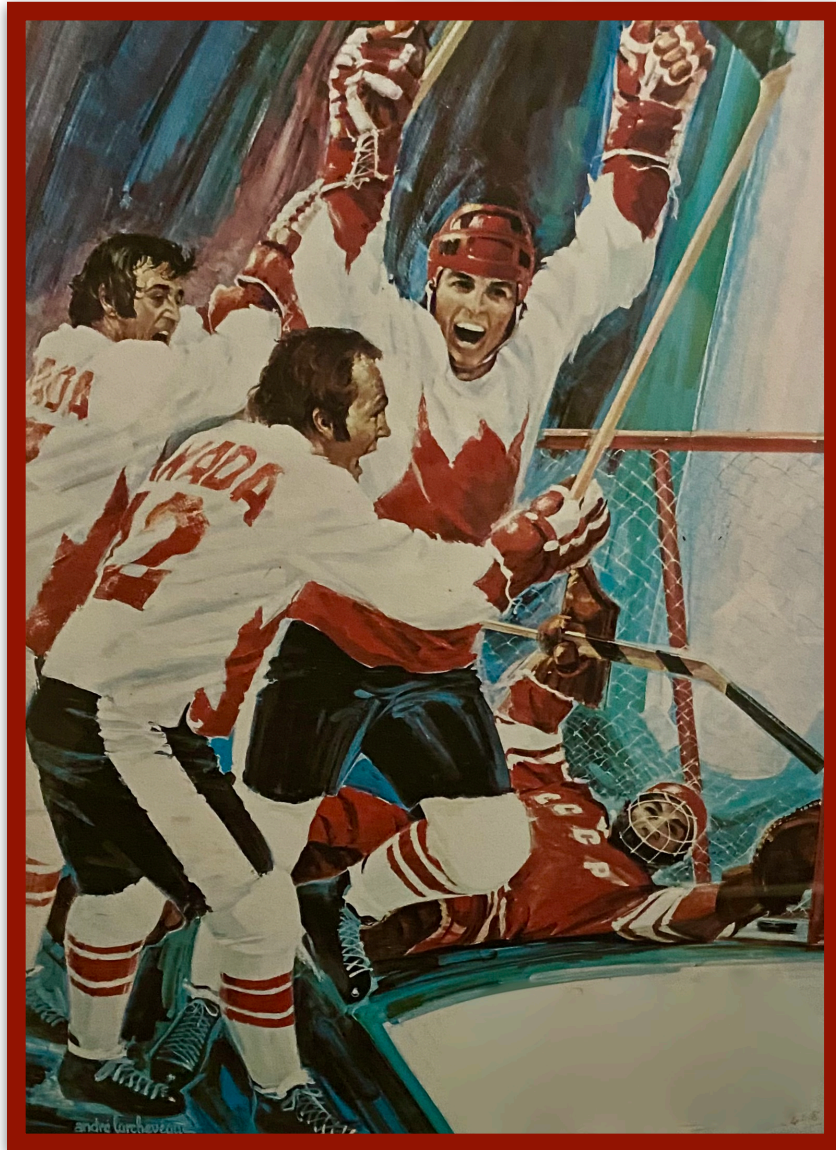


After The Goal

With Paul Henderson



I hope you enjoyed watching the Goal: the Paul Henderson Story. The '72 Summit Series will forever have a special place in people's hearts and in Canadian history. It had—and continues to have more than 50 years later—a tremendous impact on my life. I still get stories almost every day of what people were doing when I scored the goal. One of my favourites is a letter I got from a woman at Christmas 1972. She thanked me for the greatest Christmas present I could have ever given her. In September 1972 she and her husband were signing the final divorce papers. They were going their separate

ways, getting divorced. He came to her place to get the papers signed. The game was on (Game 8) the start of the third period and he asked if he could come in and watch the final period. They were both hockey fans. He comes in. They didn't say a word to each other. When Esposito scored there was a little bit of a cheer. When Cournoyer scored it was a little louder. They continued to watch. When I scored the goal they both went crazy, cheering, yelling. The next moment they found themselves with their arms around each other and in that moment realized that they were still in love. They ripped up the divorce papers, got back together and put their marriage back together. She said, "If you hadn't scored that goal my husband and I would have probably walked out of each other's life and gone our separate ways. Thank you for scoring that goal." To me that was a great story.

Wherever I went—to a restaurant, the grocery store, wherever—people would come up to me, ask for an autograph and thank me for scoring the goal. I had never known such popularity. Yet despite all the fame something inside was not right. Instead of being happy, I was miserable. I experienced a debilitating low. I couldn't understand why.

