

# PHIL HARBRIDGE

## My Conversion Experience †

My original encounter with Jesus Christ was as simple as I was young. Before I was six years old, I invited Jesus into my heart to be my Savior. Growing up in a Christian family brought with it the early exposure to Christ through my parents and the church. I remember being drawn by a lesson in my Sunday School. I'm not sure why I was interested, and to this day I don't remember what it was the teacher had to say. Looking back on it now, I suspect what really gripped me was her sincerity. I could sense at my young age that whatever it was she was teaching, she believed it. That to me translated into a measure of curiosity. I remember, on that same Sunday afternoon, asking my mom questions about Jesus. She explained to me in terms that seemed to make sense, that God loved me and wanted to have a good friendship with me, but that was only possible if I believed that Jesus was God's son who had died to repair the damage of my sins. It all seemed 'fairy tale-ish', yet I knew my mom (and dad) believed it and that they loved me. That afternoon I prayed with my mom to receive Jesus Christ as my Saviour.

From that point I experienced the apathy of growing up 'born again'. Until I really understood God's promise that "neither death nor life, neither messenger of Heaven nor monarch of earth, neither what happens today nor what may happen tomorrow, neither a power from on high nor a power from below, nor anything else in God's whole world has any power to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord!", I'm sure I had asked Christ into my heart dozens of times. My faith hadn't really become practical. I was simply going through the motions not knowing that all the disciplines did not validate my faith. I was clearly caught up in religion and neglecting my relationship with my Lord.

When I was sixteen, the reality of Jesus' love for me, and the awareness that He was always with me, gripped my heart and mind. My church youth group, youth pastor, family and circumstances nurtured me deeper into Christlikeness, and challenged me to develop as a leader. My spiritual pilgrimage from that first introduction to Jesus Christ has encompassed various challenges and accomplishments, but the simple realization of God's love for me, as my heavenly Father, expressed through the work of Jesus Christ and the residence of the Holy Spirit, continues to carry me.