

Madison Heights Christian Church
(Disciples of Christ)
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MADISON HEIGHTS MESSENGER

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April 18, 2018

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Open doors - Open hearts

Blessed by God

It was sometime back in the early 80's. Life was hard for our young family but we were determined to make it on our own. The economy was struggling, times were hard, and for a while there I couldn't get a steady job. I did a few odd jobs here and there, anything that would bring in a little extra cash, but it was nothing we could count on. We made a commitment to ourselves, and to our son, that his mother would stay at home with him until he started school. I thought about re-enlisting but my "love it and hate it" relationship with the Marine Corps was skewed heavily toward the "hate it" side. So, I decided to go to college on the GI bill and we struggled to survive on \$464 per month. We got a little help along the way; the landlord gave us a small break on the rent, someone gave us a Christmas tree, the Salvation Army paid the electric bill once, and social services helped some along the way.

I remember going to the college lounge and standing there for the longest time staring at the drink machines. A pattern developed where I would do this on a daily basis. My mouth watered as I craved one of life's simplest pleasures but I was too poor to afford just one drink from the vending machine. One day while I was standing there in front of those drink machines I made a promise to myself that I would never be in such a desperate position ever again.

From time to time I go back to those days and reflect upon how it is the hard times that make the good times so good. Things began to turn around for us financially when I was able to get a full time job as a security guard. For a year, or maybe a little longer, I worked full time and went to college full time too. It was a tough situation, and a strain on the family, but at least the bills got paid and we were able to eat. Life continued to be a struggle as I ended up scratching and clawing my way through life trying to make a living; trying to survive. The reality of various jobs turned out to be much more difficult than they originally seemed. I ended up earning less than promised, working long hours, and working on Sundays.

The big change for me came one day by accident and I am so glad it did. I was chasing money like a dog chases a car when the spirit of the Lord hit me with a divine revelation that sent goose bumps down my spine. There is a Bible lesson that I had read probably half a dozen times but the lesson the Scripture reveals could not find its way through the overwhelming influence of our culture. That is until the painful reality was revealed to me that I was serving the wrong master. The Scripture is Luke 16:13 No slave can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth" (NRSV). It is not that I was trying to serve one or the other; it's that I was trying to serve both. I was in the race of selfish ambition that our culture encourages and I was so consumed with the financial struggles of life that I lost sight what is really important.

The Scripture presents us with an either or equation. I encourage you to reflect on your life and your relationship with the Lord. There is great joy in serving the Lord and giving back to God because God has given so much. Many times I have heard "give what you can" or "give what you are able." However, I think we should consider what is the best gift that we can offer?

In Christian Love

George Harris