

It was a July 4th weekend. The actual day was July 7, 1968. I was two months shy of being 17 years old and a senior in high school, at the time. It has now been 49 years.

My earliest memory of church is that of being five years old, on a Sunday evening singing songs like, the B-I-B-L-E, and, Jesus Loves Me. I remember myself and a few others gathered into a Sunday school class room singing along with the pastor's wife as she played her accordion.

Throughout my years of being in Sunday school I learned so much that, if I were to try to write it all down, this one edition of The Republic would not be able to contain it.

Here are just a few things I learned:

"In the beginning God..."

the names of the 66 books of the Bible, in order

the names of the 12 disciples, which included Judas Iscariot, the disciple who betrayed Jesus

the details of many of the parables Jesus taught, their meaning and an everyday practical application of each

about the friendships of Ruth and Naomi, Mary and Elisabeth, David and Jonathan and others.

about tithing, why it is that God places such an emphasis and importance on giving and being generous to others, as well as to the church, with what God has given us

about the birth of Jesus, God's son, the Holy Spirit, and along with God, make up the Trinity

the example Jesus taught his followers to pray, the Lord's Prayer

what, today, we know as Easter and what it's really all about

Jesus life, his death, resurrection and ascension

the 23rd Psalm and many other passages

that God promises to be with us to strengthen and encourage us when life is not fair to us

if we are Christ followers, the Holy Spirit lives within us to help us become more like Jesus

One of the most important things I learned in Sunday School is that, everyday of my life, I am now and forever will be, a sinner saved by God's grace and that, if you are a Christ follower, you are too!

Lastly, and above most everything else, I learned that God has always desired an everyday, living, personal relationship with each and every human being, past, present and future. He tells us this in his love letter to us, the Bible, from Genesis through Revelation.

Yes, the words to the songs I learned as a child are true. "The B-I -B-L-E, yes, that's the book for me. I stand alone on the word of God, the B-I-B-L-E!" and, "Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so, little ones to him belong, they are weak but he is strong. Yes, Jesus loves me, the Bible tells me so."

It was on that day, July 7, 1968 that all the head knowledge I had acquired growing up in Sunday School moved to my heart and I experienced the personal relationship with Christ that he had given his life for.

Ephesians 2:8,9 reads, "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast."