



### My Testimony – Thomas Shanley



My name is Thomas Shanley, and on the 17th of May I was baptised as a public declaration of my faith in Jesus Christ. I did not grow up in a religious household. No one in my family or close circle had faith, and growing up in Essex I had very little understanding of Christianity or who Jesus truly was. During my school years, I began going down a destructive path and eventually, I dropped out of college and fell into a lifestyle filled with sin and poor decisions.

A year after leaving college, I started my first proper job at Domino's Pizza. For a short while, things seemed to improve. I worked hard, became an assistant store manager, and it looked like my life was beginning to move forward. But after leaving that job, I quickly fell back into old ways and went even deeper into a destructive lifestyle. For the next eight years, I was unemployed and made money through selling cannabis. During that time, my choices created distance between me and my family. They did not agree with the life I was living, and I was stubborn and unwilling to listen to reason. Even so, I still loved them deeply. Somewhere during that period, after experimenting with magic mushrooms, my mind opened to the idea that there was something greater than this world. I experienced what I believed at the time was a guardian angel watching over me. I became heavily involved in conspiracy theories and listened to the wrong ideas around me. Deep down, I was avoiding the truth that many of the problems in my life were caused by my own choices. Yet even through all of it, I still had no peace.

In 2024, I came to the conclusion that Jesus Christ is Lord and Saviour. Seeing the amount of evil in the world, and seeing how openly Jesus was mocked, strangely convinced me there must be truth in Him. Eventually, I also came to believe that the “guardian angel” experience I had was actually Jesus watching over me even during my darkest moments. Although I had begun to believe, my lifestyle still did not reflect my faith. I was still trapped in sin, loneliness, and depression. Toward the end of 2024, I hit rock bottom. I remember praying to God and completely breaking down in tears. I admitted that I could not continue living the way I was. I had tried doing life my own way, and it only led me into darkness. I surrendered myself to God and asked Him to take control of my life and lead me down the path He had prepared for me.

Shortly after that prayer, I spoke on the phone with Aaron, my brother-in-law, with the intention of asking if I could come and stay with them in Edinburgh so I could change my life around. Before I could ask, Aaron and my sister, Heather, offered exactly that themselves. At that moment, I felt God was working in my life and guiding my steps.

That Christmas, I travelled to Edinburgh planning to stay for a few months. On Christmas Eve, I found out that Heather was pregnant with baby Christopher. That news hit me deeply, and again I saw it as another sign from God. I knew I wanted to stay close to my family and be present in my nephew's life,





so I decided then and there that I would permanently move to Scotland. After spending a wonderful Christmas and New Year surrounded by family and friends, I spent January applying for every job I could. Within a week I had interviews, and by the 23rd of January I had started working at the casino where I still work today. By March, I had found my own place to live, marking the first time in my life that I was financially independent.

As I saw God transforming my life, I knew I needed church and Christian community. I occasionally attended a local church, but then Aaron invited me to Holyrood Evangelical Church. The very first evening service I attended had a huge impact on me. I felt welcomed immediately by the people there, and through Joe's sermon I felt God speaking directly into my life. I remember thinking, "This is it. This is the church I want to be part of." Since then, God has continued changing me through the people at Holyrood. I began meeting weekly with Joe, who introduced me to the topical memory system for Scripture memorisation. At first, memorising two verses every week felt impossible, but now I have memorised 34 verses and I am halfway through the system. Hiding God's Word in my heart has strengthened my faith tremendously.

My prayer life also began to grow. I still struggle with sin and at times experienced doubt, but instead of running further away from God, I learned how to turn toward Him. Repeating Scripture daily gave me strength and reminded me of God's promises. Friends and family began noticing the difference in me, with my mum even saying, "I don't even recognise you." God also gave me a hunger to learn more about Him. I began reading Christian books such as 'The Greatest Story Ever Told', 'Pilgrim's Progress', 'Saved From What?', and 'Surviving the Trenches'. I try to read the bible most days, and I'm currently going through the Gospels. I began meeting regularly with Alasdair, one of the elders at Holyrood, who has encouraged me in my faith and helped me better understand Scripture and how to fight sin by putting on the armour of God.

The next major step in my faith was baptism. In the weeks leading up to it, I actually found myself struggling heavily. My prayer life became weaker, I stopped reciting my verses daily, and I felt under spiritual attack in my mind and actions, much like Christian in 'Pilgrim's Progress' when he strayed from the path. But despite all of that, I knew baptism was the right step of obedience. When Sunday the 17th of May finally arrived, I was incredibly nervous sitting in church. But when I stood on the stage and looked out at the congregation, I suddenly felt peace, love, and reassurance from God. Afterward, having so many people come up to hug me and congratulate me left me deeply emotional. I felt a kind of love I had never experienced before. I felt at home and part of a family.

I know my journey is not over. I still face temptation and struggles, but now I know where my strength comes from. I know I must rely on God daily, put on the armour of God, and stand firm in His Word. Today, I believe God is calling me toward care work so I can serve others with the gifts and compassion He has given me. My life is far from perfect, but Jesus Christ has completely changed its direction.

2 Corinthians 5:17 says: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come." And Galatians 2:20 says: "I have been crucified with Christ and I no





longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”

These verses remind me of what Christ has done for me and describe the change God has worked in my life. I thank God for His mercy, His patience, and for never giving up on me, even when I had given up on myself.

## Meal and Prayer Meeting – this Wednesday

Tomorrow (Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> June) we’re having a meal together in the church before the prayer meeting. Come from 5.45pm, food will be served at 6pm and we’ll pray together from 7-8pm. We’re looking forward to Derek and Catriona Lamont from Hope Church Leith joining us.

## Summer Appeal 2026

Each year our Summer Appeal goes towards the support of our three Holyrood missionaries – Lorna Ferguson (serving with OMF in Japan), James Stewart (serving with OMF in Singapore) and the Sorsamo Family (serving with Wycliffe in Finland). The appeal runs during June and July.



There are two ways you can give:

1. Electronically via BACS payment to the church account: Sort Code 80-22-60, Account number 12345666 and use the reference ‘Summer Appeal’
2. By cheque or cash in the offering box marked ‘Summer Appeal’

Please speak to Nick Archer if you have any questions about how to give. Thank you!

## Church Calendar

This week for your info and prayers:

- Tuesday: Youth Discipleship Team Meeting at 7.30pm in the church
- Wednesday: Meal from 5.45pm and Prayer Meeting (in person and online) at 7pm.
- Thursday:
  - Women’s Bible Studies from 10.30 – 11.30am in the church
  - Session Meeting at 7pm
- Sunday:
  - Worship Service at 10.30am – Joe Barnard preaching (live streamed)
  - Evening Service at 6pm – Jon Gemmell preaching
- Monday: Baby and Toddler Group from 10am – 11.30am

