

The Richest Caveman - Lesson 8 of 21 - Landmarks of Prophecy

Welcome, friends, to a special edition of our Landmarks of Prophecy series. And we're very glad that you're joining us, those of you who may be watching right now live on television or via the internet. We received some e-mails and Facebook reports of people who are tuning in from around the world and it's always very humbling and encouraging to know that. I want to welcome, also, our audience here in Albuquerque. I sort of claim New Mexico as one of my homes because we lived here for a few years. I still have family here. And it's a delight to be with you. Glad you've decided to join us this morning and I'm very thankful that you are here.

This morning's presentation is going to be a little unique from the regular Bible studies that we do, where we follow a lesson. What I sometimes do during one of these series of meetings is I just take a section of time and I share with you my personal experience of how I came to the conclusions of the things that I'm sharing with you and, knowing the background, sometimes helps. I'm sometimes reluctant to share these things that first night or two, because I might lose all credibility once you hear what the story is. But, you know, there's always a risk when you take time like this and you spend the next 48 - minutes talking about yourself. It's very easy to lose focus on the real meaning of these meetings - is to talk about God. And there's always the risk that when you tell a story - kind of like a fisherman that keeps saying 'Yeah, I caught a fish and it was this big.' And it just keeps growing every time you tell it.

It's like the little girl that wanted to make a big impression when she gave her book report in front of her class, on Abraham Lincoln. She was a young girl and she stood before the class and she said, 'Abraham Lincoln was born at an early age in a log cabin that he built with his own hands.' So sometimes stories can become bigger than life and I want to keep perspective but tell you how the Lord led. I'd like to begin with a verse from the Bible and this one is from the first book of Peter - 1 Peter chapter 2, verse 9, "But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation; His own special people that you might proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." And that would be my goal, to talk about the One who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light. And I really did live a life of darkness before I learned the truth from the Bible. Now, what I'm sharing with you is in a book and I'm just always shocked that the Lord blessed and how well the book did.

Years ago I used to just share this story at various camp meetings and a dear sister, Marilyn Tooker, a school teacher, she said, 'Doug, you need to write that up.' I said, 'Oh, I'm not much of a writer.' And she kept after me and she said, 'Tell you what, you put it on tape and I'll write it.' And so we did that and I'd edit things along the way and she wrote this book and, you know, it just amazes - the Lord has blessed - the book is still in bookstores today. It's in ten different languages. And the only reason I share that with you is because that is a miracle of itself because she had never written a book. I had never written a book. And God has used it to bring so many people to the Lord.

We just praise Him for that. It's called 'The Richest Caveman.' And the theme of what I'd like to share with you this morning is very simple: the world is looking for happiness, but most of the world is looking in the wrong places for happiness. People think that happiness comes from fame and fortune, from having enough friends or popularity or from, you know, just materialism or physical satisfaction and those things don't bring real lasting happiness.

Now, I came from a very unusual set of parents and I'll take a moment and share about that. You ever heard - that's my mom and dad - you ever heard the expression that opposites attract? It's strange that the irony of that and somehow people who are so opposite end up getting married. I don't know that it was ever more true than with my mother and my father. My mother was Jewish. My father came from a Baptist background. My mother was a Democrat. My father was a Republican.

My mother was born in New York City and my father was born in a small Oklahoma town - he was a

country boy. I mean, they were about as opposite as you could be. And somehow they met in Southern California. They got married. It was the second marriage for both of them and, as a result, my brother and I ended up coming into the world.

Just a little bit about Dad for a moment. He was born very poor in Oklahoma. His father died when he was seven years old, leaving him with three younger brothers. Matter of fact, his mother was pregnant with the youngest when his father died. And that happened during the depression in Oklahoma.

Some of you have heard of a story called 'Grapes of Wrath.' And you've heard about the Dust Bowl. I mean, he just lived through that whole thing of coming to California looking for work because there was such poverty during those times. So he made up his mind when he was a young boy - he was working from seven years old - that he never wanted to be poor again. And he was a very driven man. He somehow got himself through high school and got some lower college experience - did flight training - was very intrigued with flying.

He knew Amelia Earhart and Charles Lindbergh and some of those people. There was a lot of aviation happening in California back in those days and dad became a flight instructor. And during - then the war broke out and he entered World War II and in the - what we call now the - the Air Force. It was the Air Corps back then and he was there at D-Day in Europe. This is a picture of dad in England during World War II.

After the war he realized that there was a great future in aviation and so he began to buy the World War II surplus planes. You know, the U.S., after the war they had all these planes they didn't know what to do with. They began to sell them. Hawaii - they had all these planes and I remember Dad telling me the story of how he flew to Hawaii, bought a DC-3 and, by himself, he flew from Hawaii back. Now, I don't know if you know how long that is in a DC-3, but it was like 24 hours of flying. You have to fill the plane with fuel. You have to fill the cabin with fuel and you have to go back - he'd tie off - they didn't have auto pilot back then - he'd tie it off with a belt. They had no GPS navigation. They used a compass. If you miss where you're heading, you don't know where you're going to land.

But he somehow - he'd fly these planes. He said it was the longest day of his life - from Hawaii back - and he began a business of buying and selling and leasing aircraft until it was the largest aircraft leasing business in the world, called international air leasing. And he made a lot of money. There's a lot I could tell you about Dad, but he was very successful. Even in the websites they call him an aviation tycoon, is where I first heard that word.

