

# Separated From God by Sin

## Charlie Remembers His Early Years

I would like to tell you how Jesus Christ came into my life. Before God could bless me in this way, though, I had to learn some very important lessons about life. I learned them the hard way.

We all come into the world the same way, created by God and born of human parents. God creates us for a purpose—to know him, to love him, and to serve him. But none of this was communicated to me as a boy, born in 1933 in a small town in North Carolina.

My mother and father were very loving, but not particularly religious. I suppose my parents believed in God—I remember his name coming up in conversation once in a while. But, except for occasional weddings and funerals, we never went to church.

At a very early age, the things of the world began to excite me. Material possessions brought me what I thought was happiness. Money in the pocket, spending money, selling things for profit—these were the things that brought me joy and fulfillment. Making money became my definition of the purpose of life. Money itself became my god. So, I decided that I would find ways to make as much money as possible.

I quickly learned that I had a knack for making money. One of my earliest successes was selling lemonade during World War II when I

■ **α** ■  
**God creates us for  
a purpose.**

■ **Ω** ■

was eight years old. Sugar was rationed then, but my family received a greater ration of sugar than most, because my father was in the service. I made lemonade with real sugar in a big wooden washtub and pulled it on a wagon down to the tobacco market. People loved that ice-cold lemonade, sweetened with sugar, on hot days. I made a big profit, and it excited me a great deal. My pockets were loaded, so I was happy.

My mom was a great mother, always encouraging the six of us kids. She would say, "If you want something done, give it to Charlie. He can do anything."

I felt like King Kong. I really believed that I could do anything.

As I grew older and more successful, I began to think about God. I decided that God liked successful people. My spiritual philosophy was 'God helps those who help themselves.' I found it quite easy to help myself. Not only was it easy for me to make money, but people admired me for it. Some were even jealous. Thrusting my chest out like a proud peacock, I'd show off my new car and bulging wallet. When I noticed that people were admiring or envious, I showed off even more openly. I wanted people to notice Charlie Osburn.

My father was in the Army, and when I was sixteen years old, he left for the Korean War. When I watched him walk away, my heart just about broke. I made up my mind that I would join him there when I turned seventeen. While he was away, I was the man of the family.

I joined the Navy at seventeen, and I never did get sent to Korea. But I trained a lot of guys who did. Most of them never came back. Thank God my dad did. I spent ten years in the military, pulling extra duty and cutting hair to fatten my paycheck.

When I was transferred to Pensacola, Florida, in 1955, I arrived at the Naval Station to present my transfer orders. A very pretty young woman named Jeanne finished processing my papers, and I asked her to direct me to a restaurant where I could get a good hamburger. When I arrived at the restaurant, Jeanne was there with some of her friends. They asked me to sit with them, and I was attracted to Jeanne from that moment on.

■ α ■

**Religion  
had never meant  
anything to me.**

■ Ω ■