

## **New Man Story**

### **Johnny Musso — Barbecue Conversion**

One of the greatest football players in the Alabama Crimson Tide's storied history, Johnny Musso is a 1971 All-American running back who led his team to an undefeated regular season under coach Bear Bryant that year. Nicknamed "The Italian Stallion" by adoring Alabama fans, Johnny was inducted into the Alabama Sports Hall of Fame in 1989 and the College Football Hall of Fame in 2000. Following an eight year professional football career which concluded with the Chicago Bears, Johnny went on to a successful career with the Chicago Board of Trade as a commodities futures trader.

When he entered college in 1968, Johnny made a conscious decision to make it a "fun" experience. He joined a fraternity and, unbeknownst to coach Bryant, fulfilled his desires by partying and compromising his values. That left him feeling guilty and lost by the time he graduated.

Johnny married in 1972 and moved to Birmingham, where a friend provided an apartment for the newlyweds. There he discovered to his dismay that his neighbor in the apartment two doors down was a college acquaintance he didn't care for. In Johnny's words: "he stuck out as obnoxious. Some people who drink and party are fun to be around...but this guy was just obnoxious."

However, over the ensuing months Johnny and his neighbor would barbecue outdoors at the same time nearly every night. They would share each other's coals and make light conversation. It was during those grilling times that Johnny saw his neighbor in a different light. He wasn't such a bad guy after all. In fact, Johnny came to like him and the two became friends.

One night they ended up at dinner in the Musso's apartment. Johnny asked..."You know, you're different now than I remember you in college. What's the deal?" His new friend explained to Johnny that his life had been changed by Jesus Christ. He told him the simple gospel message about sin and separation from Christ, about how Jesus dealt with that on the cross and about how forgiveness works. When he said that, it all made sense to Johnny. He describes his experience that night as "like putting on glasses and everything going from fuzzy to perfectly clear."

Johnny's friend asked him if he wanted to pray to receive Christ into his life and give him a new start. He did. The next morning he started reading Romans and couldn't stop crying. He was overwhelmed by the story of what Christ did for him. Although he had heard it many times, it wasn't until that night and morning that it all became real and personal for him.

Now, after nearly 50 years of faithfully following Christ, Johnny is able to say: "At the core of who I am, I know that God loves me and has forgiven me. The wonder of my salvation has never left me."

#### **Discussion Questions**

1. What might have happened if Johnny's friend hadn't shared the gospel story with him that night?
2. Have you ever seen a life-change in someone which led to or deepened your own faith?
3. Do you have a distinct, moment-in-time conversion story similar to Johnny's?

Click below to watch an 8 minute clip of Johnny's MGF talk  
[\*\*vimeo.com/430508131\*\*](https://vimeo.com/430508131)