Joseph Wannenmacher holding his violin, circa 1940s.
Saved, Healed, and Filled with the Holy Ghost: The Changed Lives of Five Early Pentecostals

By Darrin J. Rodgers

Early Pentecostals cherished their testimonies. They told and retold the stories of how God transformed their lives, refining these accounts until they became second nature. These accounts of divine transformation—showing how God can redeem the whole range of human experience—were more than just reminiscences. They communicated theology. Testimonies put flesh onto biblical truths, confirming that God changes hearts and circumstances.

Pentecostals found testimonies to be a particularly effective way to share their faith. One Pentecostal, writing in 1915, affirmed “the value of a clear-cut definite testimony.” For months, he wrote, he had been sharing Scriptures with a friend, who refused to believe and instead countered with criticisms. This friend finally came to Christ after reading the testimony of a homeless drunkard whose life was miraculously transformed after he became a Christian and left his sins behind.

Compelling first-hand accounts of transformed lives provided proof that the Pentecostal message was true. Variations upon the phrase, “I was saved, healed, and filled with the Holy Ghost,” became commonplace in Pentecostal circles. These testimonies demonstrated that the gifts of salvation, divine healing, and Spirit baptism were not just found in the biblical text—these gifts were also available to present-day believers.

Early Pentecostal literature overflowed with stories of people who had transformative encounters with God. The following vignettes of early Pentecostal leaders, drawn from the Pentecostal Evangel and other sources, offer a glimpse into the lives and worldview of early Pentecostals. May their testimonies continue to illustrate biblical truth, inspire the faithful, and offer hope to unbelievers.

**Joseph Wannenmacher: The Healing of a Gifted Violinist**

As a young man, Joseph P. Wannenmacher (1895-1989) was a rising star in the Milwaukee musical scene. But a miraculous healing in a small storefront mission in 1917 forever changed his life, and he went on to become a well-loved Assemblies of God pioneer pastor. He shared his powerful testimony in the October 29, 1949, issue of the Pentecostal Evangel.

Like many other Milwaukee residents, Wannenmacher was an immigrant. He was born in Buzias, Hungary, to a family that was ethnically German and Hungarian. The Wannenmachers moved to Milwaukee in 1903, but his father was unable to adapt to American ways so they went back to Hungary after ten months. In 1909, they returned to Milwaukee to stay.

From an early age, music helped define Joseph Wannenmacher’s life. In Hungary, he was surrounded by some of the nation’s best musicians and became a noted violinist. In Milwaukee, at age eighteen, he organized and conducted the Hungarian Royal Gypsy Orchestra (named after a similar group in his homeland), which performed at many of the region’s top entertainment venues.

Wannenmacher seemed to have it all. He could afford fashionable clothing, a gold watch, and diamond-studded jewelry. But underneath this successful veneer, he was haunted by his
own human frailties.5

His flesh began to swell, develop blisters, and rot. Doctors diagnosed his condition as bone consumption. Wannenmacher knew that he was dying a slow, painful death. His sister had already died of the same malady. Anger boiled up in him as he grappled with the unfairness of life. He developed a sharp temper and, try as he might, he could not find peace.6

Wannenmacher was raised in a devout Catholic home, so he turned to his faith to help him deal with his physical pain and bitterness. He frequently attended church and offered penance, but these practices did not seem to help.7

He then turned to Luther’s German translation of the Bible, which someone had given to him, and began reading it voraciously. In its pages he discovered things he had never heard before. He read about Christ’s second coming, salvation by faith, and Christ’s power to heal. Perhaps most importantly, he learned that God is love. Up until that point, he had conceived of God as “Someone away up there with a long beard and a big club just waiting to beat me up.” But then, at age 18, he began to discover the gospel for himself.8

In the midst of this spiritual awakening, Wannenmacher’s health was weakening. He could barely hold his violin bow in his hand, and the pain was almost unbearable. Then one morning in 1917 he heard about a group of German-speaking Pentecostals who prayed for the sick. The next service was scheduled for that afternoon, and Wannenmacher made a beeline for it. He wrote, “It was a dilapidated place, but the sweet presence of God was there.”9