He knew people like Howard Hughes, Kurt Kerkorian and a number of the famous businessmen and aviators, and worked mostly out of Southern California, out of the airport in Burbank, where my brother and I were eventually born. Here you see some magazines: George Batchelor, most influential person of the year - of course that's Southern Florida. George Batchelor is Miami's Mr. Aviation. He eventually moved his business from Southern California to Southern Florida, where he spent the last thirty years of his life, and was also very active.

He liked racing cars. He'd water ski, flew planes, had a lot of money and - millions of dollars. Here's a picture, believe it or not, that's me in younger days, with one of my step-mothers. And Dad had sports cars, Learjets. When he wanted to buy the best Learjet, he wasn't sure which one to get so he bought three, tried them out and then sold the other two - I think at a profit.

And he was just a very successful businessman - a very driven man. But he wasn't a very happy man - married five times and his first wife and baby died in a plane crash in Southern California. He was supposed to be on the plane. He says if he was on the plane it wouldn't have happened. And so, he struggled with that guilt and then my brother and I came along.

My brother was born with Cystic Fibrosis and dad and mom decided they probably shouldn't have any more children after that and - but here's when he was 71 years old - just - this is a clip from a paper in

Miami - it's actually the Miami Herald. "At 71, aviation pioneer George Batchelor isn't ready to descend. He runs one of Miami's most successful businesses, pilots a jet, races cars, water skis and is soon to take a bride age 29." Just to give you an idea - and this was actually wife #4. Here's - this is a picture of him with wife #3 - I know I'm doing this out of order right now, that was Betty. He was married to her for thirty years and she was Miss Kentucky - a nice lady - she was my step-mom and I gave that poor lady a hard time.

But Dad was hard to be married to. He was a very driven man and just everything was work. I mean, he worked just regular-hour days, but then he would pretty much drink himself to sleep. Starting at lunch, he would have his first cocktails. By the time he came home he was almost always drunk. We were just always worried - was he in a good mood or a bad mood? And we'd run and hide if Dad came home drunk in a bad mood. So it wasn't always a very happy home.

Here's a picture of my brother - this is one of the few pictures I have. This was wife #4 - this is the - I think when he first started dating her she was 28 or 29, I'm not sure. That's my brother Falcon. Now my brother - my Dad named my brother and I after airplanes because he was in the aviation business. I didn't do too badly, Douglas, you know - DC - McDonnell-Douglas - but my brother's name was Falcon. And it's tough being named Falcon Batchelor. And, not only that, my brother had - we were - same mother and father - he had red hair, brown eyes. I've got blue eyes. He had freckles, I don't. I have no hair - otherwise, we were the same height and build, but Falcon really struggled because he had Cystic Fibrosis, which caused all kinds of health challenges for him.

And so my Dad, with all of his money - happiness doesn't come from the abundance of things. He had a lot of stress. At times he employed thousands of people and he was worried all the time and 'What would happen to them?' He really cared about all the people that worked for him. He wondered, 'What will happen to them if I lose my work? Or if something happens to me?' My wife - this is Karen - and she's a physical therapist and she was trying to work some of the knots out of dad's back. But, with money, Dad knew a lot of people. He knew a number of presidents because he would make donations when they ran for office and you get to at least shake their hand and take a picture or make a phone call when you need a favor.

And this is my Dad with pope John Paul II. It so happens, wife #4 who, incidentally, passed away a couple of months ago. Wife #4 was Italian and she worked something out, and I guess the Pope was having their Jubilee in 2000. Dad said he would pay for the aircraft or something and so visiting the Pope - I think it only cost him 2 million dollars - and you can get a picture with the Pope too. So, I'm just telling you how things really work. My father was so in awe, he told me he kissed his ring. I said, 'Dad!' That wasn't like him. 'Oh, I was just so in awe when I met him.' And he's there in the Vatican with all the pomp and ceremony. And you should have been there - speaking of pomp and ceremony - when my dad got married to wife #4 - Marianne was her name - and my family was invited. It was really strange because, now follow me, my wife, even though she looks much younger, my wife is only six years younger than me. I just - I'm high mileage so I look a little older. My father's wife was younger than my wife.

But it gets better, listen to this, my father, when he married Marianne, had a brother-in-law that was eleven years old and my father was 71 or 72 at the time of the wedding. Can you imagine that? 'Yeah, this is my brother-in-law.' But wait, there's more. Get your credit card out now and we'll double your offer. My father's mother-in-law was younger than me. Now the ladies right now are thinking, how does that work? It's true.

It was really strange. We went to the wedding. It was in Miami Beach and the Deering museum/mansion is a very fancy place and they had - all these limousines were pulling in and an army of valet parkers and people going around with their trays of hors d'oeuvres and drinks and just a very elegant, high-class wedding. Helicopters were flying over with a news crew out in the bay, just outside of the - where the wedding was happening there on the dock - my dad had his boat - he had a yacht, it was called 'The

Batchelor Party' and the inside of the boat was also very pretty. I think I might have a picture of that somewhere else, later. But someone made the mistake - they told our 13-year-old son at the time, his name was Daniel. They said, 'Now Daniel, when you get out there to Florida and you go to this wedding, you make sure and climb up in Marianne's lap and say, 'Grandma, tell us about the good old days.' So - I said, 'Don't tell him that.' He didn't do that but I think he did call her Grandma. It didn't go over very well.

But Jesus said, "One's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses." Money does not make a very good foundation for happiness. My Dad had, at about the time he died, he had a mansion right on the water there in Miami Beach - it sold for millions. Rolls Royce - step-mother had Ferraris - I mean, he had all the toys - airplanes, race cars, and he would drink himself to sleep every night.

