

My Testimony

By Melinda Berge

On November 18, 1978, I was born in Bemidji, Minnesota, to two of the most wonderful people in the world—my parents: Kenneth & Rebecca Berge. I was the fourth and last child to be born to my parents and was greatly blessed with two precious sisters, Melissa and Melanie, and one dear brother, Matthew.

Shortly after my birth, my parents, along with Pastor James Tuttle, prayed over me and dedicated me to the Lord and to His service. I was to be a life that was set apart for God's use. From the very beginning of my life, God's hand of blessing and protection has been upon me.

Saying that my childhood was close to perfect seems rather unrealistic, but I can honestly say that overall my growing-up years were truly above average. My father and mother were deeply committed to one another and to God, and this made for a home that was a true haven.

In 1984, when I was five years old, my parents felt strongly that God was calling them to take a step of faith to educate their children at home. Therefore, my elementary and high school days were spent at home, striving "to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." (2 Tim. 2:15). I have fond memories those days!

Yet under the layers of my apparent "all-together" life, I was a sinner without a savior. I had a good life, yes, but good was not going to get me anywhere. The only thing that mattered was the answer to this question, "Have you been born again?" God had heard my parents pray and dedicate me to the Lord years earlier, but now He wanted to hear from *me*. He is a personal God and wanted to make my life more than good—He wanted to make it abundant!

In November of 1992, when I was thirteen years old, my family and I attended a week-long seminar in St. Paul, MN. I remember being challenged and inspired by the Word of God as it was presented in a powerful way. It was the second to the last day of the seminar that proved to be the greatest in my life. Among the hundreds in attendance, God sought me out and knocked on the door of my heart. It was the first time I remember acknowledging the true condition of my heart and realizing that I was a sinner in desperate need of a Savior. I realized that without a vital relationship with Jesus, I was bound for hell and would never see heaven. "*For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord*" (Romans 6:23). That night I prayed and asked Jesus Christ to forgive me for my sins. I dedicated my life to Him, asking Him to take all of me. "*Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it*" (Matthew 10:39). I finally understood the purpose of the cross,

and the purpose of Jesus' shed blood; it was to give me life. *"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I [Jesus] came that they may have life and have it abundantly" (John 10:10).*

There is only one way to find forgiveness, one way to find peace, one way to gain heaven; it is through Jesus Christ. *"I am the way, the truth and the life, no man cometh unto the Father but by me" (John 14:6).*

Today I am living for one purpose—to glorify God. I have been bought with a great price—the precious blood of Jesus. My life is not my own. Why waste my life on *my best* when *HIS best* is exceedingly above and beyond what I can think or imagine?! He has done such a marvelous work in my life and has shown Himself faithful over and over again.

Has He bestowed an abundant life to me? Oh yes! But it's not because of His blessings that I love Him; I love Him because it was HE who first loved me.