The small band of believers had been fasting and praying that God would send someone who was in need of salvation and healing. The service was unlike anything Wannenmacher had ever seen before. He watched the people get on their knees and cry out to God. Their outpouring of genuine faith moved Joseph’s heart.10

The pastor, Hugo Ulrich, preached that sinners could be saved simply by trusting in Christ. It seemed too good to be true, Wannenmacher thought. Faith then came into his heart, and he started laughing for joy. The pastor thought Wannenmacher was mocking him, but Wannenmacher didn’t care. At the end of the service, Wannenmacher came forward to the altar and experienced a powerful encounter with God.11

Wannenmacher described his time at the altar: “the power of God just struck me and shook for fully half an hour … the more His Spirit operated through my bones, through my muscles, through my being, the hotter I became. The more God’s power surged through me, the more I perspired. The Lord simply operated on that poor, diseased body of mine.”12

He described this experience as being in the “operating room” of God. Later in the service, as he knelt at the altar rail in silent prayer, it seemed like heaven came down. He recalled, “As I waited there in

Joseph and Helen Wannenmacher at the 1957 General Council in Cleveland, Ohio.
God’s presence … [God’s] hands went down my body from head to toe, and every spirit of infirmity had to go. I got up, and I was a new man.”

A few days later, Wannenmacher was baptized in the Holy Spirit. He soon launched into gospel ministry and shared his testimony wherever he went. He would often go to the Harley Davidson factory, which was near his work, and he would play his violin and sing gospel songs during the lunch hour. He testified about his healing in hospitals, street corners, and other places. Everywhere he went, he prayed with people, and many accepted Christ and were healed. Wannenmacher’s family jokingly referred to his violin as the “healing violin,” because numerous people experienced healing as he played gospel songs and other tunes such as “Ave Maria” and “The Holy City.”

In 1921 he married Helen Innes and started Full Gospel Church in Milwaukee. He went on to found six additional daughter churches in the area. He also served as the first superintendent of the Hungarian Branch of the Assemblies of God, which was organized in 1944 for Hungarian immigrants to America. After pastoring Full Gospel Church (renamed Calvary Assembly of God in 1944) for 39 years, he retired in 1960.

Throughout his ministry, Wannenmacher emphasized the importance of the Word of God. In his Pentecostal Evangel article, Wannenmacher compared reading the Bible to the mastery of music. “You have to practice and play music over and over again before you have mastered it,” he wrote, “and you have to apply yourself to those wonderful teachings of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, too, in order to make them yours.”

While Joseph Wannenmacher went to be with the Lord in 1989, his legacy lives on in the churches he founded and in the people whose lives he touched. Calvary AG is continuing to reach people in the Milwaukee area and was renamed Honey Creek Church in 2015. Joseph and Helen’s three children, John, Philip, and Lois (Graber), were involved in Assemblies of God ministries.


Joseph Wannenmacher concluded his 1949 Pentecostal Evangel article by admonishing readers, “Never lose your first love for Christ.” Wannenmacher testified that his love for the Lord had grown greater over time, and he left a legacy of changed lives to prove it. God radically transformed Joseph Wannenmacher’s heart and healed his body, and the world has never been the same.

Samuel Jamieson: The Spirit Baptism of a Presbyterian Minister

Samuel A. Jamieson (1857-1933), one of the founding fathers of the Assemblies of God, previously served as a denominational leader in the Presbyterian church in Minnesota. Despite having all the outward signs of ministerial success, Jamieson felt that inside he was spiritually dry. Jamieson shared his testimony in the January 31, 1931, issue of the Pentecostal Evangel. Jamieson, a graduate of Wabash College and Lane Theological Seminary, was ordained as a Presbyterian minister in 1881. A pastor and church planter, he also served as superintendent over home missions for five Minnesota counties. He organized 35 Presbyterian congregations and 25 new churches were built under his direction.

Jamieson appeared to be a model minister, but he continued to grow more
and more spiritually weary. What could he do? Jamieson and his wife, Hattie, had reached a point of desperation when they heard about the Azusa Street revival (1906-1909) in Los Angeles, which was a focal point of the emerging Pentecostal movement. They believed it might be an answer to their prayers.

