

SOMEONE ASKED ME THE OTHER DAY HOW IT IS THAT I GO FROM BEING AN ATHEIST CONVICT INTO A CHRISTIAN WANTING TO HELP PEOPLE?

I'VE THOUGHT A LOT ABOUT THAT QUESTION AND WHAT WAS THE RIGHT ANSWER. I EVEN WONDERED IF IT WAS SOMETHING THAT I NEEDED TO ANSWER. I DECIDED THAT MAYBE IF SOMEONE HEARS MY STORY AND MY REASON, IT MAY HELP SOMEONE ELSE COME TO CHRIST. THAT IS A GOOD ENOUGH REASON FOR ME.

BEFORE I GO INTO MY FEELINGS AND PAST AND PRESENT THOUGHTS ABOUT IT ALL, LET ME GIVE YOU A LITTLE HISTORY ABOUT WHERE I COME FROM AND WHERE I'VE BEEN. MY FATHER HAD ONCE BEEN A CHRISTIAN, THAT WAS BEFORE I WAS BORN. BY THE TIME I CAME ALONG HE HAD LEARNED THAT ONCE SAVED DIDN'T MEAN ALWAYS SAVED AND HE TURNED HIS BACK ON GOD AND TOOK HIS CHILDREN WITH HIM. NOT NECESSARILY DOWNING GOD TO US, BUT NOT GIVING US THE RIGHT OF FREE CHOICE, IT CAME AUTOMATIC THAT THERE WASNT A GOD. MY MOTHER BEING THE OH SO LOVELY SCHIZOPHRENIC THAT SHE IS, JUST WASNT ABLE TO REGISTER HER OWN THOUGHT AND OPINION ABOUT GOD TO US. THO I DID THEN AND I DO NOW BELIEVE THAT SHE DOES PRAY AND DOES READ HER BIBLE. I AM NOT SO SURE IF THAT IS OUT OF BELIEF OR JUST USES IT FOR A PEACE OF MIND. I ONLY HAVE THE ONE SISTER AND SHE DID HAVE EXPOSURE TO CHURCH FROM MY GRANDPARENTS, WHENEVER MY MOTHER WENT INTO A NEW PSYCH WARD, WHICH WAS MANY TIMES A YEAR, MY SISTER WAS SENT TO MA MAWS AND PA PAWS. I WAS LEFT WITH MY DAD. I WOULD VENTURE TO SAY THAT IS WHERE MY DYSFUNCTION BEGAN. MY FATHER WAS VERY VIOLENT AND ABUSIVE. HE BLAMED ME FOR MY MOTHER HAVING A MENTAL ILLNESS BECAUSE OF A CHEMICAL IMBALANCE DUE TO MY BIRTH. WHICH I DIDN'T KNOW THEN, BUT I LEARNED BY READING SOME PAPERS AT 12 YRS. OLD. THE DAY I READ THOSE PAPERS, WAS THE BEGINNING OF THE END FOR ME AND THINGS WOULD NOT GET RIGHT UP UNTIL 6 MONTHS AGO.

AFTER 4 PSYCH HOSPITALS, 5 JUVENILE PRISON INCARCERATIONS, 1 REHAB FOR CRIMINALS AND THIRTEEN YRS. BEHIND BARS....GOD WAS LOST. IF THERE WAS A GOD I THOUGHT, HE WOULD HAVE SAVED ME. IN THE TIMES I WASN'T BEHIND BARS... I WAS ADDICTED TO COCAINE, ON THE RUN FROM THE LAW, LIVING ON THE STREETS AND DOING ANYTHING TO SURVIVE AND I MEAN ANYTHING. SATAN HAD BLINDED ME SO BAD THAT I WAS ALREADY IN MY OWN HELL AND NO GOD I HAD HEARD OF WAS SAVING ME. I KNOW NOW THAT I COULD HAD NEVER BEEN SAVED BECAUSE I DIDNT FEEL I WAS SAVABLE OR FORGIVABLE FOR WHO I WAS AND WHAT I DID TO MY MOM. THEY CALL BABIES GODS CREATURES AND IF THAT WAS TRUE THEN WHY DID HE MAKE ME AND DRIVE MY MOM CRAZY. TO ME THERE WAS NO GOD.

IN THE LAST YEAR THERE WERE A FEW THINGS THAT HAPPENED AND NOW THAT I LOOK BACK AND I LOVE GOD, I CAN SEE THAT IT WAS GOD PROTECTING ME BECAUSE HE HAD A PLAN, HE HAD A PLACE HE NEEDED ME TO BE. HE WAS KEEPING ME SAFE UNTIL I CAME TO CHOSEN. I CAME TO MY SALVATION... BUT LET ME TELL YOU ABOUT THOSE FEW THINGS.

