

The Gospel According to Me (testimony) (Or “How to Get Fired”)

Miscellaneous

Peter Hiett

February 3, 2008

Call to worship

Psalm 150

Praise the LORD.

Praise God in his sanctuary;

praise him in his mighty heavens.

Praise him for his acts of power;

praise him for his surpassing greatness.

Praise him with the sounding of the trumpet,

praise him with the harp and lyre,

praise him with timbrel and dancing,

praise him with the strings and pipe,

praise him with the clash of cymbals,

praise him with resounding cymbals.

Let everything that has breath praise the LORD.

Praise the LORD.

Worship

Prayer

Lord, as we talk tonight and I kind of share my story, I pray that it would be your story, for our stories really have no meaning unless they're hidden in you, Lord Jesus. So help us, Lord Jesus. It's in your name that we pray. Amen.

Message

I'm sharing my story tonight because we feel that the church, the Sanctuary, is kind of in a time of waiting. We're waiting to see what God wants to do with us and we're having different people share their stories. So, if you've been around Lookout for a while, you probably heard some of it. If you've been in the new members class, you've probably heard it. So hopefully, it won't be too boring. Maybe there'll be something new in it.

I was born into a pastor's family. My dad was a Presbyterian pastor. And so my earliest memories were of talking to God. He was a guy that lived at our house. When I went to school as a young boy, I didn't find the same kind of welcome that I found at home. I was kind of lonely, rather insecure; I felt rejected a lot at school. But church was different. Church was really my sanctuary, my safe place where I was accepted, where I belonged.

Part of that was because my dad was the senior pastor at First Presbyterian in Littleton Colorado. But my friends and I, we kind of owned the place, you know? My initials were carved in the pew in the balcony. I knew where every attic was, every nook and cranny. By the time I

got to high school, I had my own set of keys. So on Friday nights, I'd just go down there with my friends, like Andrew. We got busted by the cops for riding the fellowship chair cart down Littleton Boulevard at 2 in the morning. We'd throw snowballs at cars from the tower and water balloons. I mean, it was incredible. It was my family. It was my safe place.

Well, I always wanted to be a scientist, like an astronomer or a geologist. And I thought dad's job was a little goofy because it was a little humanistic, or worried about humans, and they're weird. And I like solid things, like rocks and stuff. So, I went off to college, at the University of Colorado, and was getting a Geology degree, doing a few ministry things here and there. I should also tell you kind of my conversion story because I don't know that I really have one. Because, like I said, in my house, you just grew up talking to God. If I have a point where I think I really was converted, it was at some point in high school. Like I said, I was really into science.

My Junior year, we got a new youth pastor at our church, named Gary Reddish. He acted like he was really serious about his faith. And I began to get serious about mine, asking all sorts of questions. We had a history teacher at Heritage High School in Littleton who loved to question kids and make them doubt their faith. And so, I went through a period of kind of doubting my faith, wondering if the whole God thing was true, because I was taking it seriously and I realized that mattered. If I had a conversion, I think it was the night, when I went upstairs in the bathroom of our house. I got down on my knees and I just started sobbing. I said, "God, I don't think I can believe in you anymore."

Several years later, I realized that I had been talking to the person I said I didn't believe in. Because, the reality was, I did believe in him. I knew him. I'd come to meet him, and people like my mom, and friends, and most of all, my dad. And now I realized that my heart was telling me, "You can't explain dad with geology, or astronomy, or mathematics. There's something there from beyond this world."

Well, that kind of sent me on a quest and I kind of gave my life to the Lord anew. And then, like, I was saying, I went off to the University of Colorado and studied Geology. It was during my sophomore year that I got news that things were rough at First Presbyterian church in Littleton. I remember thinking at the time, "Oh, that's just crazy. I'm sure nothing bad will happen." My dad had kind of gone through a time of renewal in his faith and really wanted to preach from the scriptures rather than just philosophy and that sort of thing.

There were some people in First Presbyterian Church in Littleton Colorado that had some problems with my dad. And, Gary Reddish, being the youth pastor, stirred things up quite a bit, so things were kind of volatile. And somebody called the Presbytery and they sent the ministerial committee from the Presbytery to the church and began questioning people. There was kind of an obvious reason, which had to do with being evangelical and preaching from the scriptures. And there were some at the Presbytery that didn't like that. They had a kind of liberal group in the Presbytery. They came and started asking people questions.