In 1908, Hattie Jamieson went to Atlanta, Georgia, where she attended services at the Pentecostal Mission for over three months. She was Spirit-baptized, and she testified that “He [God] flooded my soul with peace and joy.” She returned home and encouraged her husband to resign his position and also seek the Baptism. In 1911 he resigned his position in Duluth, Minnesota, and joined with Florence Crawford’s Apostolic Faith Mission in Portland, Oregon. The following year, they moved on to Dallas, Texas, where Jamieson was Spirit-baptized under the ministry of healing evangelist Maria Woodworth-Etter. The Presbyterian church still included Jamieson on its rolls as a minister in 1913, although he was living in Los Angeles and without a congregation.

Jamieson rejected his wife’s plea, fearing that identifying with the Pentecostals would be costly. “For me to give up my position of honor and my good salary,” he wrote, “would eventually lead me to the poorhouse.” Hattie continued to reason with him, saying that he needed to be “willing to pay the price” to follow God.

Finally, after months and months, Jamieson relented. He began praying earnestly and, he recalled, “the Lord soon removed from my mind all hindrances to tarrying for the Baptism.” In 1911 he resigned his position in Duluth, Minnesota, and joined with Florence Crawford’s Apostolic Faith Mission in Portland, Oregon. The following year, they moved on to Dallas, Texas, where Jamieson was Spirit-baptized under the ministry of healing evangelist Maria Woodworth-Etter.

The Presbyterian church still included Jamieson on its rolls as a minister in 1913, although he was living in Los Angeles and without a congregation.

Jamieson attended the organizational meeting of the Assemblies of God in April 1914, and he became a noted pastor, educator, and executive presbyter in the Fellowship. He served as principal of Midwest Bible School (Auburn, Nebraska), which was the first Bible school owned by the General Council of the Assemblies of God. He also authored two books of sermons published by Gospel Publishing House: The Great Shepherd (1924) and Pillars of Truth (1926). Jamie son, in his 1931 article, wrote that the baptism in the Holy Spirit changed his ministry in the following three ways. First, Jamieson realized that he had been relying upon his academic training rather than upon the Holy Spirit in his sermon preparation. He literally burned up his old sermon notes, humorously noting, “they were so dry that they burned like tinder.” Second, Jamieson wrote, “After I received my Baptism the Bible was practically a new book to me. I understood it as I never had done before. Preaching under the anointing became a delight, and my love for souls was very much increased.” Third, Jamieson wrote, “It increased my love for God and my fellow men, gave me a more consuming compassion for souls, and changed my view of the ministry so that it was no longer looked upon as a profession but as a calling.”

Samuel A. Jamieson’s testimony
beautifully captures the early Pentecostal worldview. This worldview, at its core, included a transformational experience with God that brought people into a deeper life in Christ and empowered them to be witnesses. Jamieson concluded his 1931 article with the following admonition: “To those who may read this narrative I would suggest that if you want to succeed in your Christian work you should seek the Baptism in the Holy Spirit.” Jamieson hoped that his testimony would spur others to seek what he had found.

**Barney Moore: Saved in a Methodist Revival with Signs and Wonders**

When Barney S. Moore (1874-1956) converted to Christ in 1901, it was during a revival with signs and wonders in a Methodist church. His testimony, published in the January 17, 1931, issue of the *Pentecostal Evangel*, recounted that the Methodist missionary at the revival “was preaching nearly everything that is now preached in Pentecost.”

Moore recalled that, as the congregation was in quiet prayer, the “heavens opened and a rushing mighty wind” filled the small Methodist church. About one-third of the congregation fell to the ground, overwhelmed by God’s glory and the power of the Holy Spirit. Moore experienced something unexpected—he began speaking in a language he had not learned. At first the pastor was uncertain how to respond to the revival and the gift of tongues. But they soon realized they had experienced something akin to the spiritual outpouring in the second chapter of Acts. At the end of the revival, Moore counted 85 people who had decided to repent of their sins and follow Christ.

