

her I wasn't happy with how things were going in my life, and she admitted the same thing to me about her life. When she told me she needed to get back on track with God, I immediately knew that God was showing me the reality of Christianity in a person close to me. In that moment God reduced the war within me to a small battle — He was conquering my doubts and fears about leaving the comfort of my music and lifestyle behind.

In my bed that night, I told God that I had been running my life for a long time, and it was a mess. I confessed my sins and told Him I want-

ed a new start, with Him in control.

I'd responded in faith to Christ through Jimmy Swaggart's ministry, but I didn't understand all that went with my commitment to Christ. My life remained in chaos, because I chose to run it myself. For almost seven years. But God was patient with me. He drew me to Himself and never gave up on me. □

Lee Warren is a freelance writer from Omaha, NE, with more than 100 writing credits. He has also written the singles devotional book *Dinner for One*, scheduled for release by Revell Publishing in early 2005.

Perhaps you can relate to Lee Warren's search for a meaningful relationship in the music scene. Perhaps your own search has taken you elsewhere. And perhaps, like Lee, you realize now that you're not any closer to what you've been seeking than you were days, months ... even years ago. Lee discovered — and you can, too — that the most meaningful relationship a person can *ever* have is with God.

Dear Lord,

You know everything about me — both good and bad — and yet You love me anyway! You have invited me to talk to You, confess my sins to You and ask You to be the Lord of my life. I want to do that right now. And, as Lee discovered, I know You will **never** give up on me and that I can count on You to be there with me **all the time**. Thank You for loving me. Thank You for being my Savior.

"... if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved" (Romans 10:9).

If you'd like someone to talk to, I'm available ...

Name:

Telephone/cell phone:

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BEYOND THE MUSIC

BY LEE WARREN



I WAS 19 AND IN PAIN. MY GIRLFRIEND HAD BETRAYED ME WITH MY BEST FRIEND. SOON AFTER THAT, I FELL FOR A WOMAN WHO DIDN'T HAVE THE SAME FEELINGS FOR ME, AND AS A RESULT I QUIT CARING ABOUT MY COLLEGE CLASSES. I LET MY GRADES DROP SO FAR THAT THE UNIVERSITY PUT ME ON ACADEMIC PROBATION. THIS WAS NOT HOW MY LIFE WAS SUPPOSED TO TURN OUT.

LifeNotes

I always assumed I would marry early in life and that we'd grow old together. In pursuit of what I thought was a "given," I fell into a pattern of pursuing relationships, but one attempt after the other failed, and I quit caring about my life and my future. Then God intervened.

One Sunday night, flipping channels on my TV, I stopped when I saw Jimmy Swaggart preaching. I don't remember what he spoke about that night, but his passion had a ring of truth that intrigued me. I began to watch his program regularly.

One night, around my 20th birthday, when Swaggart closed by inviting everyone in his viewing audience to deal with their sin and ask Jesus Christ to be their Lord and Savior, I prayed to receive Christ.

I wish my story ended there, but it doesn't. Shortly after I prayed with him, this TV preacher fell into sin, and his ministry came crashing down. I was

disappointed and couldn't help but wonder about the validity of what he said about salvation through Jesus Christ.

One night shortly after this, some friends and I went to a rock 'n' roll nightclub. I felt so alive there: rock bands blaring out my favorite songs, friends all around me, people dancing ... and the chance to finally meet the woman of my dreams! But the cycle continued. Whenever I was interested in a woman, her feelings never matched mine, and I felt even worse.

Then I noticed something — many of the songs that the bands played were about broken relationships, lost loves and the pain that coincides. I identified so much with the music that I spent every night possible in rock 'n' roll clubs, because it felt so good to connect — even at a distance.

I grew my hair long and became increasingly introverted. I only cared about the music. My relationships with family and friends suffered, and if people wanted into my world they were welcome, but they couldn't try to change me or expect anything from me — the music came first.

For five years, that was my life. Then, once again, God intervened. I was flipping through the AM radio dial and stopped on a program examining current events from a biblical perspective. It didn't take me long to conclude that the talk-show host was a Bible-thumping religious nut! But curiosity got the best of me, and I was

soon listening to the program every day. As the host discussed family life, politics, the arts, entertainment and current events, I slowly began to realize that Christianity was more than just a ritualistic religion void of meaning. It was a lifestyle.

I started listening to other programs and soon spent most of my days listening to Christian radio — while

WHY DIDN'T I KNOW A SINGLE PERSON WHO LIVED THE WAY A CHRISTIAN IS SUPPOSED TO LIVE?

my nights were still spent in nightclubs. The tension to choose one lifestyle over the other was mounting, and a question kept flowing through my mind: Why didn't I know a single person who lived the way a Christian is supposed to live according to what I'd heard on the radio?

I was disturbed by that unanswered question, but didn't tell anybody about my internal war. Too risky. I didn't trust pastors after Jimmy Swaggart's problems, and I couldn't admit my struggle to my friends, because I wasn't sure how they'd react. I didn't want to face more rejection, so I decided to handle things on my own.

I was in a quandary. I believed that the Bible was true, and at the same time I sought comfort in the only thing that had ever brought me comfort — music. But something was beginning to happen that I didn't understand: I was beginning to feel like I didn't belong in the nightclub lifestyle any

longer. That scared me, and I started struggling with the lyrics in songs that had once brought me comfort. The closer I got to God the more He revealed my sinful nature.

As the war within me intensified, my desire to see a person living out his or her faith increased. I turned on the radio one day to hear Larry Burkett's call-in radio show, "Money Matters." A

single mother called in tears. The brakes were out on her car, and she didn't have the money to fix them. Burkett encouraged her to let her pastor know, so that her church would receive an opportunity to minister to her. Then he said something the Lord used to change my life. He told her that if her church wouldn't help her, he wanted her to call him back, and he would personally pay to fix her car. At that moment I said to myself, This is real. Like Doubting Thomas, I needed to see Christ for myself, and I saw Him in Burkett's desire to help this woman. But God wasn't finished yet.

My company Christmas party was approaching, and usually people brought spouses or dates with them. Since I didn't want to go by myself, I asked a close female friend to go with me. She'd grown up in a Christian home, but had admittedly backslidden, so her faith had never been an issue in our friendship. After the party I told

