



The Storyteller Radio Broadcast

Andrew Nelson (Aleut)

My name is Andrew Nelson. I'm from Igiugig. I used to fish there on Igiugig for the sailboat days. That was a tough job, cause I was young guy but I was a hard worker, I never give up. There's one thing I never do is give up, like in my Christian life, I'll never go back live the worldly life as long as I live. I'll always put the Lord first.

One thing I remember, when I was a kid, when I did something I did it right or I don't do it at all. Like in Igiugig, we had a chief; my dad was a chief, and anything he say goes. If he wants help, he would say go see him, he'll help you, because Aleut people (was all Aleuts there) but he was the chief, and what he said went! When someone said I'll get some one to carry my coal for me and you just go see him and you're here to help you. And you go see the gang, he say, then they listen to him, they go help him.

The Aleut way, we used to go out hunting together, go out there get ducks, geese in the fall, they're for the winter. Then we put up our dogfish, carry our dogfish.

I never had much freedom. My dad worked me, he worked me hard, he let me carry my fish all the way up from down cannery, all the way up to two wheeler, load the fish, take it home, and then chop wood for dogs, cook for the dogs, feed the dogs, put grass in the dogs' houses, saw wood... you know, a little guy, me, I saw wood and I chop the blocks. He had me working. My sisters go out on to have movies and stuff like that. I couldn't do that; he said, "You got to do these things first." Then I never get to go nowhere.

My dad was a strong Aleut. He always like to work and he did the same thing and that's how come I think he, I think he died of cancer myself. They say he died of TB, but I don't believe it, cause he never spit blood in his life. Only thing he spit and hum, moan, groan all night long, he became skin and bones. His back, he had bones sticking out in his back, rear end from laying down in bed so long; he was just nothing but bones.

And every time he hurt so much he used to tell me, "Go down there to the doctor and tell him I want some pain shots," and he'd come up and give him a pain shot for \$5, and then he would sleep that night; otherwise he'd moan and groan all night.

When I was a little kid, they used to give us wine at the church at Orthodox, my background is Orthodox, Russian Orthodox, and I used to be a boy that take care of the incense pot. I used to see the preacher there fixing the wine up to have to serve to the people in the morning, have communion, and I'd see him drink out of that thing, take a sip out of that wine, then when I get out there, I'd have to make confession first before I could drink that wine.

Then they'd give me one teaspoon of wine, mmmm, good, boy, and then when my mom start drinking, and after my dad passed away and then I start drinking wine, and that from

there on I couldn't stop. It just keeps on going after I start drinking beer, and then it just kept on, it just got worse.

And when I got in service it got worse. Then when I lost my mom, - when I was in San Diego she passed away, so I couldn't handle it - it was drink after drink after... so they say, "Andrew, we're going to let you go, you're not... it's bothering you when you lost your mother." So they let me out on hardship discharge, two months early. So I got home, and then I went back to drinking again; I'd just do it... just a matter... just time, you know. Never no peace.

At times, me and my wife would sit and ask ourself, "Gee, what are we going to do?" so we went to see a Catholic priest and he give us a note and he write it down and he say, "Read this every night and it will help you." We did that and nothing happened.

And finally a missionary came to Igiugig, Harlan Willis, and he preached the Gospel, and the time that my wife would go to church and come home and tell me all about this service they had up there. It seemed like I was going to church too.

That made me drink more, cause I know it'd make me feel guilty, how I didn't like the life I was living. My wife came home and she said she was born again, and I said, "About time!" and that's what I want to do here all the time.

She was my preacher! Every time she come home she'd preach to me, and I'd ask cause I wanted to hear; I was thirsty, I wanted to find peace, and I couldn't find it in the bottle. Only thing I could find in the bottle was just hangover, and get mad, and go out to other parties, and I was not happy.

But I was searching, see, what I was searching for Jesus. And I would just keep drinking, and drinking and drinking and searching. And then, when I heard about her getting saved, my wife getting saved, and accepting Christ as Savior and I could see the change in her life, and I wanted that. I didn't want to go my way all the time so... and... but it kept on going.

