

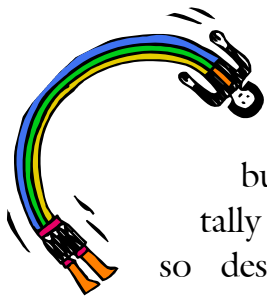
Life Began Pretty Well—I was loved!



I began life blessed in many ways. I was a wanted child, born into a strong and loving family that hung together well and went to church every Sunday. Although this gave me many advantages in life, I never knew who I was, where I was going or what a personal relationship with Jesus Christ was, and I didn't know if I'd go to heaven or not when I died—or really cared for that matter!

Although I was kind of shy and a loner growing up, in high school I became fairly popular, was a good student, was elected ASB President, and led a winning tennis team. My parents loved me and told me so. *But, while I looked successful on the outside, I didn't feel that way on the inside.* I didn't know who I was, or why I should be alive. Inside, I had no real reason to live.

But, Growing Up /sn't Easy...

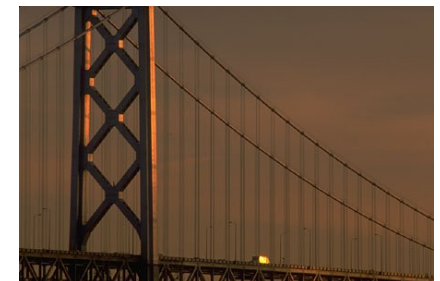


Then, when I was 20 years old, I fell in love with a neat girl named Chris. We spent the summer having a bunch of fun together, until one day at the beach, she accidentally slipped and fell off a cliff into the ocean and drowned. I was so destroyed at her death, that I wanted to die too. I felt lost and alone. Yet as I thought about what Chris might have wanted me to do for her, something inside me said to get right with God – in a real way. I thought about it, but my pride and independence kept me from asking God to come into my life and lead me in His ways.

Eternity From A Bridge

I decided to put God off until later.

A year later I quit college and moved to Minneapolis, lived with my cousin Paul and struggled to find work, friends, and a purpose to live. I was intensely lonely and lost. I began late at night to go on walks in the city, crying out to God, asking Him to make Himself real to me, to fill up the emptiness inside, and give me a reason to live. On one of those walks, I was so depressed *I nearly jumped off a very high bridge,* but I realized I didn't want to die, I just didn't have a reason to live.



That was when God broke through...

A few weeks later, my cousin convinced me to go to church with



him. *I went reluctantly.* We arrived very late, and I sat down in the back wondering what I was doing there. But the last few minutes of the pastor's message was as if God began speaking through him to me—personally! He asked anyone who wanted to get right with God to come forward, and I felt an inner urge and hunger to go. I went forward, and in a small room in the back I told God I was done running from Him, that I needed Him to fill up the empty places inside, and give me a purpose to live. Admitting that I hadn't lived up to my own standards, much less His, I surrendered my life to Jesus Christ, began following His teachings and received His forgiveness and new life.

Bottom line? Well, it hasn't been a bed of roses since then—but the foundational questions of my life have been answered by the One who created me. *I've found that living with a purpose beats living without one any day and living with God beats living apart from Him in spades!* In fact, a recent European Union scientific study found that those who have a meaningful relationship with Jesus Christ live an average of 20 years longer than atheists! God's effect on life is real.

If this makes sense to you, or if you have any questions about my story, please give me a call at 865.247-6106. God's best to you,

Bruce Koester



See my website at
www.stronginspirit.com

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✠ “My life was becoming a ‘disaster-piece’ instead of a Masterpiece.”

✠ “I couldn't think of a reason to breathe on planet earth.”

*Would you
consider my story?*

