



The Storyteller Radio Broadcast

Connie Hayes (Colville/Creek/Cherokee)

Hello, my name is Connie Hayes. I was born on the Colville Indian Reservation in Nespalem, Washington. It is in the center part of Washington State. The tribe is Colville Indians, the Confederated tribes of the Colville.

I've never lived there, but I've lived in Oklahoma all my life. I came here from Washington when I was six weeks old.

I was raised by my grandparents. They're Creek and Cherokee, so I'm Colville, Creek and Cherokee; Creek and Cherokee from my mother's side, Colville from my father's side.

When we left the reservation in Nespalem, Washington, my mom and dad separated and they were never together again. They got a divorce, and when I was three years old Dad was killed. He was shot by his own brother, because he was trying to hurt people. I guess they'd been drinking. So I never knew him at all.

And then my mother, the way I got to live with my grandparents, was she was a nurse and she had a lot of different hours, and I just had always lived with my grandparents because of my mother's schedule.

Now, living without my parents and being raised by my grandparents, I guess I always wondered why my mother wasn't there. Then she told me it was because of her work schedule, and yet she had my brother and sister from another marriage, too, and kept them. And there is a feeling of rejection that comes.

That's hard to understand, but you know, when you grow up under the love of God and with grandparents that shower you with love, and I probably had a chance to be a little spoiled. I was their first grandchild. There was a bunch of boys at home, my uncles. I was the youngest child and the only girl, so I really had a chance to be a brat.

I can remember, when I was growing up, I actually don't remember a time when I didn't love the Word of God and was drawn to it. Where we lived and where we went to church, it was about 45 minutes apart. And back then, the seats of the cars were one full bench seat and I would lay my head in my grandma's lap and put my feet in my grandpa's lap, and I would ask my grandma to tell me a Bible story. So while she stroked my hair she'd tell me about David and Goliath or Daniel in the lions den, or Jesus blessing the children, and so that 45 minutes was good. It was a good ride. My head in my grandma's lap while she strokes my hair, and my feet in my grandpa's lap, and he would massage my dirty little feet, because at a country Indian church little Indian kids didn't wear shoes. And the only thing that could make that trip home any better was if my grandpa stopped and got us a strawberry soda.

My grandparents are gone but I miss them so much. They were such a good example of what God wants His people to be.

I viewed my grandfather as my father; actually, he was the father that I knew. I saw God in him, and he was so complete. He was only educated to the second grade, but he was one of the smartest men I ever knew. So wise, and he just meant so much to me; they both did.

I was eleven years old when I knew that I needed the Lord Jesus to be a part of my life. At eleven years old, I asked Him to come and live in my heart, at a vacation Bible school in Henryetta, Oklahoma, out on the Tiger Mountain. The church was named Silver Spring, a little Indian church out there.

About a year before I gave my life to the Lord, I just felt a deep heaviness in my heart. I attend a Baptist church where they give an invitation every week. I just knew that whenever they gave the invitation and this was for, oh, I think a year, it was just a heaviness in my heart, and I knew that the Lord was talking to me and bidding me to come and be His child. It was just a heaviness and a sadness and a darkness that I felt, and at the same time a drawing to Him. And when I finally did it I felt light as a feather.

I've heard a lot of people say they felt like the weight was off their shoulders. That heaviness was gone when I finally did that. It was something that happens deep inside with that recreated spirit.

And it is that sin that we're born with, that heaviness and darkness is what separates us from God. It's the thing that keeps us from being His; it's how we're born. We're all born with that heaviness and darkness on the inside of us. And it was just so stirred at the time, that I felt that. It's always there before you're saved, but when the Holy Spirit starts talking to you, it stirs and it feels so dark and so heavy.

Sometimes people don't understand that there's an eternity, and that they will live that eternity in one place or another. They'll live it in Heaven with God and the Lord Jesus, and loved ones that have given their life to God, or they'll live it in a Hell that was created not for them but for the devil and his angels.

And sometimes that's a hard reality for people to understand, but people need to be born again. God's plan is salvation; God's saving grace offered to us is simple. We try to make it hard and difficult, sometimes, but simply put, it is asking Jesus to be your Savior, asking the Lord Jesus to come into your heart because there is a judgment to face, there is a Hell. Like I said, I don't think people comprehend that there is judgment and punishment, and eternal death.

We will live eternally in Heaven, those of us that are born again, saved, have accepted the salvation and God's saving grace. But those that are not will live eternally in darkness, and in fire, and that's hard to imagine, that there's fire and there's darkness, but it's an eternal darkness. There's no end to that.

During my teenage years I really wasn't a bad kid; I didn't drink, but I didn't attend church, I didn't live for the Lord.

When I got married I had two children. We went to church for a few years, then dropped out. I didn't live for the Lord. I didn't do, you know, I didn't do drugs and I didn't drink, and I didn't party a lot, but maybe somebody would have a birthday party and I'd go to it. But as far as being the partier, I just never was, but without making Jesus Christ first in my life, giving Him the place that He should be, it was a miserable time on the inside, not living for Him.

I think that Christians that are not living for the Lord can be even more miserable than the unsaved person, because they're being pulled in two different directions. And, thank God, the Lord never left me alone. When I got up to go to work each day, I felt such an emptiness and a hunger. And I started rededicating my life to the Lord simply by getting back into His Word. And the scripture that helped me so much was Psalms 143:8. And it says "Cause me to know thy loving kindness in the morning; for it is in thee that I trust: cause me to declare my trust in you."

I began my day with that scripture every day for about two years. While I was getting ready for work, and while I was driving to work, I would recite this scripture. And I just kind of had church for myself, and I can say that starting my day with God's Word truly made a difference in my life. I began to grow in Him. I dreaded every day, I dreaded every single day of my life, before I made His Word a part of my life each morning. I knew how to read the Word, but making it a part of me and asking God's Holy Spirit to be my teacher made a difference for me.

I have a relationship with the Creator of the universe, the Creator of this world and a Creator of all of us. He created us for himself, and the way that anybody can get to that relationship is through Jesus Christ. My relationship with Him is the most important precious thing to me.

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