

thought that this was how the Holy Spirit worked. So I challenged the whole idea of preparing set sermons, but I did the work. When it came time to preach my sermon in class, I criticized everything the seminary was trying to do. I called it the wisdom of men. I, of course, had the wisdom of God. I said, "I hear more talk about John Calvin than I do about Jesus Christ." (This wasn't really true, but I was trying to make a point.)

Dr. Spear called me into his office, and I basically called him a demon possessed Pharisee. Well, I was called before a special meeting of all the professors to give an account of my actions. I basically played "Mr. Repentance," and told them what they wanted to hear. I was really not repentant, but I figured that this was not my battlefield. I would tell them what they wanted to hear and live to fight another day. I would straighten them out yet!

When I took the cotton out of my ears and put it in my mouth, I learned something! I found out that I did not know everything, and in fact was mistaken about many things. I heard the teaching of my professors and saw their godly lives lived out before me. Little by little, my heart of stone was becoming a heart of flesh.

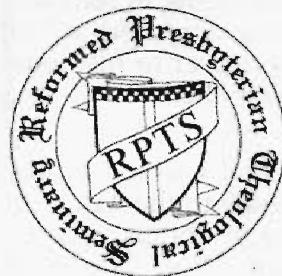
About a year later I went to Dr. Spear in true repentance and confessed my sin and asked forgiveness. Let me say here that this man is the theologian that I respect and admire most in the world. His teaching is clean, concise, and fair. I hope to model my own manner of understanding after his example.

I don't think anyone loves RPTS as much as I. Whenever I give my testimony and tell of the grace of Christ, I tell some of these stories. Going to seminary here has made a profound impact on my life. It has given me a

clearness of insight and thought. It has shown me what questions to ask and how to go about finding the answers. The greatest virtue of RPTS is its love for Jesus Christ and His Word as contained in the Holy Scriptures. That is the centrality of life here at RPTS. This is what endures unto eternal life.

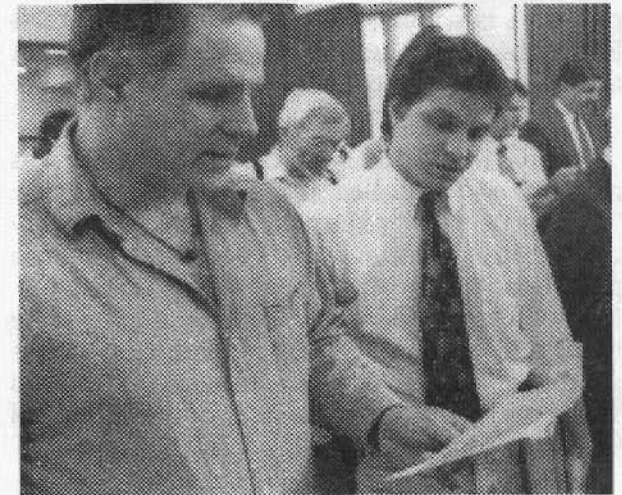
Attending RPTS is one of the best things that I have done in my life. I praise God for His providence. While many seminaries today are succumbing to the secular ideals of society and are not teaching the inerrant, infallible Word of God, RPTS has stood as a light on a hill. I praise God for you, RPTS!

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From Vegas Mobster to Gospel Preacher



*How I set out to change
RPTS, and how God used
RPTS to change me.*

—Mike Cara

They say that you are to be careful when you see the light at the end of the tunnel, because there might be a train behind that light. The train is heading for me at breakneck speed as I am now in the process of candidating for a pastoral call.

After four years of study at RPTS, I press on into Christ and look forward to the challenges ahead in the work of ministry and the extension of the kingdom of Christ to the glory of His name. It is a bittersweet time. I already miss RPTS, the work, the service, and the people. Let me tell you why I praise the Lord for RPTS.

For background, let me say that God was gracious as He called me in my own unique "Damascus Road" experience and subsequently converted me from a Las Vegas mobster to a preacher of the gospel. From the gutter to glory, Jesus Christ changed my "million dollar" drug habit into a desire to serve others. God in His power took me from the seamy side of the Las Vegas underground to the top of the Mount of Olives to proclaim His kingdom.

I would like to share with you a few stories about how in God's providence I entered RPTS. After I accepted and received Christ, I eventually moved back to my hometown of Steubenville, Ohio, and joined Full Gospel Ministries Church. Years later, having grown somewhat in the Lord and having favor among men, I was preaching at a Nazarene church in Florida. The pastor there felt called to exercise gifts of healings as he preached. Nazarenes are not especially "charismatic" in their proclamation of these types of things, and as a result the pastor, Greg, was somewhat ostracized by his peers.

At the time of our meeting, Greg was questioning his beliefs in this area. I, on the other hand, had been discipled by a man, Rocky Jenkins, who felt very much called to the ministry of healing and deliverance. He had trained me well in these areas, or so I thought. I sat with

Greg that night and we stayed up all night searching the Scriptures in the area of healing. I showed him that his misgivings were misguided. That week, during our meetings, the Lord really did do some wondrous things to the glory of His name.

Pastor Greg told me that I should consider enrolling in seminary. Well, my church background at the time had pretty much instilled in me a great distrust of formal education as pertains to the ministry and, in particular, seminary. I had all the clichés in my pocket, and I fired them at Greg: "Seminary? Why would I want to go to cemetery? I don't need to read Greek or Hebrew . . . I need to read in the Holy Ghost! Seminary, you go in sanctified, and come out petrified! Whitewashed sepulchers—full of dead bones!"

Well, God is not mocked. Three months later, there I was (you guessed it!) in seminary.

In the meantime another problem presented itself. The question was this: where should I attend? With my church background, I assumed that it would be a charismatic type school. I had a friend who had procrastinated for years about going to seminary. As a result, he had many catalogs from schools around the country. I went over to his house and started looking through them.

I assumed that I would probably be suited for places similar to the Assembly of God, but as I read through the catalogs as to what they believed, I said, "I don't believe these things"—pre-tribulation rapture, everyone speaking in tongues as a sign of the baptism in the Holy Spirit, women pastors, etc.

Another friend of mine, Don, who is a pragmatist, said this: "Mike, don't pretend it's a spiritual decision. It's like getting your driver's license. Go to the cheapest and closest place." I

said, "OK, Kevin, what catalogs do you have for Pittsburgh?"

Well, he had two catalogs. I picked up the first and looked through it. The first page I turned to was a summation of a course. It was a study of Joseph Campbell's *The Power of Myth*. I knew this work, and I knew that it was not Christian. I knew that this seminary was not for me.

The other catalog was from the Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary. Now, at the time, I didn't even know that there were different kinds of Presbyterians. In fact, the only thing that I knew about Presbyterians was what I had read in the paper two weeks earlier—that they had opened their national meeting by calling on Indian spirits. That, of course, was the "other group."

Well, I decided I would go and check it out anyway. Upon my arrival at RPTS I quickly saw a few things that struck me. I thought this group seemed to be right from the Pilgrim days, and they hadn't changed much since then. They sang only the Psalms without musical instruments—what an odd thing. However, one thing drew me to them. They seemed to really be interested in studying the Word of God. This is what I wanted. So, I enrolled.

Needless to say, my first year was a difficult one, not so much for me but for them. I felt that this was a pretty dead bunch, and I was going to straighten them out! I challenged and questioned everything that they were doing.

Let me give you an example. In my first preaching class we were assigned a particular text of Scripture to preach in class. I had some experience in preaching, and with my background we did not really prepare sermons as such but just preached extemporaneously. We