And so, when I meet people who think, 'Oh, if I could just make more money I'd be happy.' I think, 'Oh, you really think so?' It doesn't work that way. Jesus said, 'Do not lay up for yourself treasures on earth where thieves break through and steal and moth and rust does corrupt.' Because these things just don't last. They don't bring happiness. And you can't take it with you. You have never seen a hearse pulling a U-Haul, have you? It's like Job said, 'Naked I came into the world and naked I go.' And I remember standing by my father's grave in Oklahoma - he was buried by his parents - and that's all you get if you don't have Jesus. You can't take it with you.

So, now I'm going to switch over and talk about Mom for a minute. Very different - Mom was Jewish. Her maiden name was Tarshis and she was born in New York City. She went to California with her family when she was young. They were looking for a better life and Mom really was intrigued with wanting to be famous. She was very - in my opinion, she was very good looking, obviously, I didn't take after my mother, but she was very talented - she could sing. She taught herself to play the guitar, to play the piano. She just had a lot of natural ability. Loved to be up front. She got it from my grandfather. Do any of you remember The Gong Show? My grandfather was on The Gong Show and he won. So I have a very unusual family - did I mention that? Matter of fact, every member of my family has been on national news for completely different reasons. And so, it wasn't uncommon to hear something happened and my family - my brother started a camp for kids with Cystic Fibrosis and they did a national news report about that and - anyway, just an interesting family.

She started out as a songwriter and she - back when she was still in her teens, she was writing songs for Elvis Presley. She wrote three songs for Elvis and through Mom I actually met him twice. Well, once it was at a concert but once at a news conference. And Frank Sinatra - you know, as I share my testimony, I realize the younger crowd doesn't even know who I'm talking about anymore. You know, Frankie Avalon? Anyone remember Andy Williams? He passed away a couple of years ago and one of the news pictures they showed of Andy Williams, he was on the stage singing a song that Mom wrote and he allowed Mom to dance and I captured that picture off the internet. And she - it was a song called 'Pardon Me, Haven't We Met?'

And so she was involved in Hollywood - a lot of it was songwriting - but then beyond that, Mom she really became famous - she was an actress - any of you ever see 'The Ten Commandments?' Whenever we watch it with our kids we say, 'There's Mom!' She had a little part as a slave and she goes by. You can see her but - so she had small parts in some big movies with Charlton Heston and Yule Brenner - because she actually did two movies with them. But most of it was as a film critic. She wrote plays that were on - Off-Broadway plays, actually. And she became very successful.

She, actually, was the president of the Los Angeles film critics. That's a very powerful position because, when you're in that position and you give a good rating to a movie - some of you have heard of 'Good Morning America' - Mom was the film critic on 'Good Morning America' that gave the report. She replaced Rona Barrett - and had a syndicated program called 'Ruth Batchelor's Hollywood' years ago. So

now I'm going back several years ago. But during that era it was a very powerful position.

If a critic said a movie was bad, they lost a lot of money. If it was good they could make a lot of money. And so she knew a lot of powerful people and movie stars in Hollywood. Now, when I tell this story, in the past people have said, 'Aw come on Doug, you're making these things up.' So I said, 'Well, let me get some pictures.' So here's some pictures of Mom with some of the different celebrities. This is Mom and Dustin Hoffman. I have a lot of pictures but I'm just taking some that you may still recognize. These are younger versions of Mom with Sylvester Stallone, Muhammed Ali - anyone remember George Burns? Paul McCartney? Here's Mom with Warren Beatty, Jimmy Stewart, Bob Hope, Natalie Wood. Some people thought they even looked a little alike. Here she is with Sally Fields who's still acting today. Clint Eastwood - he's still producing. Paul Newman, Roger Moore - one of the James Bonds.

So she knew these people and when we were growing up, my brother and I, we didn't realize, you know, how famous some of these folks were, but famous composers, singers, and actors were coming to and fro in our home, both in L.A. - She lived in Beverly Hills and in New York City and - but one thing I noticed is, they weren't very happy. We had some friends - they were child actors - that committed suicide. Healthy, talented, smart, good looking - and they were so empty. They were on national programs and they killed themselves. I had one friend that he locked himself in the garage, turned on the car and just asphyxiated himself because he was so unhappy. A lot of people in Hollywood, they're having - they have drug problems. Do I need to tell you their marriages don't last as long as the average person? And so people think, 'Oh, if I could just have money' 'If I could just have fame' - my brother and I saw, growing up, these people weren't very happy. And so I was wondering 'Where does happiness come from?' Years later, when Mom passed away - she was actually my age - she was 57 and died of cancer a young lady. Karen and I were in Russia. We had to make an emergency trip home. Nobody called. None of the people in Hollywood called. None of - it was just my wife and I, my grandparents, that were there and she, basically, died alone with very little fanfare. A little obituary that said, 'Ruth Batchelor passed away.'

So it's all an illusion. It doesn't really mean anything. Movies and television - it just creates an illusion because you multiply an image, but they're just normal people and they struggle. Now I grew up mostly in New York City - born in Southern California - Burbank. I grew up - mom moved to New York City after she divorced dad. People were amazed the marriage lasted six years. I was three years old when they divorced. Bounced around between my grandparents, my father, and my mother. They didn't know what to do with us because Dad was so driven, Mom was so driven - they'd send us to summer camp ever since we were very young. Any type of boarding camp or something to get us out of the home, they sent us away because they were so busy with their careers that we just, kind of, felt like we were in the way.