LAST AUGUST I HAD LEFT CHARLESTON SC. AND WAS HITCH HIKING DOWN RT 17 TO SAVANNAH GA. I HADNT HAD A RIDE IN A DAY AND A HALF AND HAD BEEN WALKING. IT BEGAN TO STORM, LIGHTNING, THUNDER, HAIL, IT WAS RAINING SO HARD I COULDN'T SEE IN FRONT OF ME. THERE WERE NO CARS ON THE ROAD AND SWAMPS ALL AROUND ME. I WAS SCARED TO DEATH AND MORE THAN ONE TIME I CRIED. I DIDNT KNOW WHAT TO DO, IT WOULDNT STOP RAINING. OUT OF NOWHERE COMES A JEEP CHEROKEE, BRAND NEW AND PRETTY AND JUST STOPS ABRUPTLY IN THE ROAD AND STARTS TO BACK UP, COMING TO ME. SHE OPENS THE DOOR AND TO ME WAS A HUMAN ANGEL (NOW I CAN SAY THAT) LOOKING AT ME. A PRETTY BLACK WOMAN TOLD ME TO GET IN. I SAID 'THANK YOU, BUT IM SOAKED ILL RUIN YOUR CAR.' SHE SAID I DONT CARE, GET OUT OF THE RAIN. I GOT IN, AND SHE WAS LISTENING TO SOME REAL UPBEAT GOSPEL MUSIC AND BEGAN TO TELL ME ABOUT HER LOVING GOD A LITTLE. NOW KEEP SOMETHING IN MIND, I HADNT HAD A BATH OR SHAVED IN A WEEK, ALL KINDS OF TATTOOS, AND LOOKING SCARY AND THIS BLACK CHRISTIAN WOMAN PICKS ME UP IN THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE. SHE DRIVES ME ABOUT 50 MILES OUT OF THE RAIN AND LETS ME OFF AT A TRUCK STOP THAT I MIGHT BE ABLE TO GET A RIDE. IT WAS SUNNY AND HOT THERE AND I WAS DRY WITHIN A COUPLE HRS. I KNOW NOW THAT I WASNT SAFE WHERE I WAS AND THAT GOD SENT HER TO ME TO TAKE ME TO SAFETY. THAT IS GODS WORK, WHO ELSE WOULD HAVE MADE SUCH A BIZARRE THING HAPPEN IN SUCH BIZARRE CIRCUMSTANCES. IT'S NOT BIZARRE, IT'S GOD. THANK YOU FOR THAT GOD.

I WENT ON FROM THERE AND 4 DAYS LATER I STILL HADNT EATEN ANYTHING AND I WAS STUCK IN POINT SOUTH SC. AND GOD SENT ME YET ANOTHER ANGEL. THIS TIME IT WAS IN THE FORM OF A DRUNKEN VIETNAM VET IN ARMY FATIGUES. HE CALLED ME OVER TO HIM, AND ASKED ME A COUPLE QUESTIONS THEN ASKED ME HAD I EATEN. HE WAS ON THE ROAD AND HOMELESS TOO. I SAID NO... AND HE BROUGHT A SANDWICH OUT OF HIS BAG AND A POP AND FED ME. I STAYED WITH THE OLD VET FOR A WEEK AND HE PANHANDLED TO FEED US AND SHARED EVERYTHING HE GOT. EVEN PUT US IN A MOTEL AND GAVE ME THE BED SO I COULD GET ONE GOOD NIGHTS SLEEP AND A SHOWER. HE NEVER PREACHED, BUT WOULDNT LET ME CUSS AND ALWAYS SAID TO NOT WORRY, THE LORD WOULD PROVIDE. I THANK GOD AND GIVE HIM ALL THE GLORY FOR THAT. I ENDED UP MAKING IT TO SAVANNAH GA. ON MY OWN AND WAS ARRESTED AWHILE LATER.