The amazing thing to me was there were a million different agendas. I remember one lady came to a meeting I was at and she was mad at my dad because he didn't fix the roof in 1967 or something, and this thing, that thing, whatever. And I thought, "Well, I'm sure it'll just blow over." I think the most painful night of my life was a night when I went to the Presbytery meeting and I watched my dad tried on the floor of the Presbytery. I vaguely remember. I remember the room, people getting up and talking about my dad and just speaking all kinds of junk about him that I

knew wasn't true. Others were trying to defend him. Finally, I remember this one man. He got up and he walked down to the front of the room and he said, "Well, you may think all these wonderful things about Dan Hiett, but we have come to discover that Dan Hiett doesn't tell the truth." They called him a liar, closed debate, and they voted my dad out.

I remember that place. I think that place is like my place of deepest shame, and fear, and anger. I remember, I almost walked right down to the front of that room and decked an elder on the floor of the Presbytery. And so, we were out—my sanctuary, my family, my home.

Well, I think I stuffed my anger. And it was interesting because it was along about that time that I started feeling called to the ministry. I was working with young life in Boulder and I started thinking, "Well, I really want to do this ministry thing." I'd been dating my high school sweetheart, Susan, so upon graduation we got married the week after graduation. I worked as a plumber for a year. And then I went off to seminary at Fuller Seminary out in Pasadena. My dad had been a part of starting a new denomination, called the Evangelical Presbyterian church. But, since they weren't out in California, I became part of the Presbyterian Church, USA, which was a big group that had kind of kicked my dad out.

I worked at Bel Air Presbyterian Church. It was the church of Ronald Reagan, famous church. Don Moomaw was an all American football star. I mean it was a big deal to work at Bel Air Presbyterian Church, and I thought I was pretty cool. Upon graduation, we moved to northern California and I worked at Community Presbyterian Church with Ron Davis, who wrote scads of books. He was known all over the world for speaking on integrity and the family. And I thought, "Wow! I'm in a pretty cool place."

My third year there, someone came from the Presbytery, the bad people, and informed us that the senior Pastor had four affairs several years ago, in Fresno, that area. And so we confronted Ron and he repented and I wrote how beautiful his repentance was. And then it turns out that he had actually had several more affairs going on at the church, and when I talked to kids in my youth group, some of them felt like he'd even put the moves on them.

It was along about that same time, that I found out that the Senior Pastor at Bel Air Presbyterian Church had done the same thing. I was so angry. I mean, I remember, I got the bench press record at the club that I worked out at because I'd just go down there and lift weights like crazy. I don't have that any more because I'm more at peace, but it was great for a little while. I was just so, so angry—so mad.

After a while, I realized that I needed to leave. By then we'd had three kids. I called my old Youth Pastor, Gary Reddish, and he said there was this little church in Colorado that was looking for a pastor. Well, that was Mountain Christian Fellowship up on top of Lookout Mountain. And so, we went out there and before we knew it, we had joined them. They were an independent church and they wanted to have a denomination. I said, "Well, I like the Evangelical Presbyterian church," and one thing led to another, and we were in the EPC, and the church started to grow at really kind of an amazing rate.

About two years into it, I remember Lanna Bore, if you remember Lanna, she came in and she was a, you know spiritual woman, and they kind of made me nervous because I always felt that I didn't hear from God very well, and I hadn't had all those experiences and supernatural encounters. But she said, "God told me he wants you to go to Toronto and he wants me to send

you.” And I said, “Really?” She said, “Yeah, I was watching TV and it looked really incredible, and I heard that you should go.” And she said, “I want to send you and your wife.”

They were having this laughing revival in Canada that was really bizarre and everybody was worried it was heretical or something. And I said to Lanna, “Well, you’ll send Susan too?” And she said, “Yeah.” And I said, “And we can go to Niagara Falls?” and she said, “Yeah.” And I said, “And if I think they’re a bunch of wackos, that’s okay?” And she said, “Yeah.” So I went to this conference and it was just an incredibly amazing place, a turning point in my life.

I’ve found that I couldn’t disagree with what they were saying because it was stuff I had been preaching. And when they prayed for people just wild stuff happened! They would have a group that would go around (trained) and pray for people after the service and I just stood there like this, thinking, “Hit me! Nail me with whatever you got because I’ll take whatever you got.” Susan stood there as well and she turned to me and said, “Peter, I don’t want these people to touch me!” And someone walked by her and said, “Bless you dear.” And she fell on the floor, like having visions and all this stuff. And she opened her eyes, looked at me like, “You poor thing! You sad thing.”

