

My Testimony



My name is Stephen Barney. I'm 46 years old, and I have witnessed the greatest miracle I could have ever dared hope to see. No, I was not there for when they rolled the stone away from the empty tomb, nor did I get to put my hand against the spear wound in Jesus' side... But just as though I were a part of those miracles, I am left convinced that Jesus is Lord, that he died and rose again, and more importantly that he did so for me. Of all the miracles of the Bible my favorite seems relatively small when compared to others. Yet it is recorded in both the gospels of Mark and Mathew, as well as in my heart. It matters so much to me because it is not just a story that happened... it is also my story now. In Mark it begins like this: "A leper came to Jesus, and begged him on his knees, and said, 'If you choose, you can make me clean.'" And make no mistake; for much of my life I was a leper.

Physically, I was not leper. I did not start out as one nor did I intend to become one. But as my life progressed, I was one who was hopeless. I was surely "Outcast and Unclean" and it was a result of my own bad choices. I started off the child of an alcoholic father and a well-meaning mother, an unequal relationship that led to divorce. My grandparents on my father's side were Mormon and they did their best to get me to chapel and children's service, and when I was 8 years old they wanted to baptize me. (For Mormons this means more than just a profession of faith.) So my mother stepped in and I no longer had to go to church with them, because she felt I needed to be old enough to understand what that meant. (CONTINUED ON INSERT)



RICK SOUZA *Happy Holidays To You*



On New Year's Day I mentioned to my six siblings that 2025 sounded like a science fiction year. My brother Mark, three years younger than me, said I said the same thing in 1925. I laughed, considering that 1925 was 27 years before I was born, and reminded Mark that he isn't far behind me. But 2025 sounds like it should be in the far future and not the present. Like many septuagenarians, I would really appreciate it if time would slow down a bit.

Regardless, we are anticipating this bright new year to be filled with hope, new challenges, and tremendous victories. I speak for our

entire staff. Psalm 111 is our theme this year: "I will extol the Lord with all my heart in the council of the upright and in the assembly."

As I was seeking His direction, this Psalm and this scripture rang a bell in my spirit. This is my personal desire for my family, for the staff, and every student—that we would all extol the Lord with all our hearts! We will study this verse, pray over it, and magnify it all year long. I hope you will join us in extolling the Lord.

The Christmas party for the students in December was such a blessing. Julie will highlight it with pictures and she will put a spotlight on those who made it possible. Stephen Barney's testimony will deeply touch your heart and emotions. This is what the Lord does at the Ranch throughout the year—and it's the closest thing to the New Testament church we can experience.

As I enter my eighth year as Executive Director, I could not be more excited. We have passion for the lost and we have passion to see strongholds demolished and see Hope put within reach of everyone struggling with life-controlling issues.

Maranatha,

Rick Souza
CEO /Executive Director



HELP US SUPPORT OUR STUDENTS

Programs like our Auto Donations program substantially help in offsetting costs to host our students through our long-term care facilities. Donate through our website: fhtc.life/auto-donations

We partner with an Auto Donations company called "CARS." They help us facilitate vehicle acquisition, promotions, donor management, and they supply us with metrics on donations data every month.

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PRAYER REQUESTS?

UPCOMING DATES

To Remember

- Monday, May 5th, 2025: Lewie Roche III Golf Classic
- Saturday, May 17th, 2025: Graduation Ceremony
- Saturday, June 21st, 2025: Roger's 5k Walk and Run
- September 15th-19th, 2025: Spiritual Emphasis Week
- Saturday, October 18th, 2025: Annual Ball Drop





The divorce did nothing to slow my father's drinking, and because he was the less responsible parent, I foolishly chose to live with him. He was mostly gone, drinking, spending most of his time at his girlfriend's house, leaving me in our house in the Foothills alone. To my child's mind it seemed the better deal to be able to do as I pleased even if it meant food was scarce. My choices often incurred my father's wrath—if they got bad enough that they reminded him of my existence.

It was during this time that I picked up some of my worst habits. No drugs and alcohol ... yet, but how to avoid dealing with troubles. I remember a time in 6th grade when I skipped school for almost 6 months because no one was around to make me go. Eventually I got caught, so I took my beating and used it as an excuse to move in with my mom. But as soon as her house rules became restrictive, I would move back in with my dad.

That was how I dealt with problems for most of my life. If anything or anyone hurt me I would cut it or them out of my life. I acted like it didn't bother me and then use the pain internally as an excuse to continue to make more bad choices. That is what led me to become an outcast at 20 years of age. I decided it was easier to live on the street than try to maintain a normal life.

The first few years were difficult. I was self-conscious about it and went to great lengths to hide it from anyone I associated with that lived in houses. It took me a while to learn how to survive properly—how to get food and stay warm. Even how to prepare a camp for winter.

Those years I learned what it meant to be hungry and cold. Now I know that God was watching over me even in some of the worst circumstances. My survival was truly a miracle. And through the harsh times I learned how to survive better. It only took one year, when I did not prepare for winter rains, and one very long wet night to begin to read the signs of changing seasons. After that, I was always prepared for the first rain, wherever I was.

This went on for many years. Some of the time I drank or got high whenever I could afford it. In winter I would spend most of the time inside my tent covered in blankets to stay warm even as frost formed on top of the tent. I would read for days on end to pass the time. After 10 years I felt secure in my ability to survive. By then I had withdrawn from everyone I knew. Sure, others like me that I'd see on the street liked me well enough and would greet me when I was out, but I never let any of them know where I kept my camp. And I always kept my camp away from others, preferring to walk a few miles for water rather than having neighbors. I was homeless for the majority of 14 years. Truly I was hopeless. I was such an outcast that I would cross the street to avoid walking next to another person because I was sure that my presence would offend them.

