

Aleksandr Kulikovich

Was born in 1977 Brest, Belarus

In 1998 immigrated to the United States, Evansville Indiana

I was born in a Christian family. My parents and grandparents were all professing believers. From a very early age I attended Sunday school, memorized Bible verses, attended youth fellowship groups and participated in a variety of church activities. I recall one time when we had a guest preacher in our church from Germany; he made it clear that if a person doesn't have peace with God, this person is doomed for eternal destruction. It was a strong evangelistic message; many of my peers walked down the aisle, and so did I. At that time I was fifteen.

However, if I were to ask myself a question, was there anything changed in my life, my answer would be - no. No one in my family took any consideration about my "conversion". I continued to live my life like I always did. I continued to come to church on Sundays, but deep in my heart I understood that most likely I was unregenerate. I didn't have a relationship with God. I was drawn to the world. In my high school years I started to hang out with unbelieving friends, participating in all their ungodly activities. I never made it to the baptism, although my father constantly reminded me that all my church friends had already been baptized. I was afraid to make any "promises" to God. (*And this prefigured baptism, which now saves you—not the washing off of physical dirt but the pledge of a good conscience to God—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, 1 Peter 3:21 (NET)*). It was clear to me that it was going to be hypocrisy. Also I knew that if I didn't keep my promises serious consequences would await me.

After graduating high school, I stopped going to church. I knew that God existed, but I didn't want to be a hypocrite like some people whom I knew. I used this as an excuse not to go to church. I started engaging myself in business, got involved in various corruption scams. After

the collapse of the Soviet Union there were a lot of opportunities to earn "easy" money. I liked that, and I felt very confident.

My parents started to think about immigration and wanted me to go with them. I did not want to move, but the friends with whom I hung out, convinced me that I needed to go and see - perhaps there was something good. After a couple of weeks in America, I realized that this was not a vacation. All my ambitious life in Belarus was left behind, and it was very hard to accept the new reality. No friends, no language skills, and all the guys I knew, worked hard in construction; it was unpleasant to accept the idea that I need to work so hard physically to make money. I went into deep depression. I sat home for six months and did not go anywhere.

Occasionally I attended a small Russian-speaking church in Evansville, Indiana. But I behaved very arrogantly, rejecting any attempt of people to get in touch with me. Then I met with Russian non-Christian guys, I started to get into trouble, and had a lot of problems with the police. I had lost meaning in life; I allowed myself to drive while I was intoxicated, and I had no interest in anything. As a result of such conduct, I was put on house arrest for six months. I had to stay at home and not go anywhere. I had a lot of time to think. At first, I blamed the police, but then later realized that I was guilty and bearing deserved punishment. I felt better after this realization, and I decided that I would change my life.

I decided not to talk to old friends, find a profession, and begin to improve my situation. I stopped drinking and went to school to be a hairstylist. When all my issues with the law were resolved, I was accepted to the Academy of Hair Design and began to study.

After graduation, I was accepted to a prestigious salon; I grew professionally and was quite successful. In 2005 I started my own business. I felt satisfaction from the fact that I had achieved something and become a "normal" person. However, after two years of hard work, I was tired of this kind of life and satisfaction had lost its newness.

My younger brother Vadim repented at that time and moved to Vancouver, Washington. I saw his truly transformed life, and it helped me to believe that not all is lost, that if he could be

changed, there was hope for me also. I wanted my life to be different, but it was not very realistic. I knew that my life was flying by in vain. I lived from Monday to Monday, making money, and didn't even have time to spend it. I lived in captivity of my work, and captivity of my sinful relationships. And then I started to drink again. At first one glass of wine in the evening after work, then more and more.

At one point a police officer stopped me again when I was driving while intoxicated. At that time I was not a new immigrant, but a known businessman in the city. The local newspaper wrote an article about my arrest, which one of our clients showed me few days later. I was very ashamed and embarrassed. Then I realized that, in fact, I had not changed at all. If before I had directed all my efforts to satisfy my vile lusts, to party and hang out with friends, later, I used all the forces to be a decent person and raise my "Ego". The inner essence of me had not changed.

Then I began to talk more with my brother Vadim. I was struck by the fact that he was really interested in me, that he really loved me and was longing to understand all of my anxieties and worries. While the other Christians around me constantly condemned me, and were asking when I would finally change my life, he really loved me. I began to call him often, to share my problems and concerns.

He just showed me with love, the hopelessness of my situation. Then Vadim sent me a sermon by John MacArthur called "*When God Abandoned the Nation*". After listening to this CD, I realized that I was an enemy to God, His anger was directed towards me, and I was hopeless. I began to panic. It was the beginning of my real search for God. I started listening to the preaching of John MacArthur on the radio every day for half an hour. I liked that this man spoke straight, honestly, not trying to win the audience. Slowly, I began to understand clearly that if I try to seek God and ask for His help, He will help me find Him. I wanted to be changed by the Word, but had no idea how it could be. I just decided to continue to listen to the Truth. You can ask how my real conversion to God happened. It happened in jail.

I was put in a cell for five days for my violation. Before I was locked in the cell I had shared with the officer who worked on my paperwork that I was being punished deservedly, that God wanted me to learn something, and I listened to sermons by John MacArthur. He replied that if I listened to John MacArthur, I really would know the true God. Then he gave me a Bible and various Christian books. In the jail cell I had plenty of time to make sense of my search for God. There was nowhere to escape from my thoughts; it was impossible to play music and occupy my mind with other distractions. In one of the books that was in my cell, I had read about the view of God on sin. I was overwhelmed. I never realized how severely God treats sin. I was very troubled. At first, I tried to forget it and fall asleep, but could not. I knew that if I would stand before God right now, The Bible would judge me before the throne of God. I saw the horror of my guilt. I began to pray to God and tell him that I no longer wanted to live, everything that I did led me to hopelessness and problems. I said I did not want to be the master of my life anymore. I prayed for the salvation of my soul. It was my prayer of repentance.

What happened next? I went out and repented publicly in the Russian church in Evansville. Then, I regularly started watching sermons online by Pastor Alexey Kolomiytsev. I began to read the Bible, and continued to listen to MacArthur every day. Also, I began to think about how to leave my job, as I realized that my work was the meaning of my life. I ran into a big confrontation at work. I began to experience pressure, some tried to say that Jesus would not do that, that you could be a believer and live in any part of the world. But I knew that I needed to leave. God brought me out and helped to resolved all my problems. I gave my share of the company stocks to my businesses partner, finished everything and went to Vancouver, Washington.

I understood that I needed to grow spiritually. Of course, I could listen to sermons on the internet, but my brother Vadim was telling me that I became a part of the body of Christ, and I needed some real support. I realized that I needed to be in the Church, that I needed to go where the Word is in high respect, where people live by the Word. In November 2007, I moved

to Vancouver. I knew that for my spiritual growth I had to be among the brothers and sisters, with whom I would interact, who would help me to see those areas of life in which I had to change.

God miraculously arranged my life in every way. He blessed me with my precious wife Tania and wonderful children James, Karina and Solomon. He allowed me to come back to Evansville. We see His hand every day in our life. I'm thankful that we are a part of Evansville Bible Church.

And you were dead in the trespasses and sins ² in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— ³ among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. ⁴ But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— ⁶ and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷ so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. ⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰ For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Eph 2:1-10