

## **Dottie Hooper**

I grew up in a good home, and went to church from the time I was born. I thought I was a Christian, because we were not Jewish or anything else, and because I had been baptized and "joined the church" at age 12. However, the denomination I grew up in had drifted away from true Bible teaching and did NOT teach that we must accept Jesus as our own personal Savior and be born again. The first time I heard the TRUE Gospel was when I was in college. By that time I had gotten involved in drinking, smoking pot, partying, sexual promiscuity, and whatever else was popular on the college campus, since I didn't really KNOW the Lord. I was confused, lacking direction in my life, and "looking for love in all the wrong places." The staying out late, partying, drinking, and the current boyfriend became the focus in my life, and I ended up dropping out of UCLA in my Senior year.

Several people were witnessing to me during those years, and at age 21 I finally asked Jesus to come into my heart. Because I didn't get into a good, Bible-believing church right away, I didn't grow in my faith, and my life basically stayed the same for the first year. Finally, after breaking up with my boyfriend that I had been living with (we were both baby Christians, and the Lord had to deal with us about that sin), I was lonely enough to go to some Bible studies that I had been invited to. Even then, my motives were not pure, because I went there to meet guys. But the Lord met me there, and I started going almost every night of the week, and really committed my life to Jesus this time. It was there that I met my first husband and we started going to a solid Bible-teaching church. I got re-baptized there, since I hadn't really been saved when I was baptized at age twelve. I really began growing in my faith, reading God's word, teaching Sunday school, and witnessing for Christ at work, but my husband did not grow in the Lord with me. He eventually fell back into his old worldly ways, and our marriage began to suffer. He left me and our daughter when she was just four years old, and I became a single mother. It wasn't until years later that I found out he was committing adultery at the time, and had started using crack cocaine, but I couldn't understand at the time why he left. I prayed for God to restore our marriage and family, but when it didn't happen, I got bitter, and I guess even angry at God. I began drinking, at night after I put my daughter to bed, just to cover the pain and loneliness. Eventually, it became a habit I couldn't stop, even when I got rid of the bitterness and anger - I had become an alcoholic. After many years of struggling and hiding my drinking (because I was still active in church), I finally came to the place where I realized I had to make a choice. I still wanted to drink, but I had to CHOOSE NOT TO, and had to choose being obedient to the Lord over my own desires of the flesh. Thank God, He has restored me to fellowship with Himself, and given me my heart's desire, a wonderful Christian husband, and we are serving Him together.