At the encouragement of his pastor, Moore attended Taylor University (Upland, Indiana) and studied for the ministry. At his first pastorate, in Urbana, Illinois, in 1904, the power of God fell again. During the revival, he wrote, a lady in his church spoke in tongues she had not learned, which Moore deemed to be classical Hebrew and Latin. Moore was ordained in 1906 by the Metropolitan Church Association, a small Holiness denomination. Before long he heard about the Azusa Street revival (1906-1909) in Los Angeles. He immediately recognized the similarity between his own spiritual experiences and what was happening at the Azusa Street revival. He cast his lot with the Pentecostals.

In 1914, Moore and his wife, Mary, followed God’s call to serve as missionaries in Japan. They established a thriving mission and, in 1918, affiliated with the Assemblies of God. When a catastrophic earthquake and tsunami hit Japan in 1923, devastating Yokohama and Tokyo and killing 140,000 people, the Moores turned their efforts toward relief work. Moore wrote a widely-distributed book, *The Japanese Disaster: or the World’s Greatest Earthquake* (1924), and spent years raising money to help the suffering Japanese people.

The testimony of Barney Moore demonstrates that early Pentecostals did not emerge in a vacuum. They were heirs to earlier revival traditions, including those in Methodist and Holiness churches. Moore was careful to document that his experience of speaking in tongues

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Barney and Mary Moore, circa 1919.
came before the broader Pentecostal movement came into being. His story also shows that early Pentecostals, when confronted by human suffering, were among those who demonstrated Christ’s love not just in word, but in deed.

**Elmer F. Muir:**
**A Baptist Pastor Discovers the Power of the Holy Spirit**

A Pentecostal revival in the 1920s touched numerous Baptist ministers and churches, resulting in the cross-pollination of the two traditions. High-profile Baptists who became Pentecostal included Mae Eleanor Frey, an evangelist and author ordained by the National Baptist Convention in 1905, and William Keeney Towner, pastor of First Baptist Church in San Jose, California. Many lesser-known Baptist ministers also embraced the Pentecostal movement, but their stories have been largely forgotten. Among these was Elmer F. Muir, a pastor who had experienced great discouragement in his ministry. He was spiritually refreshed by the winds of Pentecostal revival. He received the baptism in the Holy Spirit and testified that he experienced “the deep things of God.” Muir’s testimony was published in the April 25, 1925, issue of the Pentecostal Evangel.

Elmer Ferguson Muir (1890-1947), the son of Scottish immigrants, was born in Dubuque, Iowa. He received a call to the ministry at age 21 while attending a revival campaign held by legendary evangelist Billy Sunday. Muir quickly discovered that the road to the ministry would be challenging. Muir had dropped out of high school, but his Presbyterian denomination required that ministers have a college degree. He enrolled at Coe College, a Presbyterian school in Iowa, where he recalled “burning the candle at both ends” both day and night for five years. He graduated from Coe College in 1917 and became a Baptist pastor.

Muir served as pastor of the Baptist church in Arkansas City, Kansas, in the early 1920s. He sometimes found the work of the ministry overwhelming. He described a revival campaign at his church: “It was one that was worked up instead of prayed down.” The experience wore him out. He wrote, “I never want to go through one again, it was dental work from beginning to end.”

Muir received a fine theological education. However, he came to realize that
he needed more than mere knowledge “to bring about this great, wonderful program of God.” What did he need? He was uncertain. “But how [the program of God] was to be brought about,” he recalled, “I had no conception.”

To add to his problems, a lady in Muir’s congregation kept asking him if he had been baptized in the Holy Spirit. He was not sure how to answer. At first, he responded that the experience was only for the early church. She kept pestering Muir for over two years until he relented. Finally, he agreed to preach one Wednesday night on the subject of the baptism in the Holy Spirit. He titled the sermon, “Has the Church Lost Its Power?” But as Muir studied the Word of God, he came to realize that the lady in his congregation had been right—the baptism in the Holy Spirit was for him, and it could empower him in ministry.

Muir and his wife both sought and received the baptism in the Holy Spirit and spoke in tongues. At first, Muir was hesitant to tell his congregation. What would people say? Ultimately, he shared his Pentecostal testimony and was forced to resign from the church.

