mom was unable to go to work because of her persisting head ache.

One Saturday morning she would not wake up. She was breathing, but unconscious. I called a different doctor. After examining her, the doctor called an ambulance. She had brain aneurysm and was in a coma. It was probably what caused the severe pain in her head two weeks earlier.

I personally believe my Mom could not live with the guilt of telling my Dad to “DROP DEAD” the morning he died. The Bible says, *D a a a* .⁴ Those hateful words from the tongue of my Mom brought death to my Dad, and eventually took my mother’s life also.

My Mom never regained consciousness. She died at the hospital two weeks later from a second aneurysm. She was only 37 years old. Today I cannot thank God enough for that Baptist pastor who came to our house and lead her to Christ five months earlier.

I was 16 years old and alone. I miss my Dad... and I miss my Mom. You never really appreciate someone as much as you do until after they are gone.

¹ Luke 18:13

² Romans 10:9-13

³ 2 Corinthians 5:17

⁴ Proverbs 18:21

My Dad's brother, my Uncle Murray, did not want me to be put in an foster home. I went to live with him and my Aunt. My Uncle told me later that my Aunt did not want me living with them. She made it obvious I was unwanted in their home.

A young person knows if they are unwanted.

I had a corner of their basement where I stayed until I graduated from Redford Union High School in 1966. That fall I moved to Milwaukee to attend a school to study radio broadcasting. I wanted to be a "disc-jockey." I eventually returned to Michigan and got a job at Dikar Tool shop making tungsten carbide cutting tools while playing in a rock band on weekends.

I lived in a place called the Hotel Nelson on Mill Street in Plymouth,



Hotel Nelson, Plymouth, MI

Michigan. This "hotel" was actually a boarding house located next to two railroad tracks. I had a room on the second floor. It had a dresser and a bed. That was it. I shared a bathroom at the end of the hall with five other rooms.

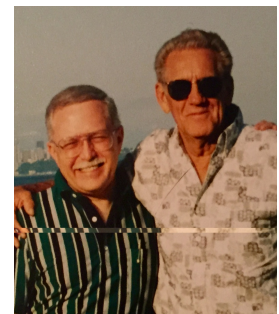


1966-67

On guy at Dikar Tool named "Gar" [short for Edgar] warned me about this "religious fanatic" named Gordie who worked day shift. Gar said, "Watch out for Gordie. He'll try to convert you!"

Sure enough... Gordie came on night shift for one week. He came in at the beginning of the shift and "scoped out the place." He spotted me and started heading my way. Gar hollered, "Look out Al! Gordie's comin' to get ya!" I ducked into the bathroom until the coast was clear.

One night, Gordie cornered me before I could get away. He asked me, "Al, have you ever thought about becoming a Christian?" I said, "I'm already a Christian. I was born in America!" He said, "Being a citizen of America will never make you a citizen of heaven!" I said, "Well, I was baptized as a baby." Gordie said, "And whose decision was that... Your parents or yours?" He had me! I knew I wasn't a Christian.



Al Hughes with Gordie Raatz - 1990

Immediately I remembered that fateful afternoon when that Baptist pastor lead my mother to Christ. God convicted me that I fooled the preacher, and my mother into thinking I prayed to be saved. But I couldn't fool this guy Gordie. He saw right through me!

I couldn't get Gordie's witness out of my mind. I kept thinking about the preacher who tried to win me to Christ the day my Dad died. I asked God, "God, if You will show me those verses again that the preacher showed my

Mom, I'll pray and mean it this time!" I even took my mother's old King James Bible and tried to find that "sinner's prayer" that my mother prayed.

A few weeks before Christmas in 1967, I received a Christmas card from Gordie. He enclosed a tract titled, *God's Promise*. I didn't realize it was God answering my prayer. It sat on top of my dresser for about a week. Then one night I came in and noticed it sitting there. I picked it up and began to read.

It began: "My Friend... I am asking you the most important question of your life. Your joy or your sorrow for all eternity depends upon it. The question is: Are you saved? I mean... are you sure you will go to Heaven when you die? It is not: Are you a member of some church?... but, are you saved?"

