

## Personal Testimony of Leland Johnson

I was born into a Christian home, both parents having accepted Christ as their Savior before I was born. We grew up going to church and were there every time the doors were open. As a child, around the age of six, I accepted Jesus Christ as my Savior. My parents wanted to wait until I could fully understand the process of baptism and I was baptized, around the age of 9 years old. My father was a deacon, and both my parents were deeply involved in all of the ministries of the church. My parents were also bus captains, so growing up we worked on the bus route every Saturday and Sunday mornings.

When I was a teenager we moved from Richmond, VA to the Washington DC area. That's when I personally became more involved in ministries, working with the choir through the sound ministry. I also worked with our Assistant Pastor on the COEBA conference, which our church held every year. One Sunday, when I was 16 years old, my pastor was preaching on "Being Sure of Your Salvation." I realized then that my memory was fuzzy regarding the details of my salvation. Even though I could ask my parents and they could recount the time it happened, I did not want to stand before God telling a story that my parents had related to me. I decided to bow my head right then and gain full assurance of my salvation. Later that year, the youth ministry attended the Gospel Light Youth Camp in Walkertown, NC. During that conference I surrendered my life to preach the Word of God.

I enrolled in Pensacola Christian College in the fall of 2000. Being that I thought that I could out-think God, I majored in Advertising and Public Relations. I figured that I would need a job before I could go into ministry to provide for myself. God gave me no rest about this decision, as it showed a lack of faith in Him. After my first year, I changed my major to Bible. After my second year, I felt that God was leading me to get more specialized training and I transferred to Atlantic Baptist Bible College. God also led me to work with a pastor-friend who had planted a church an hour away from the college.

After graduating in the fall of 2004, Naomi and I were married. We remained heavily involved with a church plant that we were working in during college. We led the youth ministry, cleaned the church, I preached frequently, and helped with anything else the pastor needed. In January of 2006 we experienced the birth of our first child, Lincoln. Just 10 months later, we experienced the birth of our second child, Lauren.

In 2007, God led the Berean Baptist Church to call me to be the pastor of the church. We had not been seeking this opportunity, however, God through a series of divine appointments allowed this to happen. After a time of prayer and seeking God, we accepted the call. For seven years, I served as the pastor of the Berean Baptist Church in North Carolina where people were saved, and God changed lives. God gave us a wonderful group of people that loved Him and each other.

In 2013, while on a missions trip to visit one of our church's missionaries, God began to deal with our hearts about surrendering to God and to the mission field. In early 2014, we surrendered to go to Brazil as church planting missionaries. Leaving Berean was the hardest part of the call to the mission field. God worked in tremendous ways as He allowed us to raise all our support to go to Brazil in just fourteen months and to cancel meetings and leave for the field early. God helped us make a significant

impact in Brazil where we planted the Igreja Batista Nordeste. God also allowed me to preach revival services, youth meetings, seminaries, and many other things in the quest to see souls saved and lives changed across the country.

Unfortunately, Naomi developed serious health issues due to long-haul COVID and it became necessary for us to return to the United States. However, God is showing that He is still not done with us as He opened doors for us to serve in a leadership role with Macedonia World Baptist Missions.

God has also given me the opportunity to earn a Master's Degree in Biblical Studies from Piedmont Baptist Graduate School, as well as a Doctoral Degree from Louisiana Baptist University. God has truly done wonderful things in my life, and I am so excited about what He will continue to do in the future! We serve a mighty God.

Romans 8:28-37