

Stories of Healing

How God has worked in our Church Family

Week 8

Jesus was my Missing Piece

Rich Jacobs' Story

He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also, he has put eternity into man's heart, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end.

Ecclesiastes 3.11

Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me.

John 14.1

Rich Jacobs grew up in a religiously split home—his mother was a member of the Methodist church where they attended and their father was a non-practicing Catholic. His father also struggled with alcoholism. As they reached adulthood, Rich's two brothers left religion altogether and fell into alcoholism as well. Rich expresses great sadness as he reflects on all of these things, as well as a number of family dynamics that he described as "shattered" and "not what God intended."

Nonetheless, Rich went on to stable and successful adult-good. When Rich met his wife, Tina, he was exposed to the church of Christ for the first time. As Tina began to press him on his faith and challenge some of his beliefs, Rich initially shut down. In 1998, Tina continued to invite Rich to church until eventually he caved and said "yes." Rich felt like even though he 'had it all,' he felt something was missing.

The way that the disciples were in that small North Carolina church of Christ, made a lasting impression on Rich that he hasn't forgotten to this day. The preacher took a special interest in Rich. The minister helped him understand some things about religion, faith, and practice through small "around the table" studies which helped him to clarify his faith in the God of scripture. That study eventually led Rich to the decision to give his life in faith to Christ by being immersed in water into Jesus' death, burial and resurrection.

Rich left his denominational identity as a Methodist and committed to the Christ and Christ alone from that point on. It was no longer a religion he adhered to, but a relationship he entered. While Rich will tell you it didn't all change overnight, God has been working on him and changing him.

Applications and Takeaways

- **We inherit circumstances, not destiny.** We are all born into various, rarely perfect circumstances in or outside the church. That being said, circumstances do not determine our eternal trajectory. *The child will not share the guilt of the parent, nor will the parent share the guilt of the child. The righteousness of the righteous will be credited to them, and the wickedness of the wicked will be charged against them (Ezekiel 18.20).*
- **It's about what we choose to do in the present.** Rich's story is powerful because he shows that someone doesn't have to pursue the same path as those who have come before. Even though his brothers struggled with similar issues as their father, Rich resisted those temptations and eventually found Jesus. *Now therefore fear the Lord and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness. Put away the gods that your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord (Joshua 24.14-15).*
- **We can have it all... but still feel hollow.** Rich was stable, despite having a rough background. He had what everyone calls "the American dream" yet, he felt strongly that he was missing something. What he was missing, was eternal. *I have seen everything that is done under the sun, and behold, all is vanity and a striving after wind (Ecclesiastes 1.14).*
- **The love of the church can be healing.** All relationships have this in common—we can get hurt in them. However, we can also find healing in them. For Rich, the church was a place where he encountered an extraordinary kind of love, that eventually pointed him to choose Jesus. *Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing (1 Thessalonians 5.11).*
- **Jesus is the missing piece we all need.** When we seek a foundation for our lives as Rich was seeking, the only study foundation is Jesus, the Cornerstone. He is the only one with perfect love, perfect justice and all the fullness of God....*Built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone (Ephesians 2.20).*

1. What do you think of the story?

2. How could Rich have used the excuse of his mother's 'inherited' faith to keep going through the motions at church without finding his own faith?

3. How could Rich have used the excuse of his father and brothers to go down a similar path?

4. How can we be encouraged by the story of someone like Rich who owned his past and moved forward in faith?

5. What is the "something missing" that Rich described in the video? How can we help people to understand how to find it?

6. In a broken and sinful world, how can we find courage in Jesus' words from John 14.1?