God got my attention! I read the entire tract through and lo and behold, there were the same verses the preacher showed my Mom! Even "the sinner's prayer" was in that tract! I read it again! That night, on the second floor of the Nelson Hotel, I got on my knees next to the bed and prayed something like this: "God, please have mercy on me a sinner, and 'born me again?'" Praise God, He heard me and answered my prayer! **T L F S M S**

Thank God for His grace! Ephesians 2:8-9 says, *F a a a a ; a a : G : N , a a a ."*

I didn't deserve a second chance, but He gave me a second chance to be saved! No one is guaranteed another day to be saved. Today is the day of salvation. Are you saved? Have you been born again?

HYMN: **A G .**

A.D.

Psalm 40:1-3; 126:3

I went to work early the next day to tell Gordie I got "borned again!" He rejoiced when I told him.⁵ I began telling everyone else in the shop what happened in my life! Most doubted saying, "It won't last." But I can say by God's grace, that my life has never been the same. If you claim to be saved but there has never been a change in your life, you better make sure you're really saved.

Shortly after I got saved, Gordie approached "Gar" and said, "Well Gar, when are you going to join Al and get saved yourself?"

Gar said, "Al ain't saved. Religion is just a fad to him."

Gordie said, "What would God have to do to prove Al is really saved?"

⁵ Luke 15:10

Gar challenged, “Ok. Look at Al. He has long hair like a hippie. He dresses in grubby clothes. When Al gets his hair cut and starts dressing like a man, then I might believe he is really a Christian.”

Gordie got down on his knees right next to Gar’s machine and began to pray out loud, “Dear God, You heard Gar’s request. Lord, speak to Al’s heart about his hair, and clothes... Show Gar Your power!” Then he stopped praying for a moment, looked up, asked, “Gar, when would you like God to do this?”

Gar sarcastically answered, “Tomorrow!” Gordie resumed praying, “And Lord, would You please make it happen TOMORROW!”

I didn’t know anything about this. The next morning I got up from bed and looked in the mirror. I thought to myself, “Al, you don’t look much like a Christian!” I went and got a hair-cut bought some new work clothes and new work shoes from Sears. When I showed up at work that afternoon, I heard Gordie shout a big, “AMEN! PRAISE THE LORD!” I wondered what was going on. Gordie ran over to Gar and said, “Well Gar... Look at Al! Now do you believe!?” Gar just shook his head in disbelief! He accused of Gordie telling me his plan!

It wasn’t long until I became aware from reading the Bible, I should get baptized. But, I didn’t know where to go? I tried a Presbyterian Church again, but the pastor didn’t even open the Bible the entire service.

I recalled the pastor who lead my Mom to Christ was a Baptist. So, I tried a Baptist. I was impressed when I noticed practically everyone carried their Bibles to church. The pastor preached right out the Bible verse-by-verse (Daniel 7).

After the service was over, I told the pastor I wanted to be baptized. He told me to come back to his office later that afternoon. I returned to his office that Sunday afternoon to discuss baptism. He said they had not baptized anyone in about two years because their baptistery leaked!

I continued to study my King James Bible everyday. I began having a strong desire to preach the Bible. I was telling everyone about how the Lord saved me. I didn’t have any training, but I could tell what Jesus did for me. The guys at the shop began calling me “preacher.” I enjoyed listening to preaching. I would listen to Evangelist Oliver B. Greene preach on the Gospel Hour everyday. I ordered every soul winning booklet and commentary he offered on the radio.

Meanwhile my social life was really suffering. I lived a very loose life-style before I was saved—Fornicating, blaspheming, partying, getting drunk, smoking pot—but God was changing all that! I called my girlfriends and invited them to come church! They laughed and thought I was kidding and usually hung up on me. When you get saved, you do not have to worry about giving up your old friends... They will soon give you up!

In the spring of 1968, I phoned one of my childhood girlfriends. Her name was Vicki. Her sister Barb answered the phone and told me Vicki was in the Navy. I remembered Barb from the times I dated Vicki six years earlier. She would follow us around and threaten to tell her Mom and Dad every time we tried to “make-out.” She was a real pain in the neck! However, I was getting desperate for a date. All my old girlfriends had dropped me like I had the plague. So I asked Barb, “I have tickets for the Detroit Tigers tonight. Would you like to come with me?” She said, “Sure!”