All week I stood there like that going, “God, just hit me, nail me! Do whatever you want to me! Come on! Bring it on!” And people would pray for me, and nothing would happen. I finally decided that I was going to leave the ministry. I was thinking, “Oh, this is stupid. God is obviously working here. He loves other people, but I don’t think he likes me.” So that’s what I decided. The last day, they had a conference led by a Presbyterian guy and I thought, “Okay, Presbyterian. That’ll be safe.”

I went to that, listened to his thing and at the end, he had people break into little groups and pray for each other. And I remember this huge Native American, charismatic guy, and this little old Roman Catholic lady got paired up with me, like a picture of the church, you know? And I said to them, “You know, this whole thing just isn’t working for me.” And they said, “Well, okay, we’ll pray.”

I didn’t want anybody praying for me anymore. I thought I was going to be okay at the Presbyterian meeting, but no, they prayed there too. I don’t even remember what they said. But they started to pray, and I heard God. I mean I heard him, like audibly in my head. It’s the only time it’s ever happened to me. And he said, “Peter, you do not love my bride very much, do you?” And I just broke.

It was like in a moment, God reached down deep in my heart and he peeled off this huge scab. And I saw that I had gone into the ministry because I hated the church. Is that weird or what? I mean, I thought it was because I loved the church, and God revealed to me it was out of anger at the church—anger over what had happened to my father in that room that night when I felt such incredible shame, and fear, and anger, and anger over what had happened at the churches in California.

This is the weird thing, I love people, so if you were in the church at that time, it wasn’t like I didn’t love you. I just hated this *thing*, called the church. And I realized that I had gone into it out of anger, and to show the church, do it right. And that’s just kind of weird, isn’t it? But that’s how deceptive our hearts are. How easily we hide our stuff. And I couldn’t have ever gotten there by myself. I just laid there on the floor, wept, and wept and wept, . . . and wept, and wept.

When I opened my eyes, the hotel staff had set up chairs around me because they had some other meeting. And I remember thinking to myself, "Okay God, I freaked out!"

I went back to the room; we had another meeting late that night, and Susan left because she'd had enough visions for one week, or something. I don't know. But I thought, "Well, okay, I'm going to stick around." That little Catholic lady, I met her and I said, "Look, the slain in the Spirit doesn't work for me. I'll lie down and you just pray for me." So I laid down, she started praying for me. To make a long story short, after a while, my hands started to tingle like they were going numb. And this, like, fire started going down my hands, up my arms, and into my body. And I thought, "That is so weird, my hands fell asleep, and now my body is starting to fall asleep!" And then someone prayed, "Lord, let it come in waves." And it was like, whoosh, shooting through my body! And then I realized that I couldn't move my hands! They were just stuck there, like, stuck in praise!

Then I realized there was this pressure on each wrist, and I thought my arms were going to break! And I was so excited. I thought, "If they break, this is conclusive evidence that there is a God!" You know? I mean really, my science brain was just wiggling out! It was incredible. And I remember thinking to myself, "Okay, I need to pay attention to what's going on inside of me right now! It's not about just these manifestations, or whatever, but what's happening in my heart." It was like God was pulling back the curtain on all my life. And I remember I said to the lady who was praying for me, I said, "Jesus just called me a dork!" And she said, "Oh, no, he wouldn't call you that." And I thought to myself, "Oh, yeah, yeah, he would!" Because he was saying, "Peter, stop being a dork! Stop doubting my love for you." It was like he pulled back the curtain on my life and I realized everywhere I thought a good thought about God, it was Him. It wasn't me. It was Him.

I started thanking him for everything. I remember I thanked him for U-2, I thanked him for Sunday school teachers at First Presbyterian church, just out of control thanksgiving. It went on, I don't know how long. We got up and came home back to Lookout. For several months, I'd lie down, and I have a really hard time going to sleep usually, and I'd hit the pillow and boom, (Peter snaps his fingers) like that and I'd be out. After a time, it wore off, which tells me something. God still has more work to do in here (Peter thumps his chest). It was probably just the tip of the iceberg. We so underestimate our own sin.

Well, shortly after I got back, I'd been praying, "God, I just want you to be more real to me. Do whatever you want and if you'd want, I'd even pray for people with demons," because that always freaked me out.

Years before, at Hollywood Pres, I had seen a demon cast out of somebody and it just freaked me out. And it was shortly after that that I met Elaine. Elaine's probably one of my very best friends. Elaine had been raised in a coven. Elaine's going to share her story in a few weeks, I think. We started praying for Elaine. That was shortly after we got back from Toronto. And as we dealt with the demonic and all of these things, God began to show me some things that were really important, things that pertained to my story.

