

SHINING THE LIGHT OF JESUS

Canada

part 1

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Calvary Chapel Sunshine Coast

In a small town on Canada's Sunshine Coast, Roberta sat waiting for the youth leader to show up at the old church where she volunteered with teenagers. Her mind wandered to the past few weeks of her life: Her boyfriend told her he had "gotten saved" and started attending a new church in town called Calvary Chapel. Though heavily involved in her own church, one of the mainline Protestant denominations in Canada, she had consented to attend a Bible study at his new church. At the study, the couple

was encouraged to start reading the Bible on their own and journaling what they read. "I can't do that!" she had argued, a fiercely independent young woman wary of any religious restrictions of man. But as she read the Bible, she began to notice things that her own church had never taught her. For instance, the old church had started introducing Buddhism and the New Age. She had felt a vague uneasiness—didn't Jesus Christ say He was the only way to God? That night she was mulling these things over as the waiting teenagers chattered on. Someone

brought up homosexuality, and one of the kids asked Roberta point-blank what she thought about alternate lifestyles.

"Well, the Bible says it's wrong, and you need to repent and turn to God for forgiveness," she heard herself say. She was surprised at her own certainty and boldness, but she had recently read the first chapter of Romans. The teenagers seemed to listen to her opinion, and then the youth leader entered the room. Asked what they had been discussing, Roberta recounted the conversation.



Believers at CC Sunshine Coast worship in song.



Senior Pastor Ed Hickey teaching God's Word.

Davis Bay is the site for the annual New Year's Day Polar Bear Swim.

The youth leader interjected: “Oh no, Roberta, in this church we don’t discriminate against such things.” Roberta began to repeat the Bible verses in Romans and was again cut off. “That was then; this is now.” The curious teenagers were steered away from the Bible as an outdated book. Roberta’s uneasiness grew; soon she was regularly attending Calvary Chapel Sunshine Coast. As she studied the Word, she realized that she, too, wanted to turn to Jesus Christ and ask Him to forgive her sins. As she grew in her faith, the Lord also softened her heart about marriage and children. She and Matt Kirk got married, have started a family, and are growing in their faith together at CC Sunshine Coast.

“It was neat to watch how the Lord worked in her to become this beautiful woman of God,” said Cheryl Hickey, wife of Pastor Ed Hickey of CC Sunshine Coast. Unfortunately, churches that don’t teach the Bible are all too common throughout Canada.

Canada’s Spiritual Climate

“Eighty years ago, Canada was a God-fearing country,” said Ed, also a native Canadian. “Now, two of the mainline Protestant churches here have become extremely liberal. They’ve taken the lead in normalizing gay marriages.” He added, “It’s not unusual to see [those] ministers involved in the New Age and Eastern religions.”

He cited a close-to-home example in Sechelt, B.C., a bedroom community of Vancouver where the church is based. In the artsy coastal town, one of their traditional Protestant churches now has a Wiccan labyrinth—considered by Wiccans and New Agers to be a road to enlightenment and power. “It’s a New Age prayer circle painted in the parking lot; you walk around it. They did a big dedication and blessing on it for the church.” He added, “That just



Cheryl Hickey, Pastor Ed’s wife, reminds VBS children that Jesus is their leader.

gives you an idea of how entrenched the New Age is here.”

How the Journey Began

Ed grew up in a Catholic home, like many Canadians. As a teenager, he began to think about spiritual things. “In 1982, I had a ‘Damascus road experience’—the Lord came into my life, and I came to Christ at age 16,” he recalled. “I made this commitment to read the Word. Someone had given me a little Gideon’s Bible, and I started reading it for an hour every day. The Lord just began speaking to [my heart]. In a few weeks, I felt the Lord had called me into the ministry.”