BEING EXTRADITED BACK TO OHIO WAS ONE OF THE WORST TIMES OF MY LIFE. FIFTEEN PEOPLE CAGED IN THE BACK OF A VAN RIDING THROUGH THE SOUTH IN THE MIDDLE OF AUGUST. IF YOU EVER WONDER HOW HOT HELL IS, TAKE THAT RIDE. CAGED AND FORCED TO SIT UP FOR SEVEN DAYS LIKE THAT, WILL ALLOW A LOT OF CRAZY THINGS TO RUN INSIDE A PERSONS HEAD. IN MY MIND I KNEW I WAS COMING BACK TO GO BACK TO PRISON AND THAT I WOULDNT BE SEEING THE STREET FOR A LONG TIME TO COME. IT WAS ONE OF THE FIRST TIMES THAT A SERIOUS IDEA OF SUICIDE HAD APPEARED. I WANTED TO DIE, I WAS SO SICK OF THIS LIFE AND PRISON AND I DIDNT KNOW ANY OTHER WAY TO END THE PAIN. I JUST KNEW IT WAS BEGINNING TO HURT TO BAD AND I WAS TOO TIRED. BUT AGAIN GOD PREVAILED.

I ENDED UP NOT GOING TO PRISON AND WAS PUT INTO THE SAMI PROGRAM TO WHERE I AM TODAY. WHEN I GOT RELEASED FROM JAIL ON THAT IS WHEN I CAME TO CHOSEN. STILL A CAGED ANIMAL WITH A UNTRUSTING HATRED RUNNING THROUGH MY HEART AND VEINS. I DIDNT KNOW ANY OTHER WAY TO LIVE BUT BY PRISONER WAYS AND THAT IS HOW I DEALT WITH PEOPLE IS ON PRISON TERMS. THANKS BE TO GOD, THAT THIS IS WHERE THE STORY TAKES A HEAVENLY TURN.

I MADE A FRIEND WAS THE BEGINNING. IT WASNT SOMETHING PLANNED AND WASNT ANYTHING I WAS GOOD AT DOING. I DONT EVEN THINK I THOUGHT ABOUT IT, BECAUSE HAD I, I PROBABLY WOULD HAVE SCREWED IT UP WITH THE HELP OF SATAN OF COURSE. ALL I KNOW IS THAT WHEN I RELAPSED AND SMOKED CRACK COCAINE, I WALKED BACK INTO CHOSEN AND THE FIRST THING I WANTED TO DO WAS ADMIT IT TO DAVID. I WAS BOTHERED BY THE IDEA OF HIDING IT FROM HIM AND ACTING LIKE I HADNT DONE IT. RATHER IT ME BEING REAL OR MY CONSCIOUS BOTHERING ME, I NEEDED TO TELL HIM. BEFORE THAT HE WAS OK WITH ME, BUT WHEN I DID THAT WAS FOR ME, WHEN HE BECAME A FRIEND. I HAD NEVER BEEN THE TYPE OF PERSON TO ADMIT ANYTHING. I RESPECTED HIM. AND RESPECTING HIM WAS WHAT ALLOWED ME TO LISTEN TO HIM WHEN HE BEGAN TO TALK ABOUT GOD. AT THE TIME HE WAS DOING BIBLE STUDIES AND I DECIDED TO SIT IN ON THEM. I LISTENED AND I ASKED SOME QUESTIONS, BUT MOST OF ALL I WATCHED HIS WALK, WHICH SAID, 'I'M NOT PERFECT AND KNOW THIS, BUT I TRY EVERYDAY TO WALK FOR THE LORD, AND I SEEN THAT. TO THIS DAY, I KNOW HE DOES. DAVE AND I TALKED OFF AND ON AND I BEGAN TO PLAY WITH THE IDEA OF GOD.

WHILE THAT RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD AND DAVID WAS FORMING, HERE COMES THE NEXT ANGEL IN MY LIFE. KAY. THE FIRST TIME SHE ASKED ME TO GO TO CHURCH WAS A LITTLE UNORTHODOX I GUESS YOU COULD SAY. SHE TOLD ME TO GET IN HER CAR AND I SAID NO. SHE TOLD ME IF I DIDNT SHED LOSE ALL THE RESPECT SHE HAD FOR ME. I SAID OKAY. SHE SAID 'B, GET IN THE CAR. I SAID NO. SHE SAID IF YOU DONT, YOU'LL FEEL MY WRATH TOMORROW. I SAID ID FEEL IT THEN. I DIDNT GO. BUT I DIDNT FEEL HER WRATH, BUT I MADE A FRIEND. SHE TOLD ME THE NEXT DAY THAT ALL SHE WANTED FROM ME WAS TO TRY. A COUPLE WEEKS LATER I TRIED. SOMEONE ACTUALLY HAD RESPECT FOR ME, SOMEONE REALLY THOUGHT AFTER ALL IVE DONE AND THE PLACES IVE BEEN, THAT I WAS WORTH THE TRY. SHE STOOD BY ME. SHE LOVED ME WHEN I WAS UNABLE TO LOVE MYSELF. NOTHING ON THIS EARTH THAT I WAS AWARE OF, ALLOWED SOMEONE TO LOVE A PERSON LIKE ME. IT HAD TO BE SOMETHING I DIDNT KNOW ABOUT. I GOT A BIBLE. I READ IT. IN ROMANS IT TALKS A LOT ABOUT JUST THE DAY TO DAY DOS AND DONT'S OF LIVING LIFE. AS I READ THE BIBLE MORE, I BEGAN TO GO TO CHURCH REGULARLY AND I WAS ON MY WAY. THERE IS NO BIG BANG, 'HEY I'M FOR THE LORD NOW' STORY. ONE DAY IT CAME DOWN TO, OK, I'M GONNA HAVE FAITH THAT WHAT KAY AND DAVE ARE TALKING ABOUT IS REAL, I'M GONNA HAVE FAITH THAT GOD IS REAL.