He transferred his ministerial credentials to the Assemblies of God in 1925 and started a small congregation (now known as First Assembly of God, Arkansas City, Kansas). In 1927 he moved to San Diego, California, where he pastored Full Gospel Tabernacle. He also edited a book of articles by Pentecostal missionary Cornelia Nuzum, The Life of Faith. The book, originally published by Gospel Published House in 1928, remains in print 87 years later.

Emile Chastagner decided to transfer his credentials back to the Baptist church in 1929. He resigned from the Assemblies of God in good standing and spent the rest of his ministry in Baptist churches.

Emile Chastagner: An Atheist Finds Faith Through Suffering

Emile Chastagner (1882-1956) was a convinced atheist at age 21, but he became an Assemblies of God missionary to French West Africa (now Burkina Faso) at age 45. The road between these events was marked by hardship, which brought him to faith in Christ.

Chastagner shared his testimony in the August 27, 1932, issue of the Pentecostal Evangel. He was born in New York City, the son of French immigrants. His parents came from a Catholic background but did not take their faith seriously. He followed his parents’ example and stayed away from church. By the age of 21, he became an atheist, unable to reconcile the existence of both suffering and God. He was quick to argue and “tear [the Bible] to pieces, appealing to ‘reason’ and ‘common sense.’” He later admitted that he was merely repeating the claims of others and that he had never himself investigated the claims of the Bible.

After only two and a half years of marriage, Chastagner’s wife was diagnosed with a terminal illness. She became bedridden and experienced intense pain. Both Chastagner and his wife were devastated by this unexpected turn of events. However, the suffering led them to faith in Christ. Books by two Chris-
tian authors, Edward P. Roe (a Presbyterian pastor and novelist) and Carrie Judd Montgomery (a Pentecostal healing evangelist), caused Chastagner and his wife to reconsider their atheism.\(^{48}\)

Chastagner recounted his slow conversion. In Roe’s writings, he and his wife found a love for people that they had never encountered before. Roe’s love, he discerned, arose from his faith, which was grounded in the Bible. The Chastagners then read Montgomery’s *The Prayer of Faith*, which was grounded in the Bible. The love, he testified, arose from his faith, which was never encountered before. Roe’s wife found a love for people that they had never encountered before.\(^{49}\)

Five weeks after his wife’s death, Chastagner received a call to serve as a missionary. This call came while a visiting missionary was speaking at the church. Chastagner recalled that the visiting missionary and the entire congregation confirmed this call, even though he was uncertain how it could come to pass.\(^{50}\) He decided to accept the call and, in faith, enrolled at Southern California Bible College (now Vanguard University) to study to become a missionary.\(^{31}\)

Chastagner, already fluent in French, felt a call to the Mossi people in French West Africa. While in college, he met a young lady, Minnie Moore, who also felt a call to be a missionary. They married and set sail for Africa, where they served as Assemblies of God missionaries for 16 years.\(^{52}\)

Few who knew Chastagner as a youth would have guessed that he would become a faithful Christian, much less a missionary to Africa. But God used suffering to transform his heart, which changed the trajectory of his life. Was it worth it? Chastagner testified, “God has met us and supplied every need and given joy to outweigh every trial and test.”\(^{53}\)\(^{\dagger}\)

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**NOTES**

5. Wannenmacher, 11.
8. Ibid., 2.
9. Ibid., 3, 11.
10. Ibid., 11.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid., 12.
13. Ibid.
14. Lois Graber telephone interview.
17. Ibid., 13.
20. “Graduates of the Class of 1881,” General Catalogue, Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Chicago (McCormick Seminary), 1939, 123.
22. Ibid.
25. Ibid.
27. Minutes, General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., August 1913, 612.
30. Ibid, 3.
32. Ibid.
33. Ibid.
34. Barney S. Moore, ministerial file, FPHC.
35. Ibid.
40. Muir, 2.
41. Ibid.
42. Ibid.
43. Ibid.
44. Ibid.
45. Elmer F. Muir, ministerial file, FPHC.
46. Karen Fallowfield, telephone interview with the author, April 21, 2015.
48. Ibid., 1, 10.
49. Ibid., 10.
50. Ibid.
51. Emile Chastagner, ministerial file, FPHC.
52. Ibid.
53. Chastagner, 10.