The first thing was that God does not want us to hide our shame. God wants us to fight with the Light. He wants us to walk in the Light. And the Evil one really has no power, except the power of darkness. And so Jesus calls us to be truthful. He is the truth. And you know, there's objective truth, like "out there." You know what I mean? Objective truth, like two times two

equals four? And then there's subjective truth, whether or not I believe two times two equals four. So I can have the objective truth right, and yet, be untruthful and fall right into the hands of the evil one. I think that's kind of what happened with the Pharisees. Jesus is the way. The way is how it is walked. And so God asks all of us to be honest.

The second thing I realized is that the evil one uses our fears. I wrote it down here because I wanted to remember exactly how I wanted to say it. I realized this, God delivers us through our fears, not around them. We're all tempted to manage our fears rather than face our fears. And yet, the greatest gifts are waiting for us sometimes in the place of shame, and the place of fear. So, God walks us back through fears.

You know, I've found that in American Christian circles, we tend to think that Jesus was crucified so that we wouldn't have to be crucified. But if you read the New Testament, you'll find that Jesus was crucified to help us get crucified. *"It is no longer I who live,"* wrote Paul, *"but Christ who lives in me. I have been crucified with Christ."* And if we were joined with him in a death like his, we'll be joined with him in a resurrection like his. And so, God walks us into our places of fear, so he delivers us through our fears, not around them.

Our temptation is to hide our shame, manage our fear and we do that through religious control. You know, that's what the Pharisees really did, right? They hid their shame. And they managed their fear. How they do it with good deeds, with the law, with religious control. But what did Jesus do? He exposed their shame. And he challenged their fears. So they crucified him.

You know, in the last few years preaching at Lookout, we preached through Matthew and I realized that things started getting difficult for me as they got difficult for Jesus. Along about chapter 19, speaking about the rich young ruler, Jesus makes this incredible statement when the disciples asked, "Who then can be saved?" He said, "Well, all things are possible for God." And then he goes on to tell the parable of the vineyard and the people that were working really hard for a long time, they get mad because the other guys got the same amount of money. I remember I would preach during that time and just really struggle with what I knew would be controversial. And I remember I felt like Jesus would say this to me over and over, not in audible words, I haven't heard that since then, but kind of like, "Peter, why do you think you can say this stuff and have everybody like you? And when I said it, I got crucified?"

Now, if you think, "Well gee, it sounds kind of have a Messiah complex or something." Well I'm not Jesus, however, my story is hidden in *his* story. You know, our stories only have meaning as far as we are able to find them in his story. And I felt like I identified with him in his story, like I was tasting things he must have tasted. And things got pretty hard at Lookout for quite a while. And I really loved Lookout; we are Lookout.

One of the theories about me, and I'm telling my story, right? So it's okay to talk this way? One of the theories about me was that I had some, not just a Messiah complex, but a dad complex, that I was reliving my dad's story, repeating my dad's story. And you know, this is the weird thing, I don't think I was trying to repeat my dad's story. I think I was desperately trying to run from my dad's story because it was my biggest shame, and my biggest fear.

Last fall, I was feeling ashamed, frightened and alone one day. I was driving in my car and someone had given me one of my dad's old sermons. Listen to this part. This is part of it, the

sermon's on Hebrews chapter 12 and the great saints that have gone before us. You want to play this Zach?

Recording of Dan Hiett on Hebrews 11:35 - 12: 5

Well, so they are and we are not called to live the Christian life in loneliness. For we know there's nothing as disturbing as a lonely struggle, when no one is listening, no one watching, or no one caring. But, we have exactly the opposite. We have a multitude of saints, which the Scripture says "No man can number." We have a record of their lives, or the lives of many of them, and they show us that endurance is possible, and hardships and sufferings are temporary, that God's grace will sustain us, and his presence will be with us, that faith will have it's wonderful reward. Indeed, many of those witnesses have died, but the faith is still speaking to us! And many are with us now, here and wherever we go. They're not mere spectators, but they are running the race with us. They're concerned about how we're doing: praying for us, interested in us, loving us. We are *not* alone in this race. Others, who we think are just watching, are really running with us.

I think that was Saturday morning, and I remember thinking, "That's wild, I don't remember dad preaching on that verse before. I wonder if he's watching?" That night I preached a sermon at Lookout. We had communion, things were really tough. I sat down during the singing time and Susan turned to me and she said, "Peter I just saw your dad!" I said, "You did?" She said, "Yeah! He was standing right in front of us like I told you a few weeks ago."