And that's actually my brother and I at a couple of summer camps we went to. The gentlemen in the picture is one of Mom's boyfriends. She actually went with that fellow. He was the president of Mainstream Records - Robert Shad. She went with him for about 20 years - never did marry him.

First military school I went to I was five years old - in Southern California - called Black-Foxe - spelled 'f-o-x-e' - Military Academy. Some of you have maybe heard of Gene Wilder, Larry Hagman? They both went to Black-Foxe. The second military school I went to was New York Military Academy and that's what this is a picture of - sometimes known as 'NYMA' and Donald Trump graduated there. Matter of fact, he graduated just about the time I was going. He's a little older than I am. And it was the strictest school in North America. They had a rule for everything. But, believe it or not, I was actually happier at that school than I was at some of the other schools.

Matter of fact, I'm here with one of my friends. The fellow standing next to me in that little picture - I hadn't seen him - I'll just tell you, his name is Bobby. I won't tell you any more than that. I hadn't seen him in forty years. He saw one of our television programs and he called the office and said, 'Tell Dougie to give me a call. Tell him it's Bobby.' And sure enough, I called, we got together in Florida and boy, he lived a very interesting life. He was with Ronald Reagan when he was shot. He went to military school

and just ended up having a very interesting career. But I went to fourteen different schools between living in Miami, California, went to school in Maine, New York City - part of the reason is because Mom and Dad were changing custody. Part of the reason is I was getting in trouble and they kept changing me from school to school. I went to public school - public schools, Catholic schools, Jewish schools, military schools - I didn't complete the ninth grade and I went to fourteen different schools - just to give you an idea of how I bounced around and why I'm confused at times. And it didn't help that Mom and Dad were - they both had problems.

Dad had a drinking problem. Mom used drugs. And I remember one day when I was thirteen years old, that Mom said, 'Well, eventually, Doug, I know that you're going to try these things. I'd just as soon you did it at home.' And so she rolled a joint and she smoked pot with me. And it became a more common occurrence for - Mom was so bold about it, she actually took a picture of it once.

Very common occurrence in our home - two or three times per week Mom and I would smoke pot or hashish and eat ice cream. And she said, 'I just want you to do it at home.' Well, you know, it didn't stay at home. And so I started getting into all kinds of trouble. And I kind of bounced around from one thing to another. I ran away from home the first time when I was thirteen. I was just looking for purpose. I used to think about suicide all the time because many of the public schools we went to, they said there's no God. And when you die you just turn back into fertilizer. There's no purpose. And I remember distinctly, when I was living in New York City, I went to the edge of one of these tall apartment buildings. You know, we lived in a building that was twenty floors up - and get out on the roof and I stood and looked and I thought, 'You know, all I have to do is jump and I won't be unhappy anymore.'

Do I need to tell you that I wasn't a very happy child? I just felt like, you know, my parents were busy with their careers and I just didn't have any peace or happiness. I believed you die and you turn back into dirt and I thought, I got in trouble in school all the time, why not get it over with? All I've got to do is jump and I won't be hurting anymore. Sad thing is, I started thinking about that at seven years old. And I remember one of the reasons I didn't jump is I was always afraid, 'What if I jump and I live through it?' I remember hearing about a man in New York City, he jumped nine stories and lived and he was all mangled the rest of his life and I thought, 'Oh, man, then it's worse off than before.'

I remember one time, I went into my mother's bedroom and she was gone. My brother, now, was living with my father in Southern California for his lungs, because of his Cystic Fibrosis. I went to mom's medicine cabinet and I thought - I knew 'Mom takes sleeping pills. I'm just going to take some pills and go to sleep.' And, you know, one thing - one reason I was trying to do that? I know this sounds crazy, but I thought 'I want to get my parent's attention.' And I thought suicide would be a way - I know this is crazy logic - but as a kid you don't make sense. I thought suicide would be a way to get their attention. So I was in trouble at school. I went into Mom's medicine cabinet and I found a bottle of pills that said, 'Valium - take one at bedtime' and I filled my hands and I stood there a long time.

I thought, 'Well, this is it. I can just take this, go to sleep and never wake up. No more problems.' The problem was I was - I think just twelve or thirteen years old back then - I wasn't sure Valium was a sleeping pill. It didn't say 'sleeping pill' on the bottle, it said, 'Valium - take one at bedtime.' 'Valium - what if Valium is some pill for ladies or something like that? Who knows what might happen?' I said, 'I could be really bad off if I take a bottle full of these.' And so, I remember I came so close that day to killing myself but God just kept holding it back. You know, one thing that helped me, I have an insatiable curiosity and I thought, 'If I kill myself today, something really interesting's bound to happen tomorrow and I'll miss it.'

And so I was able to postpone my suicide one day at a time because of curiosity, for years. Years later - I remember when mom turned 40 she called me up. She said, 'Doug, you know, I realize that my beauty and talents are fading and I'm just thinking of ending my life.' And I said, 'Mom, let me tell you how I dealt with that.' At this point I was a Christian. I said, 'You lose all your options when you commit suicide.'

You never know, it might get better tomorrow and you'll never find out if you kill yourself.' I said, 'Just take it one day at a time.' Years later she said, 'You know, that really helped me.' So I began to think, you know, 'Why kill yourself by doing something boring like jumping off a building or taking a handful of pills? I heard a beer commercial and it said, 'You only go around once in life, get all the gusto you can.' I wasn't real sure what gusto was but I thought, 'Well, that sounds good to me. I'm going to - I'm just going to have as much fun as I can and I'll just - I'll kill myself having fun.

