

IF I WERE REALLY HONEST I would have to admit that there were many things I hated about Camp Arnes. I hated the early morning calisthenics in a clammy bathing suit, and I hated the outhouses and the mushy porridge. But what I hated most about Camp Arnes were the testimony times.

Testimony time took place on the beach around a huge bonfire. We sang. We prayed. And then we passed around a box full of little chunks of wood, and everyone took one.

Somebody, most often a self-assured gorgeous blond, would flick her chip of wood into the fire, stand, and tell the story of her salvation.

"My parents were divorced when I was four because my father beat my mother black and blue every night. So my niece and I grew up together and ran away to Morocco when we were sixteen. While hitchhiking around, I . . . uh . . . fell in love with a 30-year-old Greek, and we were married. Then he ran off with my niece (remember my niece?). Finally the Lord brought me to a revival meeting in Holland, and it was there that I got saved."

How could I follow an act like that?

Why didn't I get up? Why didn't I stride forward and throw my "chip" into the fire? I didn't because, alas, I had no tale of misfortune or self-destruction to tell. I had had no life of abuse or truancy from which I had turned to Christ.

I'd always gone to Sunday school and church. I'd always listened to my parents (more or less) and didn't cheat on exams, or shoplift costume jewelry from K-Mart, or even smoke behind the school. I took part in the local "Prayer and Praise" meetings with the other Christian kids in the neighborhood. I went to a Christian boarding school for my eleventh grade year and even taught little children about Jesus one summer with Child Evangelism Fellowship. My story, compared to the others, was about as interesting as porridge.

ONE TIME when I actually did get up the nerve to "toss in my chip," my testimony went like this:

"I was brought up in a Christian home" (here one half of the campers began to yawn) "and accepted Christ at a very early age. I'm so happy I'm a Christian." So who was interested in that? I felt cheated—left with the kind of testimony no one cared to hear. I thought I had nothing to tell.

It wasn't that I thought I was sinless! I realized that my "small" sins were as despicable to God as others' "big" ones. But one has to face the facts: Losing your temper doesn't seem half as glamorous as stealing a car! With such a humdrum, steady, and secure Christian life, how could I be expected to be a witness of God's power to others?

One day my questions were answered.

My friend Bonnie was raised in a Christian home, but turned her back on that way of life. First it was mild—deceiving her parents, ignoring her spiritual training. Soon she

found herself partying and doing drugs. Then she got into witchcraft.

Eventually Bonnie got herself straightened out, and now she's a gentle, loving, and in many ways spiritually mature Christian. But I see that old life of hers pulling at her. Even though she's given herself completely over to God, her past experience haunts her.

But Bonnie isn't the only person whose pre-salvation life "unbalances" her now. There's the girl who got attention by wearing suggestive clothes and now finds herself craving that attention again, and the new Christian who unwittingly twists God's Word around because he never had a spiritual upbringing.

A friend of mine grew up within a secular family and had no contact with Christians until a year ago when she met me. She accepted salvation recently and commented to me, "I really started thinking seriously about Christianity when I saw the love and security of your parents' home. Everyone seems to trust God in everyday life, and no one makes a big deal of it."

It was through that calm and secure feeling—the very one I considered the humdrumness of Christian life—that my friend saw the power of God. So what if I don't have firsthand experience in drugs or gambling? My conversion wasn't a turnabout from a sensationally wicked life to a saintly existence. Rather, my Christian experience has been a day-by-day spiritual plodding—two steps forward, one step back.

I thought I didn't have a story to tell, but I found out that God will display his power in every type of Christian witness. Isn't God creative?



**"I grew up in a
Christian home."**

(yawn)

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