That was when I first prayed. It was a cold night towards the end of winter. I was getting over a cold, and I had the macabre thought of what would happen if I got too sick to get water... and how long it would take for someone to find me. I prayed to the Lord and told him I was tired and if he was real to show me. Then I fell asleep and forgot.

However, the Lord heard me, and he sent someone to minister to me. This man found me sitting at the lake in the middle of town drinking a beer and reading a book. With tears in his eyes, he told me his testimony and how his life changed when he went to this little AOG church, and he invited me to join him. He gave me his number. A week later I called him and began attending church with him every Sunday. After a few months he invited me to his house.

He believed the Lord had told him I would have a hard time as a new believer out in the woods. This was most likely true as I was still regularly buying a half pint of vodka before returning to camp each day... only I was reading the Bible he gave me instead of my other books. Often, I only made it halfway through the bottle before dumping the rest out... only to repeat it again the next day. But the Lord worked on my heart, and I eventually moved in with him. I got closer to the Lord, but I still struggled with getting close to other people. In fact, even though I got a job and a car over the next year, my next 3 years would be filled with relapses. Usually with alcohol, and usually during family-type holidays. Until I finally got tired of being tired.

The hardest thing I ever did was repent from a relapse. I understand why many don't. Especially once you know the truth of Jesus, and you're not sure why you even relapsed to begin with. But I was tired of going back and forth. I had a taste of Christ in my life, and I only wanted to serve him. So, during prayer and fasting I felt like he directed me to go to Teen Challenge. I had already seen it work for others, and moreover I felt like the Lord gave me three promises if I submitted. 1, that I would be given a place in the body (one where I felt like I belonged). 2, that He would make known to me my gifts. 3, that I wouldn't have to go back and forth anymore if I trusted him. So I quit my job, gave away my possessions, and began the process of getting into Teen Challenge.

All I can say is God keeps his promises. I came to Faith Home towards the end of 2017. Still broken, still untrusting of people and unsure of myself. But truly with a heritage of over 100 years of ministry on this land, surely this land is Holy. It was exactly what I needed. Living with almost 30 other men, there was nowhere to hide when I didn't feel like being around people. I had to deal with others in good circumstances and bad. More importantly there were so many times when problems would come up... and I didn't have any other choice but to trust in the Lord. I wasn't given the opportunity to hide from it or drink it away. Through these moments, some big some small, I began to break old habits and as I began to trust the Lord, he would show up... and my faith would grow.

After I completed, I stayed on as an Intern. I wanted to be a part of what Jesus was doing in the lives of other men because of what he had done for me. After my internship I was given a staff position working skilled trades for one of our enterprises. God was in the process of molding me. Through the years I began to learn how to trust people. How to turn to him in my insecurities rather than run away. I learned how to have hope for a future. He used everyone here to help with that, but he especially used our director, Rick Souza. This man has encouraged—and even pushed or prodded, when necessary—all of us to grow and not to settle.

Eventually, I even began to feel at home here as if I finally had a family. I began having hope for a future. I want to help others like me who don't have enough confidence in themselves or faith in the Lord to imagine a better future. I began asking God how I should do this, and he led me to study for a contractor's license. It was proof for me that it was God's idea when I passed my test on the first try. I have now been a licensed contractor for almost two years. I mostly do residential remodeling projects or landscape development. My intention is to grow. I want to not just build houses for people, but futures as well. It amazes me to think how far God has brought me already. Indeed, most of the time our students are surprised when I tell them my story. I like to think it gives them hope just as the one man did for me when he shared his testimony way back when. I'm still developing a relationship with my estranged daughter as God caused her to reach out to me a few years ago; I have hope that it will continue to grow. I know life isn't always going to be easy. But I also know I have a savior who's going to be there with me through it all. And I am not alone. I'm a part of a mighty family of believers. And my favorite passage from Mark is 1:41: "He reached out his hand and touched the man. 'I am willing,' he said. 'Be clean!' Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cleansed."

JULIE COFFEY *A Christmas To Remember*



This year's student and family Christmas party was a great success. The students were so happy to have their children and other family members in attendance.

With the helping hands of both staff & students, we decorated with multiple Christmas trees, nativities and other bright and cheerful Christmas décor. We had games for the children and families to play and a delicious nacho bar, hot chocolate with all the toppings and homemade cookies to top it all off just perfectly.

Besides all of this, each student along with their wives and children received a beautifully wrapped gift from their own wish list.

This was all made possible by the generous and loving donations of our faithful Christmas time supporters who give generously each year to ensure that our students are blessed with a family Christmas.

In addition to the financial support, we have a group of shoppers who do an amazing job in purchasing all of the gifts. They lovingly brave the Christmas season crowds with the precision skill of a professional shopper, and successfully fulfill each student and family member wish list.

And they do it most impressively with joy in their heart and a smile on their face!

We would like to acknowledge and give our heartfelt thanks and appreciation to the following churches and individuals who gave of their time, energy and financial resources. You are a blessing to the Adult Teen Challenge Ministry:

Christ Community Church, Pastor Darrell & Sherry Cummings

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Aaron Keese

Debbie Wellman

Bill & Cheri Riebel

