

L.W. Smith - A Spiritual Biography

I have been a member of Rehoboth UMC in Columbia, SC all my life. Being in church was part of my life from childhood throughout most of my teen years.

Graduating from high school in 1969, I was immediately selected (drafted) by my friends and neighbors to serve my country for 2 years. I served one tour of duty in Viet Nam and returned home, but did not attend church and sowed my oats in the world. Over the next 6 years, about the only time I set foot in a church was for a funeral or wedding. My radar screen could not even pick God up.

I attended Midlands Technical College (1976-77) and there I met Janice, my love for life and we were married in 1978. Church started creeping back into my life. In 1980 God blessed us with our first and only child, a beautiful little girl. I knew my ways had to change and I knew my desires were for our daughter to be raised in the church.

My life style made church uncomfortable for me, but UMMen was the back door. They gave me points of entry that I felt comfortable with (cooking, home repairs, etc.) Through the activities of men, my participation grew to weekend events, spiritual retreats and serving as an officer. However, I was still playing church without God in my heart. (I served my church on numerous committees, served on district committees and as UMMen's District treasurer.)

In 1987, we experienced our 7th year of marriage without God at the center and we had to make some serious decisions. We decided that our faith in Jesus Christ and His church was what would hold us together. Over the next 7 years, we served on numerous committees and as youth leaders. God used us during these years to share right from wrong with these young people.

But more importantly, God used these youth to help us understand our faults and the changes that we needed to make in our own lives. Through this understanding, we started living what we had been sharing from knowledge. God's grace started penetrating our hearts. During these same years, I had served as Columbia district president and treasurer of SC Conference UMMen.

In February 1995 we attended the Emmaus Walk and God filled our hearts with new life. In August 1995 our (14 yr old) daughter accepted Christ. Our struggles since then have taken on a new meaning and life is a joy. God continues to bless us in spite of our sinful ways.

In August 1995, SC Conference UMMen elected me president and I served 6 years. During this time SC Conference presented me with the John Wesley Award. Since 2001, UMMen has allowed me to serve as Spiritual Life Coordinator.

Over the last 4 years 2005-2008, I've been blessed to serve as a Board member on the General Commission of UMMen and been blessed with the opportunity to serve as National Task Force Coordinator for Strength for Service Devotionals. On March 1, 2008, Southeastern Jurisdiction UMMen elected me to serve as Jurisdictional president.

In April 2008, I attended the 5-day Academy for Spiritual Formation. This 5-day experience helped me understand the importance of silence and listening for God.

The position as SEJ President began immediately after Jurisdictional Conference July 2008. With God as my guide and strength, I look forward to another phase of this journey in my walk and service with Christ and UMMen.

L. W. Smith