In 10th grade, he began looking into the priesthood. But the more he studied the Bible, the more he realized he didn’t agree with Catholic doctrines. Joining a charismatic Catholic group, he discovered that the Holy Spirit indwells believers today. Soon he was studying at a Pentecostal Protestant Bible college, where he met his wife, Cheryl. After graduation, Ed served in some Pentecostal fellowships. Then a friend gave him some literature about Calvary Chapel. “I had heard about Calvary Chapel teaching the Word and their openness to the Holy Spirit,” he said. “I could really relate to Pastor Chuck [Smith of CC Costa Mesa] and his story: Having a call on your life but frustrated by doing church



Teaching children in VBS, Assistant Pastor Matt Rowan pretends to be a fearful believer hiding after Jesus’ crucifixion. A time exposure caused light streaks.



Children dance through the church which was decorated for a Mexican-themed Vacation Bible School.



VBS students receive New Testaments.



Members of the worship team lead believers in song at CC Sunshine Coast's annual church picnic and baptism.

man's way. Rather, it could be based on the model in the book of Acts and simply teaching the Bible."

During this time, Ed said, "God was raising up other Canadian guys one at a time." They began attending the annual CC Northwest Pastors' Conference in Washington State, and Ed's desire to plant a new church grew. Sensing God's leading to the Sunshine Coast, Ed moved there and took a job in a hardware store to support his family as he waited on the Lord. For two years, he worked and waited.

"I hated working in those dusty boxes day after day," he remembered with a chuckle. "My coworkers and the customers were great, but my heart wasn't in it: I wanted to teach the Word." Looking back, he sees how God used this time to build relationships with men and families in the community—an important step in reaching many who didn't go to church.

"Then [in 1998] the Lord really put it on my heart that I was going to plant a church—no ifs, ands, or buts." It was God's time to fulfill the desire that had been on his heart for the past decade.

"So I went to Pastor Chuck Smith at the end of the conference and told him," Ed said. "He was very encouraging to go ahead and do it; he gave me some wise counsel about my situation."

A New Work

For 12 months, Ed and Cheryl prayed for God's clear direction and boldness. In September of 1999, Ed began teaching Galatians on Saturday night in their home. He remembered: "I had no idea what was going to happen." Four months later, they baptized two new believers. By February of 2000, they had outgrown Ed's living room and began meeting on Sundays in the public library. By June, they outgrew the

library and moved to the high school. "We were really surprised. We thought we were going to be years in my home, honestly," he said, laughing. "Then we thought we'd be at the library for at least five years." For three years they met in a high school, and the fellowship grew.

Then, on April 1, 2003, they opened the doors in their current facility, celebrating an answer to prayer and God's miraculous provision. What had been a Kingdom Hall for decades was now CC Sunshine Coast. "We joked around, 'No fooling, we have taken possession of the Kingdom Hall.'" Located right on the main highway, the spot is easily found by newcomers and affords the church room to grow.

Matt Rowan, assistant pastor of CC Sunshine Coast, testified that God is blessing the teaching of His Word. "It's been thrilling to see so many people get saved in the two years I've been here," he said.



Josh Van Klinken and son Micah play at the annual church picnic.



Children run a three-legged race.

Coming from a Pentecostal church where the Bible was not taught and the body kept shrinking, Matt had grown frustrated with ministry. After coming to Calvary, he watched God bring people to salvation through the teaching of His Word. "The second Sunday I was here, a woman cried out asking, 'How do I get saved?' I almost fell out of my chair; I was so excited to see someone who wanted to accept Christ. That's how church should be."

"The second Sunday I was here, a woman cried out asking, 'How do I get saved?'"

Assistant Pastor Matt Rowan

Reaching Women and Children

Cheryl Hickey said families and young children are dropping from church attendance nationwide. "When I was younger, I remember attending church here, and it was full of kids. There were parents, young families. Now it's not like that; churches are lacking people in their 20s and 30s—in all the churches."

She explained, "We run into a lot of people who grew up in church, and it was boring; it didn't touch them. That's why I really want children to have outreaches and special activities geared just for them so that, as they grow up, they feel the church has ministered to them."

CC Sunshine Coast did several outreaches last year for children. At their VBS, about one-third of the children who came were



New believer, Muriel Williams, answers the Lord's call to be baptized.



Ed prays with a man to receive Christ.