And so I just began to live a very wild life with abandon. When I was living with Mom I was already using drugs at home with Mom and I found out where her stash was and - oh, one time I got stopped by the police on the street. I had a skin-diving knife under my bell bottoms - you wore bell bottoms back then - and the police brought me to my Mom's door.

By the way, you know who lived right upstairs from us? Was Lloyd Bridges and his boys Beau Bridges and Jeff Bridges - in our apartment. And - I just mention that because he was famous for his 'Seahunt' scuba diving. So I used to go scuba diving in Florida. I brought my diving knife to New York, put it on my bell bottoms showing off to my friends. Someone told the police, the police brought me home. They knock on the door, my Mom looks through the peephole, she sees the police. She goes and throws all of her drugs down the toilet. She opens up the door and they say, 'We just want to bring your son back and here's his knife. We're not going to take it from him. Make sure he never takes this outside again.' Oh man, I was in so much trouble. Not because the police had arrested me, but because Mom had just flushed - maybe thousands of dollars worth of marijuana and hash - down the toilet. So that was the way we were living back then. So I already knew about that side.

When I was living with Dad, Dad's specialty was alcohol. He lived on a mansion in Southern California with a butler and a maid and he had a complete bar in the house, stocked better than some city bars. And my friends and I, we would drink. And I was getting into a lot of trouble. I started getting involved in stealing and fighting and drugs. I started smoking cigarettes and I was in and out of jail.

I ran away from home several times. My mother told my father, 'Doug needs to express himself because you're - he's - the military school - too much restrictions. Too many rules - he's rebelling now. I found a school' - my mother said - 'where there are no rules. Where he can find himself.' I don't know how in the world she convinced my father to do that. So they, then sent me to a school in Maine that was called 'Pine Henge.' This was a school for the children of hippies, or whatever, that were - there were no rules in this school. You didn't have to go to class if you didn't want to. You didn't have to wake up if you didn't want to. They had co-ed dorms.

I actually found some pictures of these - I knew all these kids - they had co-ed dorms for all ages. They said, 'Kids'll learn what they want to learn. Just put them in that environment.' So I went from a military school - the strictest school in North America - to the school that was the most liberal in North America, run by a bunch of hippies and it's true, you do learn what you want to learn. We learned how to make beer with malt syrup, yeast, and I won't give you the whole recipe. We learned how to make LSD - and we had no rules.

Now where do you think I was happier - military school or the free school? I was much happier in military school. Several kids tried to kill themselves. It was a problem all the time at this school called 'Pine Henge.' And so, I was getting into lots of trouble. And you know what it was? Is, I wanted attention. I wanted my friends to like me and I just - everyone wants love and I just felt like nobody even cared about me and so I just tried so hard to get someone to like me, I'd do just about anything.

When I was living with Dad - this is the island - that's a Google picture of Sunset Island #1 - that's where Dad lived. He was on the north part of that picture. Had a house right there on the bay. We had three boats in the backyard. We had a yacht, ski boat, and I had a little sailboat. And the friends that I grew up with on the island - you've heard of Firestone tires? I used to date Amy Firestone. Karen's prettier. You've

heard of Hoover vacuum cleaners? Sandy Hoover was a kid that we used to play with on the island. And so these were the kids and a number of others I could name. We got bored in the summertime and we would go break into the homes of the other millionaires.

We'd just sit around and say, 'What do you want to do?' 'I don't know. Let's go break into this home.' And so we'd go and we'd dare each other - just, you know, kids have nothing to do and so we'd go break into a home. It didn't matter what we stole, just steal something to show you were in there. We stole a tennis racquet - just anything. And then they started daring me - they said, 'I dare you to break in while the people are still walking around.' You could see the lights on. Because we knew the doors were open because the island had a security guard so the people were very relaxed. And so we'd break in and we'd steal something and I would do just about anything my friends did. You know, it was really interesting, in that particular story, the security guard started trying to figure out how these thieves were getting on the island because there was a gate. There was only one bridge to get on the island and it was guarded with a security guard, and he stopped everybody that went on the island and there was this rash of burglaries on the island. And we would sit there and we'd laugh as we saw these police boats patrolling the island trying to figure out how the thieves were getting on the island and it was the kids of the millionaires breaking into each other's homes.

'What do you want to do?' 'Oh, let's break into your home. We broke into my home last week.' You know, just - it was really dumb. They would dare me to jump off the bridge into the water and I would do it just, you know, just to try and get their attention. Well, things continued to progressively get worse with the drugs - the stealing - I began to break into other homes and stealing cars and run-ins with the police. I took traffic school several times before I even had a license because of the problems I got in.

But something interesting happened. I finally left home when I was fifteen and I told Dad - my step-mother said, 'Either he goes or I go.' And I don't blame her. I was really a problem. Dad moved me into one of his hotels. He said, 'You've got to live here.' That didn't work very long and finally I said, 'Look dad, I'm going to go.' And he said, 'I don't know what else to do with you. I've tried everything.' And I said, 'I'm just going to have to go figure it out by myself.' And I left and I took off hitchhiking - fifteen years old. I went up to Boston and, I mean, I had been arrested several times and Dad had to get me out of jail and he just said, 'I don't know what to do.' I mean - so I went to Boston. I had forged my driver's license - you know, I was born in 1957 - I changed my learner's permit to '52. I got a false I.D. that said I was older than I was and so I got an apartment in Boston and I started breaking into homes and stealing - stealing cars, using drugs. I had a part-time job as a security guard, believe it or not. I did. A place called 'Boston Intelligence.' And so I'd guard places at night and then I'd steal during the day because it just looks like you're moving.