And she said, "He had a bowl in his hand. And he reached out like this and he said, 'Susan and Peter, do not be afraid to drink from the cup that the Lord has for you!'" And then he disappeared. She said his eyes were like, on fire, full of joy, full of life. "Do not be afraid to drink from the cup," and my dad was holding it!

You know, in Scripture, to drink from a cup is to experience something. It's to participate in something. And so you remember, that Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, he took a cup and he said, "*This is my blood of the covenant. Do this in remembrance of me.*" And then, shortly after that, he went out to the Garden of Gethsemane and dropped to his knees and he prayed, "*Father, if there be any way, let this cup pass from me! Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.*"

In John 18: 11 John records that when the soldiers came for him, Peter, wanting to hide his shame and manage his fear, pulled out his sword, and seized control. Peter cut off the ear of the High Priest's servant and Jesus turned to him and said, "*Peter, put away your sword, shall I not drink the cup that the Father has for me?*" Shall I not drink the cup that my dad has for me—that my Father in Heaven has for me?

The day after Thanksgiving, I took my kids, and we went up to Lookout. We started packing my library to bring it home to our house. It was a hard day. Fifteen years before, to the day, we had arrived in Golden and unpacked our house in Golden. My dad was at First Presbyterian Church for fifteen years. It was the ministerial committee that came in and questioned him about Scripture. And the ministerial committee that came in and questioned me about Scripture. It was the congregation that pretty much wanted him to stay, but he had to leave, and the

congregation that pretty much wanted me to stay, but I had to leave. And then, this is really weird, you know that place I told you about? That place of my greatest shame, greatest fear? It's this room! I think I was sitting right there next to Nora.

I didn't know that when we signed up for this place. My mom reminded me. And then I remembered. I thought, "God, what are you doing?" He's writing his story. And he walks us into our place of greatest fear and greatest shame. You know why? You see, I'm still in the story, but this is why, I believe – to show us his glory. We always run from our shame and our fears, but that's where he's revealed! Do you see, we're running from the cross where Jesus died? But you have to go through the cross in order to get to Easter! And so, God may be walking you into your place of shame. He may be walking you into your place of fear. Why? To show you who he is! He's the savior. We're our savior revealed and glorified? But we need to be saved—in our shame!

I went into the ministry because I hated the church, and you can't get much more sick than that!
Shame, over what had happened to my father!
Fear, over those kind of things happening to me!
And God walks us into those places to show to us his Son, his immeasurable glory in grace.

So, anyway, that's kind of my story up 'til now. I don't know exactly what it means about this place, but somebody's watching us! Somebody's writing a story. And we're a part of it.

Now, that's the gospel according to me. So, it's not that all this is about me. You see it is, and yet, it's also all about you and there's the gospel according to you! And God is that big, that he gives meaning to all of our stories that way, and we're only part way through.

And so, this is what I'd like you to do, if you would, just take a moment. And you're going to get into groups of three or four, and I want you to just share where you think maybe God is walking you into a fear. Or maybe where, this is harder, you don't have to do this, maybe where he's walking you into a shame. And, remember he's doing it. I believe, he does it to exhibit his glory. I mean, even if you mess up, God is sovereign, okay?

So, now listen, we've been doing this recently, and I think it's kind of cool, but if you're new and that freaks you out to do that, well listen, don't say anything. You don't have to say anything. Just sit there silently, pretend you're a Quaker. You know who the Quakers are? They sit and they wait for the Spirit. But I want to tell you, you're not more spiritual if you say something, and you're not less spiritual if you say something. So what I want you to do is get in those groups and tell about where you think God might be walking you into a fear and then pray for each other. Alright? We'll worship, and then we'll go to Communion, so we'll take just a few minutes and do that. And if you don't want to say anything, that's cool too.

Communion

Benediction

Do you understand that your life is hidden in Christ, who is God? So it's not just *your* story! It's *his* story. There's a gospel according to you. And you see, there's a gospel according to all the folks up at Lookout, a gospel according to the people you may be in an argument with. I mean, that's how great our Lord is! He gives new meaning to all of our shame and all of our fear. You know, another word for word is logos it translates into "meaning." You just came and ingested

the meaning, new meaning, and Christ is rising in you. So no longer hide in shame. No longer work so hard to manage your fear. Believe the gospel, and live. He will finish the story. He already has. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Disclaimer: This document is a draft and has not been edited by the author. Therefore, there may be discrepancies. Some discrepancies may be minor; some may have to do with theology. When in doubt, please refer to the audio version of the sermon on this website and don't be shy about informing us of errors.