

The Biography & Testimony of Rev. Don Disharoon

I was born in Seaford, Delaware in 1952. I don't really remember much of my early childhood until the approximate age of 6 years old. There was a time around that age when my adoptive father (he wasn't really a church going person but confessed that he had been born again at an earlier time in life) and I went to a little church in BelAir, Maryland that was really packed by an awful lot of people one night. Little did I know that they were holding a revival meeting. When it was near the end of the service, I went forward and knelt down at the altar and began to cry uncontrollably. It was then that a hand was placed upon my shoulder. Not knowing who it was, I looked up and saw my father standing there and crying also. I would like to think that it was at this time was my first encounter with the Lord. I can't think of another time that we went to church until I met my first wife whose family all attended a main line denominational church that was very formal and to my recollection, never preached a message of salvation. Of course, I had the usual times of getting into minor troubles as most children do growing up through the years of pre-teen and adolescence. When I was about twelve years old, my father took me out on the porch of his parent's home and said he had something he wanted to tell me. It was then that he informed me that he wasn't my real father and that he had adopted me at the age of 4 ½ years old when he met and married my mother. He said that when most men and women meet, get married and have children, they get what they get through the marital relationship. Then he mentioned something that sticks with me to this day. He said, "Son, when I met your mother and she told me that she had a son, I wasn't sure about the relationship going any further. But when I saw you, I knew that you were going to be the son I never had. So you see, I was able to choose you!" This made me feel really special and that for the first time in my life, I felt the warm feeling of really being wanted. My adoptive father shared as much with me as anyone's "blood" father could have and I loved him as much or more than anyone's "blood" father.

As time went on, I quit high school (I later went back and obtained my diploma) when my father was in Vietnam. I decided to join the Navy and see the world. Little did I know that this was the "REAL" world. I became the most self centered, egotistical, selfish person you would ever want to meet. It was at this time that I had a run in with the law. I am not proud of this area of my life, but it was the starting point of my coming face to face with Jesus. After my arrest, I came to another realization that I could possibly spend the rest of my life behind bars. When I went back to work (after taking a week of to pity and indulge myself in a drinking binge) there were certain people that would come up to me and tell me about Jesus. Of course, I didn't want the advice of "Bible thumpers." As I was walking through a Sears store, I saw an old classmate of mine. I asked her how she and her husband were doing. She informed that they were divorced, but that she and her daughter had found the Lord. OH NO! Another "Bible thumper!" But she invited me to her church and it was then that I made an

excuse that I had to get going. Well, I went to a bar that night and drank so much that I never remember leaving the place and going home.

The next morning I woke up very sick and not knowing which end was up. I got in the shower and dressed up in a three-piece suit and told mom and dad I was going to church. They looked at me as if I were crazy! Well my former classmate met me at the door so I would be more at ease. The people there greeted me as if they had known me all of my life. This I couldn't understand. It was about three weeks later when the pastor was giving a salvation message and it was about three weeks before Easter. Before he could give the invitation, I was up and out of the pew headed towards the altar. It seemed as if I were floating up to the altar without even moving my feet and there seemed to be no one else there but me (and the church was packed!). After I rose up from the altar after a few minutes (or so I thought), I realized that I had been there for over a half an hour weeping and hurting from all that was going on in my life. As I arose, it seemed as if the entire weight of the world had been lifted off of my shoulders! Ever since that day, I've been living for the Lord. Don't get me wrong, I've still have made plenty of mistakes since then and will probably continue to do so, but now I have a forgiving Savior that understands instead of depending upon me to carry the load and solve them.

I faced my legal circumstances with the Lord at my side. I went through the prison system and never once would I deny the power of Jesus Christ in my life. I went through many hard times in prison, but Jesus was there to help me through. I came to the realization that I had to turn a negative situation and use it for a positive result. Prison became my growing ground. I spent endless hours and days reading and studying the Bible and long times in prayer. I achieved many things while in prison such as being the foreman for the building of the prison chapel, the completion of two years of pastoral studies from Liberty University and being the chaplain's assistant for my last 2½ years of incarceration. Upon my release from prison, I said my farewells and left the men there with a message of hope and that one day, I would return if it was the Lord's will. Many of the men had life sentences and some of them even stated that once I left they probably would never see or hear from me again.

Well, it's been almost 26 years since my release. During these past years I have been blessed with a wonderful and supportive wife, healthy children and grandchildren, a good job, a healthy body for someone of my age and a comfort and peace that I had not known in previous years when facing the every day circumstances of life. For over twenty plus of those years I have been going back into the prison(s) carrying a message of salvation and hope in the Lord Jesus Christ to as many men as I have been able. My first time going back I told the men, "See, I told you I'd be back!" I go into our local prison(s) and prisons in other states with other ministries to share the Gospel and just what Jesus can do for them. Some of them I

have seen on the street and some of them I have seen return to prison and it just breaks my heart. Another special moment of my life was when I was surprised by being ordained as a minister of the Gospel in 2007 in front of the men that I had lived with behind those prison walls. I am also honored to be on the Trustee Board of the church I attend

. I am blessed in having been able to be a mentor through Prison Fellowship for men on a one-on-one basis and am now in the process of establishing a Reentry Transformational Ministry which instructs the men in life skills such as job seeking, resume writing, addictions counseling, parenting, pre-release and over all pro-social skills. This ministry named Philemon Ministries of Delaware that was a vision given to me 2 years prior to my release, is endeavoring to establish Onesimus House (now AMEN House) in the near future that will be a nurturing, loving yet an accountable transitional home for those that are homeless, recovering addicts and our "Returning Citizens" from our prison system that have nowhere to go or do not want to go back into the "old ways, friends and neighborhoods" they came from that are a negative influence. This program also instructs and reinforces pro-social skills. This will result in positive, productive persons that were not at one time and result in providing safer communities to live in for everyone. But this is another story!

Most of all I will witness to them about Jesus and what he accomplished in my life, and to assure them that He can do the same for them. After all...if He can save the wretched creature that I was and turn ME around, then there is NO ONE that is a lost cause! Jesus came to save the lost, and believe me...there are none so lost or alone as those behind or coming from behind our prison walls! My prayer is that everyone that comes within the sound of my voice will hear and see Jesus only and come to accept Him as Savior and Lord of their lives, and that the kingdom of Jesus will be full of those that society may feel were a lost cause. I tell the men about the story my earthly father told me at the age of 12 years old, and insure them that there is a heavenly Father that will never leave them nor forsake them. We use a couple of slogans at Philemon Ministries that go something like this: "There is no one that is good enough that they do not need to be saved, and there is no one bad enough that they cannot be saved!" 4 "One person at a time...one family at a time...one community at a time!" All praise, glory and honor is given to God for anything that will be accomplished! Philippians 4:13