And while I was living like this in Boston - getting into lots of trouble - I met a friend who was very religious and he was a security guard. And he found out about what I was doing during the day. And I said, 'Jerry, are you going to turn me in?' He said, 'Oh, no Doug. I don't need to turn you in.' He said, 'Your karma's going to get you.' I said, 'What do you mean?' He said, 'Everything you do comes back.' I said, 'There's no God.' I was pretty much an atheist, you know. My mom - Jewish background but, you know, you can be Jewish and be an atheist? She was very passionate about her Jewish heritage, but she didn't practice the religion at all. And my father, even though he was raised Baptist, he was pretty much an agnostic. And so I said, there's no God.

I stole that television. I got rid of it. Nothing happened to me. He said, 'You'll see.' And not long after he told me that I woke up in my apartment in Boston and the door was open. And I got my scruples together and I looked around - my T.V. was gone - and my radio. And I was mad. I called the police. I said, 'You've got to track these guys down. You know, there's thieves.' I said, 'I pay taxes for you guys to do your job.' And I was very indignant. And I started watching and I noticed that everything I did seemed to backfire. I'd steal something and - my friends were all thieves - they'd steal it from me. Or I would steal

something - and I was often high or drunk - and I'd hide it and I'd sober up and say, 'Where did I put that?' Or I'd misplace the money. Or I'd steal something - and I remember once I'd just risked my life - I stole this stereo. I got back and plugged it in - it was broken! It didn't even work. And I started thinking, 'There must be a God.' You know, Jesus said, 'Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.' And it seemed like everything I did it was backfiring on me.

What convinced me, finally, was a little thing. I went to someone's house. I didn't quit stealing immediately, I kind of tapered off. I went to someone's house and I stole a box of Krusteaz instant pancake mix. And I know this sounds really dumb, but I did it because it was whole wheat pancake mix. Now you've got to just think about how dumb this is. I am drinking. I am smoking. I'm using drugs - but I was a hippie and I thought, 'I'll just use whole wheat pancake mix. They had this brand-new box of Krusteaz instant pancake mix and this was back before they had the barcodes and they had the little round stamp on top - they'd stamp the top with the price - a little circle - \$1.19. I stole it. That day, I went back to my house and some friends had come by while I wasn't home. I had just bought a brand-new jar of Tang instant breakfast drink. Anyone remember that? My friends drank the entire jar and there by the empty jar was the lid and the lid was stamped \$1.19 And I looked at the pancake mix and I looked at the lid and I thought, 'Crime doesn't pay.'

I started thinking, 'There must be a God.' So I began to search. And I thought, 'Well, I need to find out what the purpose is.' And so I began to go through all these different religions. I became, suddenly, very interested in religion. I didn't think about Christianity because I said, 'Oh, they're all hypocrites.' You know, you turn on the news and it talked about the Protestants in Ireland blowing up the Catholics and vice versa and I said, 'Christians are all hypocrites.' I'd turn on the news - the T.V. And I'd watch these televangelists. To me they were the lowest forms of life. Doesn't God have a cruel sense of humor? Now I am one. 'Oh, these shysters - these hypocrites.' You know, big problem - a lot of people turn away from Christianity because they think Christianity means following Christians. A Christian is not a follower of Christians. A Christian is a follower of Christ.

So I started getting into all these Eastern religions and got involved in transcendental meditation and Buddhism - this is back in the days when the Beatles and everybody was meditating and the Eastern religions were very intriguing in America. And so I was meditating and I got into something called the Spiritual Science of DNA. And I took a little bit of, kind of, the Jewish heritage and mixed that in and, of course, I'd gone to catholic school and so I kind of made this big old potluck of all these different religions with myself as my own little pope trying to put it all together. And I was very spiritual and I'd, you know, I'd quote suddenly from one religion and then from another religion and while all this was happening, I was so spiritual and so religious. I'm still using drugs and drinking. I'm still a slave to my sins. It hadn't made me any better.

Well, about this time, my father flew to Boston and he made a special trip and he said, 'Doug, you need to go back to school. I was showing off, I said, 'Look Dad, here's my uniform and I've got my own job.' And I showed him my own apartment and 'Let me buy you dinner.' I showed him - I had a wad of money from stealing and work. I had two jobs at one time. I was a hard worker. I mean, I had two legitimate jobs, plus the stealing. I worked in a rust-proofing factory where we would rust proof the steel toes in boots and - anyways, so - and Dad said, 'You're wasting your life.' My brother, Falcon, was sick. He couldn't take over the family business. And I had a step-brother from Dad's third wife, Betty, and he was starting to do it - he couldn't. Dad said, 'You're throwing your life away. You need an education.' He said, 'Doug, I found a good school. You're going to love it.' He said, 'You like adventure? This is a school that's on a boat.' It was called the Flint School. There were two schools like this in the world back then, one they made a movie out of called 'White Squall.' That was an all-boys school - this one was co-ed. They were unique schools on boats - very expensive - that sail around the world, and they teach from the boat. And he said, 'You'll water ski and you'll scuba dive. There's girls' - because I told him, 'I'm not going back to military school.' Because back then, at New York Military Academy, there were no girls. Now

there are. I said, 'I'm not going back to an all-boys school. And so he said, 'Oh, you'll love it.' And so he pled with me. I said, 'Okay.'