I think sometimes when you're going through difficult situations you slow down and start to ponder, maybe ask yourself some questions that you should have asked yourself a long time ago. You become a little more introspective. Because I was so discontent I asked myself, "is there a purpose to life? What are some of the bigger questions that I haven't even thought about?"

Well, it was a very disconcerting time for me. I was absolutely convinced that there was something out there that I was missing at this point and I just had to find out what it was. I didn't have a clue what it was, but I knew there had to be some answers somewhere.

About a year prior to this the Toronto Maple Leafs had received beautiful leather bound Bibles for each Leafs player. The Bibles had a gold leaf insignia and the player's name inscribed in gold as well. I didn't meet the guy who gave them to us however. Then one day a year later I'm at home and my wife Eleanor says there's a guy at the door who wants to talk to you. It turns out he was the guy who gave us the Bibles. He asked if I remembered getting one.

"Yes I do remember," I replied, "and actually I picked it up and started reading it."

I asked him a couple of questions and suggested that we get together again. That began a two year search and great friendship with Mel Stevens, who you saw briefly in the video.

Prior to this meeting, in September 1973, Eleanor and I along with teammate Ron Ellis and his wife Jan were vacationing in Switzerland. We were at the top of the Matterhorn and you could see the glaciers and the brilliant blue sky. It was so majestic. I remember turning to Ron and saying, "There has to be a God. And I'm going to find him." It was shortly after that when Mel arrived at my door and we started meeting together to pursue that search.



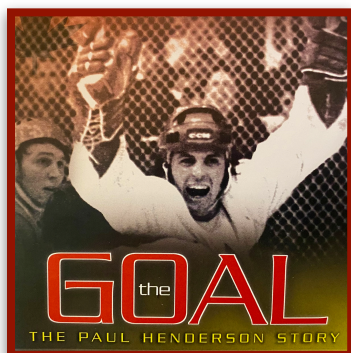
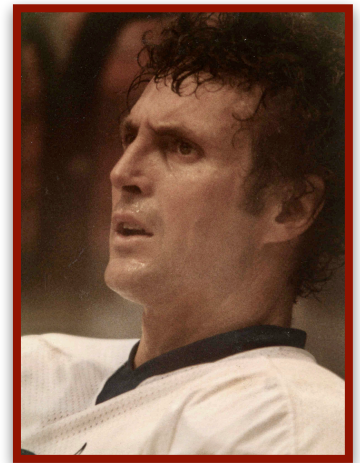
As I spent time talking with Mel, examining and studying the Bible, I came to understand that Christianity isn't so much a religion as it is a loving relationship with God. I had always thought it was a bunch of do's and don'ts. But I learned it was a loving relationship with God himself through Jesus His son. However, I wasn't experiencing His love at this point and I was separated from Him because of the way I lived my life. It wasn't that I was a really bad person, but I had basically lived my life where I went my way and let the Lord go his. I learned that God showed His tremendous love for us by sending His only Son Jesus Christ to Earth to die on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins so that we can have a right relationship with Him and eternal life.

Mel explained it this way, "It's all about putting your faith and trust in God. You gotta believe it." He told me, "A Christian is someone who basically says, "I do" to the Lord. Like you said, "I do" to Eleanor when you married her and became her husband. Paul, you need to say, "I do" to the Lord."

I struggled with this for quite some time but finally in March 1975, I cried out to God. I said, "Lord, I'm a screwed up mess. I got fears, worries, bitterness, anger. I got all this garbage and I really want to get rid of it. I've done many things wrong. Many things I'm ashamed of. You say that you will wipe the slate clean. Please wipe my slate clean and come into my life."

Well, I sat there and I wondered if it took. I didn't feel any different. I had said the words. I was sort of disappointed. But thankfully Mel shared a verse with me. In the book of Revelation chapter 3 verse 20, Jesus is talking and he says, "Behold I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door I will come in." I realized that that was what I had done. I had opened the door of my life and asked him in. That was the beginning of a wonderful adventure that continues to this day in my heart.

That is why I wanted to share more of my story with you. Perhaps you are in a place in your life right now asking some of the deep questions about life like I was. If what I have shared makes sense to you, I encourage you in the privacy of your own heart to say "I do" to the Lord. Open the door of your heart and invite Jesus in. It will be the start of a great and fulfilling adventure—one that will last forever.



Paul Henderson

If you would like more information on how to know Jesus personally and how to grow as a Christian or have questions and would like to chat with someone online we can help. Simply contact us at P2C.com.