

PERSONAL TESTIMONY

story by Christmas McCaughey

Brad Nichols: From the Grateful Dead to the Land of the Living

“For You have delivered my soul from death. Have You not kept my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of the living?”

Psalm 56:13

Addicted to heroine at age 19, Brad Nichols followed the Grateful Dead for two years. He counted himself as a walking dead man, assuming he would not be around very long. He assumed he would never have a family or a future.

Nine years ago, the death of a friend helped bring Brad from the “Dead” lifestyle to the light of the living. His life was changed through a Christian lady and the testimony of believers his age at a Calvary Chapel. He has been faithfully serving the Lord ever since and now pastors a church plant in the area he grew up—Pascagoula, MS—where he and his wife Heather share God’s hope with hurricane victims.



Brad Nichols drills as he rebuilds a home.

After his friend died from a drug overdose, the boy’s mother brought Brad to CC Gulf Breeze, FL. There, people welcomed him despite his grungy clothes and dreadlocks. He heard the Gospel presented plainly. “It was the first church I ever went to that I thought I’d be okay going back.”

He was amazed at meeting people his age who loved Jesus. “I realized they had a purity and an innocence that I had been missing, and I wondered if I could get it back somehow.” So he turned from his sin and asked for God’s forgiveness. Citing 2 Corinthians 5:17, Brad testifies that the Lord makes all things new when a person comes to Christ. “From that day, I never took any drugs or committed any sexual sin again,” he said. “I was dramatically set free from all of that by the Lord.”

At CC Gulf Breeze, Brad fellowshiped, studied the Bible and was disciplined by one of the elders. Pastor John Spencer offered to send Brad to CC Bible College in Murrieta. There Brad met his future wife, Heather. After they graduated and married, her home church at CC Vancouver, WA, sent them as missionaries to Romanian orphans. When they returned home they had children and Brad became a full-time staff member as the youth/assistant pastor at CC Vancouver.

“Right now we can have one to ten people on a Sunday morning, but that doesn’t bother us. We know God builds the church in His way, in His time.”

When Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf Coast, CC Vancouver sent several teams to minister to hurricane victims. Brad helped lead some of the trips, his heart heavy for the Gulf Coast. The Lord confirmed Brad’s call to Pascagoula through his own pastor and several other CC pastors from around the U.S. who met Brad through the relief work. Both Brad and Heather felt a strong call to minister in Pascagoula.

“The Lord gave me this Scripture, which I didn’t share with anyone, and then Pastor Daniel shared it at church regarding our leaving,” Brad said. He quoted Hebrews 11:8, “By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going.”

Looking back, Brad sees how God prepared him and Heather for the new call. “When

my wife and I went to Romania six years ago, I had a desire to plant a church, but the Lord didn’t allow that. I think He had a lot of work to do in us,” Brad said. “We’re so excited to be here now.”

In Romania, the Lord cemented their marriage and taught them about living by faith. “The Lord really taught us that He is faithful, and He taught us the power of prayer. He really did amazing things for us, for our marriage and for our love for Him while we were there; He used that time to prepare us.”

Working with the youth in Washington also taught Brad and Heather to be faithful, even if the work is slow at first. “Right now we can have one to ten people on a Sunday morning, but that doesn’t bother us. We know God builds the church in His way, in His time.”

Brad sees continual fruit from the many Calvary teams who have ministered in the Gulf Coast; several people have accepted Christ and are growing in their faith. “One family said they didn’t want any help, that they had been hurt by churches before; then their dad had a stroke. A team from Rochester came and re-did their whole house,” Brad said. “We were able to share the Gospel with them—the mom, the two sons and the husband. We saw them just open their hearts to God. They haven’t been able to come because of his health, but we bring Bible studies to them.” Living in Pascagoula allows Brad to follow up with home visits after teams have ministered and returned home. “God is doing a lot of rebuilding.”

After coming from darkness into God’s marvelous light, Brad can share from experience that Jesus Christ does make all things new. Brad, age 30, and his wife Heather now have a little girl named Lucy, 2, and a boy named Jacob, 4, with another on the way. ➔