After the game I took her home and parked the car outside her house. I surprised her when I took my Bible out of the glove box and began to witness to her! I told her how God saved me. I gave her some Gospel booklets and asked her to read them.



Barb Hughes (1968)

A few days later, Barb called and said she also got saved after reading those booklets! WOW! I was excited. It was like I got saved all over again!

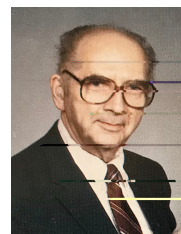
We were married less than two months later! I married my first convert! GLORY! That was almost 50 years ago! Jesus has blessed our marriage abundantly with four daughters, 22 grandchildren, and seven great-grandchildren!

I still wanted to get baptized. Barb and I went to a Baptist church in Westland Michigan. We expressed our desire to get baptized. We were told we would need to go before the deacon board and give our testimony first so they could “evaluate” our salvation experience. In other words, “check us out and judge if they thought we were really saved!” This church stuff was new to me, so we appeared before the deacons and told how we got saved. It was like a tribunal. The deacons told us we could be baptized after we completed a six week “Timothy Class.” So we enrolled.

About two weeks into the “Timothy Class” I heard this hell-fire damnation type preacher on the radio. I never heard preaching like this before! His name was Dr. Henry H. Parrish and was the pastor of Ecorse Baptist Temple, outside of Detroit.



Ecorse Baptist Temple



Dr. Henry H. Parrish

Barb and I went to visit Ecorse Baptist Temple on a Sunday night. We got there about 30 minutes before the service started. We met Dr. Parrish he gave us a tour of the church building. At the baptistery I told Dr. Parrish that I was going to be baptized in a few weeks. He asked, "What are you waiting for?" I told him I had to finish the "Timothy Class" first. He took the Bible I was holding and turned to Acts 2:41, *T a a a : a a a a a a a*. He pointed out that these people got saved and baptized *THE SAME DAY!* No going before a deacon board... no "Timothy Class." He challenged me, "If you really mean business, I'll baptize you tonight!"

At the invitation, I went forward for baptism. Pastor Parrish introduced me to the congregation, he said, "Brother Hughes, come and tell us how you got saved!" It was the first time I ever stood to speak behind a pulpit. I got a little carried away. Barb told me on the way home that I spoke for about 20 minutes. I couldn't believe it. It felt like only five minutes. That night God confirmed to me He wanted me to preach the rest of my life.

I enrolled at Midwestern Baptist College in Pontiac, Michigan to prepare for the ministry. After graduating in 1974. God lead us to start a new church in Redmond, Washington. The church grew until it eventually merged with the Open Door Baptist Church in Lynnwood. I became Dr. Ken Blue's assistant pastor.



**Al Hughes & Ken Blue
(1977)**

After serving on staff at Open Door for two years I got a phone call from one of my college friends, Brother Chip Williams. He was working with Lester Roloff at the time. He asked if I would pray about coming to Vermont to help a handful of new Christians start a local church. To be honest, I wasn't even sure where Vermont was! I told him I would pray and call him back in a week.

I went to Pastor Blue for his counsel.⁶ He told me, "Brother Hughes, if these people are serious about starting a church, they should buy you a plane ticket to come and check it out." I called Brother Williams back and told him, "If they will buy me a ticket to come check out their intent, I'll come." Brother Williams said, "They've already bought you a ticket!"

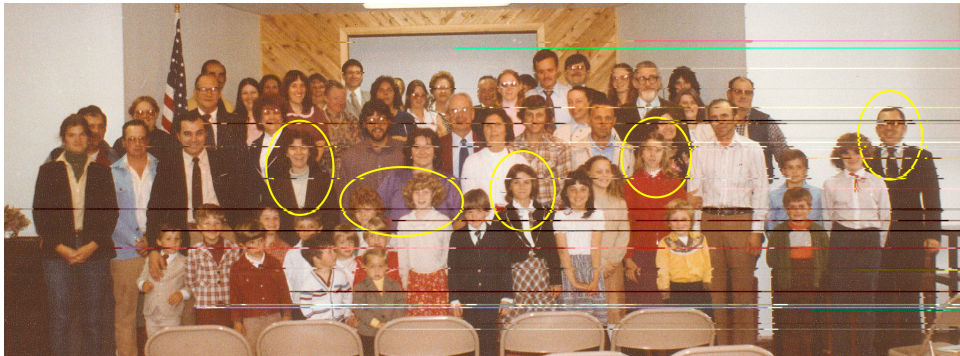
I took a flight from Seattle to Vermont on a Thursday and would stay 'til the next Tuesday. On Sunday we held a "church" service in one of the homes of a local business man. About 40 people showed up! I preached the Gospel and about 20 of them prayed to trust Christ in that living room!