Judy Watson, right, looks on as Roberta Kirk, center, receives a hug after Sunday worship service. Roberta's life began to change as she read the Bible.

“Ironically, the New Age has opened doors to talk about spiritual things.”

Pastor Ed Hickey



The Sunshine Coast, just north of Vancouver, is accessible by ferry.



Assistant Pastor Matt Rowan teaches a youth Bible study in his home.

youngsters from the community who don't regularly attend church. "The kids from the neighborhood had a fantastic time," she said. "It was a real encouragement to our congregation. ... Many of them served for the first time and really enjoyed it."

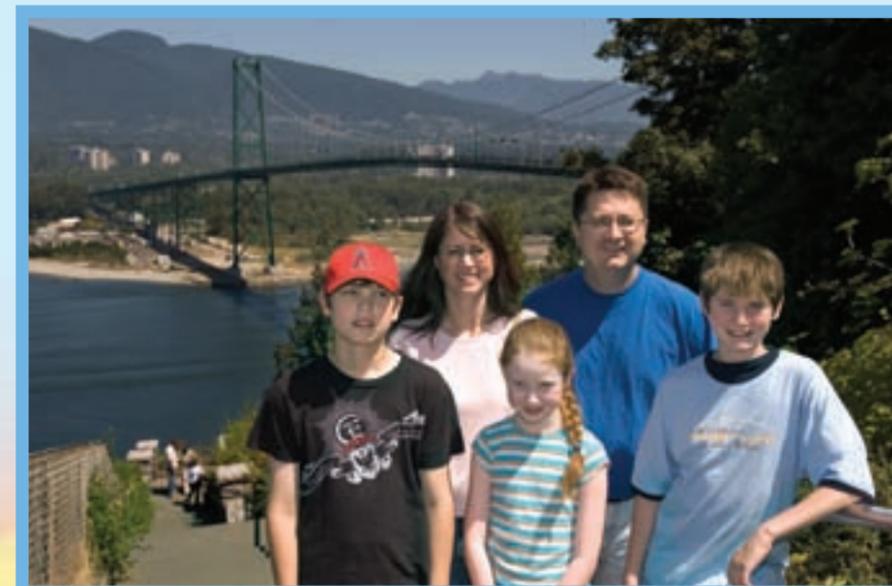
The church put on a Gospel carnival around Halloween called "Heroes Unmasked" about biblical characters. "The people in the community got to hear the Gospel," Cheryl said. "We had about 100 kids plus their parents come through—about half were visitors from the community or other churches." They had a Christian puppet show, a narrated tour of the "empty tomb," carnival games, cookie decorating, and a refreshment area for parents.

Hope for the Future

While some of the Canadian CCs have struggled with unity in the past, God has been doing a great work, said Ed, regional overseer for CCs in Canada. In 2003, Pastors Brian Brodersen and Ken Sutton of CC Costa Mesa helped bring organization and harmony to the CCs in Canada, which has helped all the churches grow in a healthy way, Ed added. The Canadian pastors now come together regularly for mutual encouragement and prayer. They also gather yearly for a national pastor's conference, this year in April. As the churches have each grown more established in the past five years, Ed said that some have sent out Canadian men to plant churches.

By the churches coming together, there also have been several CC women's retreats. "It's a blessing to come together as women from the different Calvarys—definitely an encouragement," said Cheryl. "And it's an opportunity for the young mums to come and be alone with the Lord and focus on their relationship with Him."

While the percentage of born-again believers in Canada is very low—Ed estimated it to be as little as 5 percent of the population—he believes the fields there are white for harvest. "In spite of all the materialism, people are spiritually hungry," Ed said. "Ironically, the New Age has opened doors to talk about spiritual things. People are open and searching."



Pastor Ed Hickey, wife Cheryl, and children Brendan, left, Brianna, and Justin

"This is such a large country: There are so many places that don't have Bible-teaching churches or a solid evangelical witness," Ed said. "Canada is ready for committed men to come up here and plant churches." ☞

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Upcoming issues will feature Vancouver and Calgary area fellowships.