LORD ALLOW ME TO BELIEVE IN YOU AND IF THERE IS ANY WAY TO FORGIVE ME FOR MY SINS, THEN PLEASE FORGIVE ME. SINCE THEN THINGS HAVE BEEN CHANGING IN MY LIFE DRAMATICALLY. I AM STILL NO ANGEL, BUT THIS IS WHERE I'M AT.

I STRUGGLE EVERYDAY AS A NEW CHRISTIAN. I STILL PRAY TO SOFTEN MY TONGUE AND TO RELEASE THE BONDAGE FROM MY HEART. I ASK FOR FORGIVENESS IN ALL THAT I DO. TO KEEP GOD AS YOUR FATHER YA GOTTA GIVE HIM AWAY. I TRY TO DO THAT AS MUCH AS I CAN.

ANYBODY WHO CAN HEAR OR READ PLEASE UNDERSTAND THIS, I HAVE BROKEN ALL TEN COMMANDMENTS. I HAVE CREATED MY OWN SODOM AND GOMORRAH WORLD. MORAL, SEXUAL, PHYSICAL, ANY KIND OF SIN THERE IS. I KNOW FROM SCRIPTURE THAT SIN IS SIN AND THERE ARE NO DEGREES. BUT WHEN YOU COME FROM WHAT I WAS ADAPT TO YOU TEND TO BE A LITTLE CLOSER TO HELL THAN MOST. TODAY, NOT GOING TO HEAVEN SCARES ME. NOT TRYING TO HELP SOMEONE ELSE CONFUSES ME. I HAVE TO ASK FOR FORGIVENESS AND PLUS THANKS FOR THE POWER FROM GOD THAT I DIDN'T HAVE ON MY OWN. I KNOW THAT I CANNOT QUESTION WHAT IT IS THAT GOD WANTS TO DO WITH MY LIFE AND WHAT HIS PLAN IS, BECAUSE I WILL NOT ALWAYS AND DONT ALWAYS UNDERSTAND. THAT IS WHERE MY BUILDING FAITH COMES IN AT. I HAVE TO GO ON FAITH THAT EVERYTHING WILL BE DONE THROUGH HIM.

I STILL WORK EVERYDAY TO RID MYSELF THROUGH PRAYER THE BONDAGE THAT STILL HAS A HOLD OF ME, I STILL PRAY TO BE A STRONGER CHRISTIAN THAN I AM. IF I AM NOT HAPPY WITH MY EFFORT, I KNOW THE LORD CANNOT BE, SO I PRAY DAILY TO CHANGE THOSE THINGS AND FOR STRENGTH. I WILL MAKE IT TO WHERE I SHOULD BE.

ONE OF THE BIGGEST GIFTS GOD HAS GIVEN ME IS THAT I NOT ONLY HAVE HIM, BUT I HAVE ANGELS ON THIS EARTH TO STEADY MY WALK AND REMIND ME THAT THE LORD DOES LOVE ME AND SO DO THEY. I COULD GO INTO GORY DETAIL OF MY LIFE, BUT I THINK THAT IT WOULD ONLY GIVE SATAN MORE POWER THAN HE DESERVES. I JUST PRAY THAT YOU UNDERSTAND THE POWER THAT GOD HAS AND SEE ME AS AN EXAMPLE OF IT. FIRST AND FOREMOST I THANK GOD FOR MY LIFE. AND SECONDLY, I THANK MY ANGELS THAT WALK ME TO SAFETY ON A DAILY BASIS.

JIM