

On that Sunday, the preacher opened his black Bible to II Corinthians 5:17 proclaiming that “..if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: [that] old things are passed away; [and that] all things are become new.” That verse hit me in a very peculiar way. The year was 2007. I had been in this good, Bible-preaching church for almost a year, saved for almost eight years. Yet, if anything, I was more of a sinner now than I was before!

I was born in 1977, raised Catholic, and was from a very loving, religious home. About eight months after my salvation, I moved from my family home in Ohio to pursue a film and television acting career in Los Angeles. Things were going great. I had just secured a role on the season premier of a primetime television show. Six months earlier I was ordered to get a passport for a probable role opposite Matt Damon shooting in Africa, and my callback ratio when auditioning was at 90%! Things were really starting to move in the right direction. The problem was, when I heard II Corinthians 5:17, there was a glaring issue. I was new creature, to be sure, but I didn't look like one. In fact, as stated earlier, if anything, my sins were “worse” now than the day I got saved. I would often hang my head thinking, “Why did I do that again?” I struggled with the same sins over and over, never able to conquer them even though I genuinely wanted to. I would search for a right book to help me overcome. I would make sure I was in church every week, and I would even invite guests. However, what I realize now is that while I was in a church that I enjoyed, it wasn't doing its job preaching and teaching the whole counsel of God. Until I moved to this Bible preaching church, nothing really could change. Up to this point in my life I had just about come to the conclusion that while I was saved and on my way to heaven, sin must just be a part of the state we are in; I would simply have to deal with the disappointment until my journey Home. This verse,

however, was telling my heart something very different. So I prayed on that verse for several days, asking God to show me that “new creature” reality in my own life.

One morning, after about a week of consistent prayer, I woke up and went to my neighbor's house to visit. When Sportscenter began to show the lowlights of his favorite baseball team's latest loss, the curse words started flying, and each one was like a prick hitting my heart. What on earth was this, I thought?! You have to understand, I swore worse than a sailor myself, and often never even realized when it was happening; to notice when someone else was swearing was absolutely unbelievable! To be offended was another thing entirely; and I kid you not, from that point on my tongue was changed. I didn't set out to change it, I never vowed to put .25 cents into a jar each time it happened, God just did it—without my help, WOW! That was the first time God showed Himself in a very real and tangible way in my life. But that was just the beginning.

A year passed, and I was growing, eager, and learning what a true Bible preaching church was. Then I was given the opportunity to audition for the writer of the book *Platoon*. When I received a copy of the script, every line I had was literally colored with profanity. I was at a cross roads. With a lot of God's help, I realized I could no longer do onscreen what I wouldn't do off-screen. Late one night I sent my agent an email asking him not to submit me to any further projects.

I would stop by his office to explain. Five days later after no response, I received a group email inviting me to a “sunset memorial for Jay Dunbar.” My agent had died.

Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

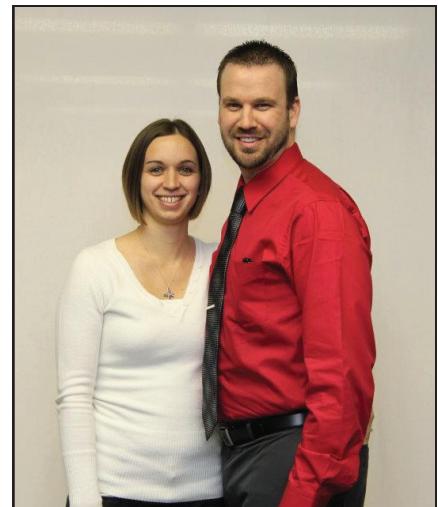
I spent the next five months listening to a lot of preaching and learning to be faithful in daily devotions and prayer. After hearing a message on I Timothy 5:4, I came to the conclusion that it was time to say goodbye to Los Angeles and be available for my family in Ohio. I left a message with my landlord's boyfriend on a Thursday, stating that I was about to head east. On Saturday the gentleman I left the message with came to my apartment to work out the details. He told me not to worry about December's rent, and to feel free to stay until the 15th. He then went on to say, “When you make out the check, please put it in my name. Ken (the landlord) passed away yesterday.”

Several weeks passed. I was leaving for home within a few days, and I still felt uncertain about the move. I grabbed a prayer list I had prayed on for a little over a year and headed down a bike path for a walk. As I began to pray through the section dedicated to my family, I was praying for my sister, brother-in-law and niece, and I heard the Lord say to me, “That's why you're going.” All of a sudden I realized that my landlord passed in the same fashion as my agent had. Immediately I had this complete sense of peace—the kind

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that comes only with a certainty of the Lord's leading. I know that God doesn't kill people to help us make decisions, but I also know that we serve a powerful, omniscient God. He knows the day of our death before we are ever born, and while He doesn't end people's lives for migration purposes, He can arrange things in such a way that they are multifaceted. He used those events to help guide me. He knew exactly how big and clear He would have to be for my doubting heart not to arise with vengeance. I have to say, it was a big exclamation mark at the end of my decision.

Daniel Novy joined Cleveland Baptist Church on January 11, 2009. He is a student at Heritage Baptist Institute, a ministry of Cleveland Baptist church. On June 26, 2010, Dan married Kelly Faulk, a long-time member of Cleveland Baptist. They welcomed their first child, Rylee Noel, into the world on October 18, 2012.



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people to accept His truth and His salvation or die. He never told us to go to holy war and bring Jihad upon the world. No! He did, however, tell us to go into the world and preach the message of the Gospel—to share with all that will listen that there is forgiveness in the name of Jesus.

This brings me to the purpose for writing this article. I see many Christians slacking off in their adherence to their faith. I am speaking specifically of faithful church attendance. When I was a boy growing up, Sunday was the Lord's Day, and we went to church both morning and evening. When Wednesday came around, we were at the mid-week service. Church is where we are encouraged and helped in our spiritual walk. However, today I sense that there is a de-emphasis in attending the three major meetings of the church. A person may be regular on Sunday morning, but may miss the Sunday night service. This is not because he is working, but because he doesn't want to trouble himself to come to another service. He might even sit at home and watch the livestream broadcast and think, why bother? If he does attend the Sunday morning and evening services, he might skip the mid-week service—wondering if there is a difference. The difference is that our world is changing—in some areas, the change is not for the better. We need all of God and His Word that we can get. Every one of us is susceptible to spiritually drifting away from God and truth. The devil has turned up his attack. He has been successful in wooing and winning many hearts and lives to accept his lies. We cannot afford for our hearts and lives to be deceived into this spiritual drift.

We must also remember that it won't be long before the Rapture will take place. We need to be ready. The Word of God states it this way in Hebrews 10:25, "*Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more as we see the day approaching.*"

Being in church for the three major preaching times keeps you ready and spiritually enhances your vibrancy. Being in church for the three major preaching times will keep you spiritually sharp and engaged in the importance of reaching our world with the Gospel. God's Word has not lost its luster or its power to accomplish God's purposes in impacting lives with the truth of the Gospel. The Gospel is still the power of God unto salvation to all that will believe. If there is a lacking element, it is in the lives of God's people having God's grace and power upon them to touch this world.

Although we have good attendance at all the services of Cleveland Baptist Church, we still have room to grow. If you have not been diligent in attending the important three meetings of church each week, making each of them a priority, then let me encourage you to change your thinking. Believers will stand before Christ and give an account of their lives, and it will be a terrible thing to have Him ask you what you thought was more important than the meeting of His body, the church!



Kevin Folger
Senior Pastor