Somehow he got me a passport, flew me to Milan, Italy, put me on this boat with the school. It was actually two sailboats that sailed together. It was called the Flint School. And after he left I realized I'd sort of been tricked because this was a very unique school for the children of politicians and millionaires to get them out of their environments. They had a lot of kids getting mixed up with Moonies and cults and drugs back then - and they got them out of the environment and put them in a controlled environment, taught them, you know, business principles. But they taught atheism.

Now I'm very spiritual and they're showing films of Darwin. They're telling us to read the books of Ayn Rand - 'Atlas Shrugged' - I don't know if you know about that stuff. It's sort of like you're god. And I just rebelled. I wouldn't participate and - you know, in military school if you disobeyed they'd hit you. They'd beat you with a belt. They could back then. They probably can't now. But this school - these are the kids of the wealthy politicians and stuff and so they wouldn't touch them. But, while this was going on, I just was rebelling and in my school - I'd gone through a religion called Shakti - the Spiritual science of DNA - and so I was trying to be at one with my DNA molecules and I was playing my recorder in my room. And the Captain said, 'Look, you're not going to have - you have to eat on the floor if you're not going to participate.' So I'd say 'Fine.' I'd eat on the floor. I disrupted the school and they said, 'Well, you're going to stay in your room.' I had my friends bringing me food. And this went on for two months. I just rebelled because I felt like I was tricked because they take your passport away and, you know, it's so controlled. You get arrested in Italy or Turkey and you're in big trouble.

And so I felt trapped. I had been an adult. I had been living on my own in Boston like a hot shot. I'd been living like, you know, I had a false I.D. And now I'm a kid again, back in school. And I thought, 'What in the world have I done?' So we had an interesting experience. We were sailing from Northern Africa - Tunis, Africa - over to Porte Mahon, Spain. And on the way across we encountered just a terrible storm and water was coming in, the main sail ripped, the wind was howling, captain was seasick, the water was cold - it was Christmas time. And what do you think atheists do when they think they're going to die? They start praying. And I was doing some praying. And you make promises. You all know what you're doing wrong when that happens. And so, of course, fear is the wrong reason to serve God.

As soon as the storm was over we forgot all about the prayers and the promises. And I managed to convince the captain, 'Look, I'll cooperate for the next few weeks until Christmas break if you just let me go home for Christmas break.' And they were so anxious to get rid of me, he called my Dad and said, 'You got a deal.' And told Mr. Batchelor, 'We think Doug's showing great progress. We're going to let him come home for Christmas.' Because my Dad had to pay the whole year up front. They didn't care, they just wanted to get rid of me. So I got on the airplane in Madrid, Spain - ordered beer and got a pack of cigarettes and told them, I said, 'You will never see me again.' And they never did.

I got back to the States and went on a ski vacation with Dad. When it was time to go back to school I ran away for the last time. And I went out to a place - I went hitchhiking across the country. I've hitchhiked thousands of miles. And I went hitchhiking across the country to a place I found when I was fifteen. In the mountains above Palm Springs, there's a very tall 10,000 foot mountain called Mount San Jacinto. Halfway up this mountain there's a cave. There's several caves up there. And I said, 'I'm going to find God in nature.'

Now on my way out to Palm Springs, something interesting happened. I got stuck on the highway in Oklahoma. I was cold, hungry, all these trucks were going by and I was a little hungover and I was desperate. And I said, 'You know, I ought to try praying.' And after standing there for eight hours freezing, because I had Florida clothing on and it was December in Oklahoma - it was freezing cold. I prayed and I said, 'Lord, I know I've been a terrible person. If You're there, please help me. And I need help with four things.' I said, 'Please help me to get a ride to where I'm going.' I had like 1,500 miles to

go. I said, 'Please help me get some food.' I was hungry. 'Help me get some money.' - I lost all my money drinking and playing pool the night before. And then I prayed for a ride with someone 'normal' because I was getting picked up by some very strange characters.

As soon as I finished praying, the next vehicle going by stopped, picked me up, took me all the way to my destination in Palm Springs, and preached to me all the way out there, which I didn't ask for. They gave me forty dollars when they dropped me off. They bought my food all the way out - everything I prayed for, God gave me. And I thought, 'What a coincidence.' But I had to listen to him or jump out of the car. So I listened to him and I thought, 'You know, the Bible's a fairytale. Now I'm going to find God through nature.' So I moved up into this cave way up in these desert mountains.

This is a picture of Palm Springs back then halfway up to where I lived, just to let you know. And this is the mountain - one of the tallest mountains in Southern California. It's 11,000 feet high and I don't know how high Sandia Peak is here - 10,000 - just to give you perspective. And Palm Springs is sea level so it seems really high. And halfway up, just at the bottom of that hill in the bottom of the picture, there's a cave right by a creek. And I wanted to find God through nature so I moved into this cave and I lived there for about a year and a half. And I just didn't want to be around people. I was so tired of the people in New York City and I didn't get along with people. I said, 'I'm just going to see if I can find God through nature.' I took off all my clothes, which wasn't all that uncommon back then, believe it or not. I wasn't the only one. And I would hike down to town once or twice a week and panhandle - I put my clothes on. I forgot once, which is another story I don't have time for. I'd take my food and go back home or I would dig around in the dumpster behind the market.

When my grandparents found out that I was digging in the dumpster for food, they told my father. How do you think my father felt? He worked so hard so that his kids would never suffer like he did when he was young and they said, 'Dougie's getting food out of the garbage can.' Because I was too proud to ask for anything. And, you know, God has paid a great price that we don't have to go to the garbage can of the world. He gave his son. But instead of going to Jesus for happiness, we think we're going to get it from the devil's dumpster and it breaks His heart. God has paid so much and done so much so we can have real happiness, and yet, we keep going back to the wrong place.