For nine months I drank. I remember one evening I came back home. I was a little bit hungry so I told my wife to make me a sandwich, but in my mind I was thinking of going up to the church. But I just couldn't make myself get around to telling her I was going to go up there. But I told her to make me a sandwich; I was there putting my shoes on and after I mentioned to my wife, "I think I should go see Harlan."

NIDA (Andrew's wife): I think it was in February; this was nine months after I accepted the Lord. It was late in the night, 9:30 - 10 o'clock. He says, "Can you make me a sandwich?" and I said, "Sure I can." So I started making him a sandwich and I thought, "Oh, he's going to go out to see the boys again and be out late." He was putting on his boots, lacing them up; he said, "I think I'm going to see Harlan." And I said, "Okay, your sandwich is ready." You know, I just said quickly, "It's ready, go; eat it and go." But I just gave it to him and he ate it; as he was eating his sandwich, he says, "One thing I could never do is memorize verses like you." And I said, "Well that's okay but, you know, it can

come easy sometimes.” And he says, “No, I could never memorize verses,” and then, “Okay,” and he was out the door. And we watched him.

ANDREW: I just wanted to go up there. I was getting tired of this life of mine, the way I’m going and make no headways. It’s getting where I’m getting I want to find peace or quiet or something. It bothers me inside, so I went up there.

NIDA: The kids got up and said, “Where’d Dad go? Did he say he was going up to the church?” And I said, “Yeah.” And we watched, we saw him pass the window, go into the church, and no lights came on in the church; the kids, “He must be in the dark.”

ANDREW: When I got to the church, the lights were out; I walked in anyway, and as I walked in and I kneeled down in front of the pulpit thing there, like an Orthodox, (my background is Orthodox) and asked God to help me. Says, “I’m getting tired the way I’m running my life. I want a new life, I want you to help me,” and just when I said that, the lights came on and the pastor came up and said, “Andrew, you need help?” I said, “I sure do.” I said, “I’m getting tired of the way I’m living. My life I’m doing now, I’d never make it. It’s so... it’s all I keep doing wanting to drink and drink; I want to quit. I need help.”

He said, “Andrew, you know what? In Romans 10:13 it said, ‘Whosoever call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.’ Can you quote that?” And I said, “Yeah. ‘Whosoever call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.’ That’s what I want to do.” I said, “I’m getting tired running this life of mine, cause I can’t make no headways; I tried everything.”

And then he asked me, he said, “Do you want to accept Christ as Savior?” “Yeah,” I said, “Sure. I want to accept Him tonight. I don’t want to wait no longer cause it’s just getting worse. Maybe God could help me get out of this mess. I can’t do it by myself, in no way.”

So he led me to the Lord. I asked God to forgive me of my sins, cleanse me from all my unrighteousness, and asked for forgiveness, so that I be have a clean heart, could walk with the Lord the rest of my life. And we prayed there together, and we prayed; he said, “Amen.” And I said, “Now I got to go home and tell my wife.”

NIDA: “I waited and waited and waited. Finally the lights went out and, you know, I wondered, “Is he going to come home? What is he going to do? Is this just going to be a really a bad night or what?” And then there was a knock at the door. I opened it.

My wife came through the door. I said, “Guess what? Romans 10:13 say, ‘Whosoever call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.’”

Oh, it was wonderful. I could see my wife’s face change.

NIDA: I said, “That’s a whole verse, that’s Romans 10:13.” He said, “I know.” And I hugged him, and he said, “Yep, I accepted the Lord.”

I was so excited, “You want to eat anything, you want something to drink, or what!” He said, “I got to go to bed.”

ANDREW: I was tired, just exhausted. It’s like a big load come off my back. And the next day I started reading the Bible and tears rolling down my eyes, the Bible just opened up just like a gush of water come out of there. I understand the Bible so clear, but from then on I never quit reading the Bible. Just kept on reading all the time, cause I understand it, it was opened to me, that I could understand the words; before it was just blank words. It was yes, no, forgive your sins, and ask Christ to come in your heart; it didn’t mean nothing to me, but when I accept Him as my Savior, makes a lot of difference.

Before, I used to be a drunk, a fighter, a woman beater, and I was no good, I didn’t know which way to turn, and after I accept Christ as Savior, everything just completely changed. I never touched a drop of liquor for 12 straight years, from that night.

I always figure, every now and then, how God so strong could stop me drinking just one night.

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