

When I was very young, my mom told me about Heaven and Hell, and how those who hadn't trusted in Christ's death as payment for their sins would have to live apart from God forever after they died. I knew that I wanted to go to Heaven when I died.

For me, though I didn't have much time in my life before I began to trust Jesus Christ for my salvation, I often think about how life would be different for me if I hadn't ever made that decision. I realize that without Him, life would really seem to have no ultimate purpose. I would be born, live, and then die – perhaps I would be remembered, perhaps not. Either way, existence would be rather pointless; I would be living just to please myself.

Now that I have placed my trust in Jesus, I have something to live for. I know that when I die, I will go to be with him in Heaven. I know that He paid the price for what I've done wrong – He took the punishment. Out of gratitude for that, I want to serve Him while I am on this earth. Though I often lose my focus, I know that my goal here is to do His will, to follow His instructions, to learn more about Him as I read his words to me – the Bible, and to share the good news of His promise of eternity in Heaven with others I meet.

I made the decision to trust Christ when I was three years old and have followed Him since. Now, that's not to say I've been perfect since – not by any means. I've known for a long time how I *should* act, but the transformation from an extremely selfish, rude, arrogant Jonathan to one who thinks and acts like Jesus would is something God has been working on for a *long* time, and is certainly still working on. He's constantly convicting me about something I need to change.

I remember a fairly definite point in my life, around the age of 14, where I began to truly understand that God expected obedience out of me even when no one was watching. When I disobeyed my parents, I disobeyed Him. I began to realize how much Jesus had done for me – how much He had given me. I realized that when I disobeyed I hurt Him, which was the last thing I wanted to do to someone who had given me so much – to whom I owed so much gratitude.

He has shown me that I always need to be ready to do His will, to serve, and to witness, even when it's uncomfortable for me. I've begun to start making the effort to truly put the desires of others above my own – especially those in my family, where this attitude is for some reason the most difficult and the most needed on my part. Right now, I'm learning to trust Him for physical things, even when I may want to take control and make it all happen myself.

None of these things happened overnight. In fact, most of these changes are still “in progress,” but thankfully God is continuing to make me into a man who will follow, serve, and obey Him, no matter what.

-Jonathan L Dautrich Jr.