

Good morning. My name is James Ryan. Some of you may know me from the Men's Ministry here at TVC. Others may know me from the Boy Brigade. Most of you probably know me from blocking your view of Pastor Matt every week at service. Sorry about that. I am very happy to have been invited to share a brief testimony of my life in Christ with you.

I did not grow up knowing Christ. I knew OF Him, but I didn't know him as my personal Savior. What I DID know, was what it was like being poor. I was very familiar with the inside of the food pantry in the local church. I also knew what it was like to have an alcoholic father. Living on welfare and watching my mother struggle as she raised my brother and I, led me to rely ONLY on myself and strive for the comforts I thought that only wealth would achieve.

I lived my life by three mottos. DTA (Don't Trust Anyone), YOYO (You're on Your Own) and *my personal favorite* "I'm not here to make the world a better place. I need to get through it as quickly, cleanly, and as profitably as possible." I lived my life and ran my business of 13 years by those mottos. My company ran smoothly and profitably. We were the second largest technology firm in the country specializing in the Credit Union Industry. My life was driven by money and making as much of it as possible.

During this time, I consistently attended church on Sundays. Nothing had ever moved me or spoke to me. I was going through the motions simply out of habit. I would listen to sermons that conflicted with the bible readings. During the week I would hear so-called Christians take God off the shelf, and dust him off only to make points during a conversation. I was very frustrated and I had enough. You might think that I would just throw my hands up and walk away forever. But, the one thing that I DID learn from the business world was to know more about a subject than the other guy if you want to have a strategic edge or advantage over him. In this case, I wanted that edge. So I decided to pick up the bible and read it. I opened it to the gospel of John.

Out of my own arrogance and self-righteousness, God called me to him. As some Christians say "the words just popped out at me" well they did. The message became crystal clear. So I opened the door of my heart and let Jesus in.

Needless to say, my life mottos had changed. And, so did the relationship with my non-Christian business partner. He basically gave me an ultimatum – to keep Jesus out of the workplace or leave. I was persecuted for Christ.

Although, frightening to leave my comfort zone, I have a family with 3 kids, and a mortgage payment like everyone else, the decision was clear. I left and began a new company. God led me in a path where I had never gone before.

My new company's name is Apostle Industries Inc. There's a reason why the company is named as such. My goal NOW is not about making as much money

as possible, but how many people I could help while spreading the good news. The company employs homeless people and ministers to those who are in need. We pray at the beginning and the end of the work day. We minister to them, share and discuss the gospel while we work. In addition, we are teaching them a trade so they can continue on with their new skills at a permanent place of employment. As an obedient disciple of Christ, I am doing HIS will, not mine, and all for HIS glory.

At the beginning of my new life in Christ, I needed to find fellowship and found TVC. The first time I came here to service, it was like a breath of fresh air. I was immediately greeted by a warm smile and a firm handshake by Ken Auerbach. I ran home to my wife, excited and filled with the Holy Spirit. I told her that this IS the kind of fellowship that I need. I've been coming here every Sunday since with my family.

As part of my discipleship, I began handing out Bibles and food to homeless people on the streets. I found myself walking the beach and handing out Bibles and talking to people about Christ – anyone who would listen. I've even mentioned TVC and directed a lot of people to the love of Christ here.

During one of the TVC Men's Ministry meetings, I met someone who told me about the Lighthouse Mission in Patchogue. The people there also spread the gospel while feeding the hungry. When I went to check it out, I knew that this was the place where God was calling me to be. I spent many days there sweating or freezing in the back of a truck, handing out food and sharing the gospel. I had never felt closer to God.

Because of the connection formed here at TVC, I finally accepted my calling and completed my studies as a Pastor. I am now happily serving the Lord as a volunteer Pastor at the Lighthouse Mission.

Looking back and as I read this now, it's amazing to me to see how God has used all the experiences in my life - the poverty, arrogance, self-righteousness - and completely turned those bad things for good; for His glory.

Those experiences have prepared me to do His works out on the streets where I can truly be a disciple spreading His word as I feed those who are hungry for food and, most importantly, for Him.

Oh by the way, I now have a new motto, it goes like this "Seeking, Sharing & Serving all for the Glory of God"