⁶ Proverbs 24:6

I told them, “OK, now you need to follow the Lord in baptism!” That night we had another service and went to a nearby lake (Shadow Lake) for a baptism service. It was dark, so people turned their cars towards the water and turned on their headlights to light up the lake. We baptized seven people that night, and thus began the Barton Baptist Church.

A few months later we moved from Washington to Vermont and went to work. In the five years we were there, God use us to win people to Christ, baptize them and see the Barton Baptist Church grow. We held services in a rented church building, and later in our living room. We had a high attendance in our home of over 60 people.

We purchased four acres of land and built a new church building. This building was built entirely by the people of our church. Some owned acreage where we cut the timber for the wood we would need (Tom Girard, Bernard Riendeau). Some were loggers who pulled the logs out of the woods with their skidders (Laurent Inkel). A couple of men (Bruce Conley and Everett DeMeritt) had saw mills where we milled the wood into the sizes we needed. Some were carpenters and roofers. It was exciting to see people work together to erect a new building in less than one year.



Barton Baptist Church Congregation (1983)

We invited Pastor Blue to come to Vermont twice to hold special meetings. On his second visit he expressed his desire for me to return to Open Door Baptist and help him establish a Bible Institute. So, in 1983 we moved our family back to Washington and continued to work at Open Door Baptist. Meanwhile, the Barton Baptist Church continues to preach the Gospel and get people saved.

In 1986, the Lord called me to become the pastor of the Bible Baptist Church in Port Orchard, WA. At that time, BBC was recovering from a devastating fire and had about 30 people attending. During the next 32 years God allowed us to see the congregation grow. We outgrew our building on DeKalb Street and prayed for God to provide us property to build a new building.

One Wednesday morning I got a phone call from Mrs. Williams. She was a Christian and God impressed upon her heart to call me about some property

she and her husband Jim was selling. She said the property was on Bethel Road. I made an appointment to meet with her husband to discuss the possibilities. The property was listed at \$250,000. I told Jim there was no way we could afford it.

At our regular mid-week service that night I told our congregation about the property. Everyone was excited and wanted to go see it. We dismissed the service and drove to the property. We walked around the land and prayed if God wanted us to have it, He would provide a way for us to buy it.

I met with our deacons a few days later. We agreed to offer \$180,000. We would pay \$10,000 down and make \$1,000 monthly payments until the remaining \$170,000 was paid—\$1,000 a month for 170 months, with NO INTEREST.

When Mr. Williams read our offer and laughed. “I can’t accept this offer without any interest!” and he walked out of my office. I figured, “OK, I guess we need to look elsewhere.”

Two weeks later Mr. Williams called me. He asked if we were still interested in buying his property. I told him we were under the same conditions of our original offer. He said he was coming right over.

When he arrived he said he would agree to sell us the property at our price with no interest! I asked him why he changed his mind? He said, “I haven’t been able to sleep for the past two weeks! Finally last night I sat up in bed and asked God, ‘What do You want from me?’ God answered, ‘Jim, I gave you that property 20 years ago, and now you are trying to sell it back to Me and charge Me interest!’ I told the Lord, ‘OK Lord, I’ll call the church in the morning and sell the property with no interest!’”

We paid Mr. Williams off early and together built a 15,000 square foot campus style facility. By God’s grace it is all completely debt free.



Bible Baptist Church & Pastor Al Hughes today

I thank God for how He blessed my life with a loving family and a fruitful ministry. To God be the glory! I can testify with Jacob, *a a*
a a (Gen. 47:9).

If you’ve never trusted Christ as your Savior, call on Him today and ask Him to save you. He will. *T a a L J ,*

a a a F a a G a a a L a ,
a a a

HYMN: **T G B G !**