

## Talk for St. Mikes – My Life Journey

Good morning, dear Church. My name is Mark Wood. I must admit that when Linda asked me to share my Journey with you that I found this a rather daunting task. I have little trouble sharing my thoughts with colleagues at work or preparing a technical discussion or participating in meetings. However, speaking about myself does not come easy. I hope you find my Journey of some interest.

I was born and raised in London, Ontario. I have one older brother and we have always had strong family ties. We went to the local Anglican Church almost every Sunday and then after Church we would make the 40 minute trek from London to St. Thomas and spend the afternoon with my Grand Parents. We almost always stayed there for Sunday dinner.

My Mother was a wonderful home maker who was always there when needed and had a real down to earth attitude about life.

My Father was a hard working honest man who taught me respect for nature and nurtured my love for the out doors.

I have one Brother who is 3.5 years older than me. Even though we now live across Ontario from each other we keep in touch regularly.

My Father passed away several years ago from a heart attack. My Mother is still alive, dealing with Dementia and resides close to my brother and his family in Port Elgin, Ontario.

Looking back over my life I can recall in my very early “Teens” surviving a choking incident, from an ice cube of all things. At 17 I survived a near drowning experience while spending the summer working as a Junior Forest Ranger near Bracebridge, Ontario. Two friends helped me. I had to let go and let myself be helped.

You would think I had enough of the water, but, at 18 a friend introduced me to sailing. I was hooked from the first time out. I volunteered as crew on many different sail boats at the Fanshawe Yacht Club and helped out on the rescue boats during regattas. I finally set out on my own and purchased a single handed sail boat. I learned very quickly while sailing on my own a very good philosophy that makes a good sailor and can be easily extended to every day life.

You can try to strong arm your way along while sailing and fight the wind and the elements, or, you can learn to work with the wind and the elements. It is really amazing how much easier and more enjoyable sailing becomes when you learn to work with the wind.

I came to this realization after capsizing several times and many frustrating hours of not really going anywhere fast.

Once I started to feel the wind and started to work with it I was amazed how much easier the boat moved through the water and I rarely capsized.

Without realizing it at the time I had learned to stop fighting God and that by working with Him life would be much easier and your path in life would become much clearer. This Truth became very apparent to me several times throughout my life.

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Sailing also turned out to be another connection point with my Father. I discovered this when I announced my involvement in sailing to my parents. My Father had been an avid sailor when he was growing up in Kentville, Nova Scotia. We spent many hours discussing the differences in technique between then and now in the art of sailing.

My path in life eventually took me away from sailing and on to different events in my life. However, I have never forgotten the lessons I learned while sailing.

I went to Fanshawe College in London where I took Civil Engineering Technology and dropped out late in the second year. I learned a lot but it was just not for me.

I made a career working in Hospitality and worked my way up from bus boy through bartender, waiter, and finally on to assistant manager. During the few years I worked as a bartender in London, I was a member of The Bartenders Association of Canada and entered a cocktail competition that was hosted by them in the spring of 1979. Well, I won first place in my category and was now eligible to represent Canada in the International Cocktail Competition. I attended this competition in the fall of the same year in Opatija, Yugoslavia. This must have been my 5 minutes of fame. I won first place and later proudly returned to Canada with a Gold medal.

I worked as an assistant manager of a Hotel in Guelph, Ontario where I worked for just over 5 years. It was while I was working in Guelph my Father passed away. This is when I realized everyone is mortal, including me. After much grieving over the loss of my Father I found myself spending many hours pondering my own future and what I wanted out of life. I learned a lot about people as well as valuable life skills while working in the Hospitality industry, however, I began to feel my current path was not where I wanted to be. I decided to take a leave of absence and worked in the kitchen at The Valhalla Inn, in Kitchener, Ontario for 1 year. Shortly after returning to my job in the Hotel in Guelph I decided I needed to change my life.

I returned to London where I moved in with my Mother and spent the next year preparing to attend University. I was accepted as a Mature Student into The University of Western Ontario where I worked towards a degree in Computer Science.

I had a part time job working in the kitchen in a local restaurant which is where I met my future wife. We were married at the end of my first year at University. At the end of my second year at University I started an Internship at Bell Northern Research in Ottawa. This was a 16 month program. I was asked to stay on at Bell Northern when I was approaching the end of my term. I worked out a plan with my Professors to finish my third year of University through correspondence while remaining in Ottawa. I completed my Bachelor of Science in Computer Science throughout the next year. It was about a year and a half after our arrival in Ottawa we had our first of two daughters. They are now 15 and 13 years of age.

We started to attend a local United Church and became close with the Minister and his family. After 10 years the relationship between my wife and I became difficult. We

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attended counseling sessions with our Minister. During this time I was Outsourced to another company but continued doing the same job. Well, the relationship and marriage did not survive. Reverend Jim continued to assist me through this very troublesome time. This is when I was introduced to a prayer that has become VERY special to me. It is the Serenity Prayer.

God grant me the serenity  
To accept the things I cannot change;  
Courage to change the things I can;  
And wisdom to know the difference.

This prayer sums up the philosophy I learned from sailing which has helped me and will help me through many troublesome times.

Needless to say, my life path changed once again. I had just finished living through an Outsourcing at work and now found myself living in a condo apartment separated from my daughters. Each day my new path became clearer and clearer. Once again, by not fighting winds of change but finding a way to work with it I was able to find my new path. I made new friends in the condo development and saw my daughters often. I started to feel good about life once again.

Then came an Insourcing at work where I was brought back into Nortel. This time I was managing a team and also navigated their return.

Three years after the breakdown of my marriage I met a very special lady and my life path changed yet again. I did not fight this wind of change but happily stepped forth to follow this new path. There have been many difficult times from external sources to our relationship. I have been with this person now for almost four years. This person is Susan Nolan.

I am now navigating a team through Nortel's bankruptcy. At this point I am not sure where my career path will head but I am confident that will be made clear to me when the time is right.

To sum up the troublesome times in my life, I was able to work through them by following the teaching of the Serenity Prayer. Even without knowing it I had found by following this teaching I was able to get through these troublesome times in my life and emerge a better person.

So, by not fighting with the winds of change, but by working with them, I am able to navigate the troublesome times and find my pathway through.

In closing, I would like to share the Serenity prayer with you:

God grant me the serenity  
To accept the things I cannot change;

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Courage to change the things I can;  
And wisdom to know the difference.

Living one day at a time;  
Enjoying one moment at a time;  
Accepting hardships as the pathway to peace;

Taking as He did, this sinful world  
As it is, not as I would have it;  
Trusting that He will make all things right  
If I surrender to His will;  
That I may be reasonably happy in this life  
And supremely happy with Him  
Forever in the next.  
Amen.