Well, the miracle is, when I moved into this cave, there was a Bible that someone had left in the cave up there in the hills and I started reading the Bible. Someone asked me, 'Was it a Gideon Bible? Did the Gideons put it up there?' You know, they do all the hotel rooms and then they do the caves, I guess they thought. And no, it was the King James version. And I finally started reading the Bible so I could argue with Christians and, you know, I said, 'This can't be true.' But as I kept reading, I realized it is true. And I thought, 'What have I got to lose?' You know, I read in the encyclopedia it says Jesus really lived. And I thought either Jesus was crazy or He was a liar or He's the Lord. I think C.S. Lewis said He's either a lunatic, liar, or Lord. Those are your only choices when you come to Jesus. He really lived. We know what He taught. He was either a great deceiver - and I couldn't accept that - or He was insane. I was amazed when I was reading the Bible, how often I would read things in the Bible and go, 'Oh, handwriting on the wall. That's where that comes from, the Bible.' 'Turning the other cheek. Oh, Jesus said that.' 'Don't throw the first stone. Oh, I had no idea Jesus said that.' I'd heard these things all my life. I had no idea they came from the Bible. I finally said, 'He didn't lie. He wasn't crazy. Maybe God did become a man to save us and that there's a purpose for our lives.'

So up there in the cave I finally decided, 'You know, I've tried everything else.' I got on my knees. I said, 'Lord, I'm a mess. Will You come into my heart and give me some purpose for living?' And I was as far away from God as a person can be. I'm running around naked up in the mountains, eating out of garbage cans, using drugs, smoking, lying, stealing - I mean, I was a big zero. And I said, 'Lord, will You give me some purpose for living?' And I felt Him forgive my sins. He came into my heart and everything began to change. Not all at once, but things began to happen.

One quick story before we run out of time. I was so excited about the Gospel and the changes God was making in my life, I said, 'Lord, I'm willing to tell people but I'm a hermit. I don't know how that's going to happen. But if You - I feel like You're wanting me to preach and teach others about You' - because I was so excited I said, 'You're going to have to let me know.' Not long after I prayed that prayer, I called my Mom in Beverly Hills. She said, 'Doug, you're never going to believe this but I had lunch with someone from NBC. They want to fly up to your cave in a helicopter and interview you.' Right after I prayed and said, 'Lord, if You want me to witness for You, you let me know.' This is a picture of my Mom at my cave. She flew up in a helicopter. They did a national interview. It was all over the country that day. My friends in jail said they saw it three times in one day. And so, from that time to this, God's just opened doors for me to be sharing with other people. He has a plan for your life.

This is a picture of - I've been back to the cave several times over the years. This is our son Micah when he was, like, seven years old. He hiked up there with me. This is the waterfall and the pool right outside my cave. I went back up with the whole crew. That's Karen in the middle with Stephen. And I went back one year and I actually brought another Bible and I left it in the cave just in case - kind of a little sentimental thing that I did. But my immediate family is all passed away. My father, my mother - I was with Mom when she died. I was with my brother when he died. And I remember, I was out walking with my brother one day - Falcon went to school. He got a college education. He tried to work for Dad as long as his health would permit. And you can tell I'm the black sheep of the family. This was at my brother's wedding. I kind of had to come out of the cave and you can tell.

And I was walking with my brother one day and he said, 'Doug, you're lucky.' And I thought, 'Wow, you've got the house in Miami Beach on the water. You've got the boat. You've got the new cars. You've got all the things that the world wants.' He said, 'Doug, you're lucky. I'd give everything I have if I could have your lungs and live a little longer.' He said, 'God isn't fair.' - My brother said - he said, 'I'm so smart but I'm sick.' And he said, 'You're so healthy but you're stupid.' And, you know, my brother, he basically said, 'I know I'm dying. I would give everything if I could live a little longer. I wouldn't care about any of this stuff - any of the fame - if I could just live a little longer.' And I never forgot when he and I had that conversation. I was at his side, holding his hand.

I prayed with him when he died and I said, 'Falcon, do you want me to pray with you?' He used to tease me when I prayed - 'Oh, yeah, Doug you're going to pray over the food. Go ahead. Rub a dub dub, thanks for the grub.' - He used to tease me. But, you know, when he was dying I said, 'Falcon, do you want me to pray?' And he said, 'Yes, please.'

And what profit is it if you gain the whole world? If you're famous, if you've got fortune - if you don't have life, you don't have anything. My brother would give everything for a little more of this life and, yet, sometimes we're reluctant to let go and let Jesus take our lives and have eternal life. He wants to give you that life, but you have to ask Him. He has a plan for you. He wants to mobilize - and I'd like to pray with you before we close. John, maybe you could come sing for us - and Kelly, thank you. And invite you, if you've not done this before, those of you who are watching, if you've not made the decision yet to ask Jesus to take your life, then I'd like to pray with you right now that you'd make that decision. And we'll go off the air with John singing.

Father in Heaven, I pray that each person here will make this decision to surrender their lives to Jesus - come just as they are and say 'Lord, activate Your plan for our lives. Give us the true peace and happiness that doesn't come from fame and fortune, but it comes from knowing You.' We pray in Christ's name, amen.

Take my life and let it be
Consecrated, Lord, to Thee.
Take my hands and let them move,
At the impulse of Thy love, At the impulse of Thy love.