



FMH Children's Club International

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P.O. Box 640109

El Paso, TX 79904

915-751-6789



Pilgrim's Progress: The Personal Testimony Of Alan Wayne Richardson

Come here
 Look into my face
 And hear into my heart
 Hesitation
 Could re-arrange
 The other side
 To your love
Take hold now [My son]
 And take
 What other [Brothers] have not
 Times is changing –
 Will they re-arrange
 The [desire for your First] Love...

Come home
 Here he is – *impatient* one
 Come home
 Tell the story
 Prodigal son
 Come home
 [Prodigal one]...
 Here he comes
 Yeah that *prodigal* son
 He's the one –
 To tell his story
 To tell his story
 To [give the] glory...

- Billy "Idle", English poet



Alan
(former prodigal son)

“And because iniquity shall abound [as the end of time approaches], **the love of many shall wax cold.**” - Matthew 24:12 (KJV)

“Fight the good fight of faith... **[take] hold on eternal life**, where unto thou art also called, and... [profess] a good profession before many witnesses.” - 1 Timothy 6:12 (KJV)

I write this testimony by the will of my Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, who is yet faithful to empower me to escape a life of sin. *Evidence of the work of Christ can be seen in a person's changed life.* To the Great “I Am” be all the glory, honor, and praise.

I was born on December 20, 1964 in the South Texas town of Kingsville, which is the home of the King Ranch. I lived the first seven (7) years of my life in a small town called Bishop, which is a short drive from Kingsville. Rockets, trains, and airplanes caught my attention during my early years, as is the case for many young boys. Two (2) of the experiences I had with eye-catching and ear-grabbing machines stand out in my mind. When I was about 3 years old I rode a friend's toy locomotive down the sidewalk while visiting him at his house. Then when I was 4 1/2 years old I watched the image of NASA's Apollo 11 “Mission to the Moon” on our television screen that showed the *Saturn V* Rocket that thundered through the atmosphere at *escape velocity*. The date was July 16, 1969. Note: “Escape velocity” is the minimum speed required for an object to escape a planet's gravitational field, in order to reach outer space. On the surface of the Earth, it is 6.96 miles per second (25,056 miles per hour).

Man's amazing display of engineering that succeeded in putting a man on the moon made a great – even haunting – mark on my life. I look at this as an example of how an event can be used to influence a person for good or for bad, depending on the way a person perceives it, and makes use of it. It's been said our "worldview" (how we relate to and interact with the outside world) influences the *choices* that we make in life, yes, and in greater ways than we know or understand. The importance of the choices we make now and tomorrow cannot be overly stressed. The phrases "You reap what you sow" and "You made your bed, now lie in it", are true to life. The choices that we make today are going to follow us tomorrow, and into *eternity*.



Saturn V Rocket

Speed And Power

Seeing the Saturn V Rocket in action increased my youthful pursuit of speed and power and the rush of adrenaline that accompanies racing and hot rodding. When I was around five (5) years of age, I took a ride to the neighborhood grocery store with my dad, *Meck Lee* Richardson (my dad's name is short for "*Mexican*", the namesake of a family friend). On the way back home, I can remember riding in Meck's lap, and helping him guide our *1968 Mercury Cougar* towards the street we lived on. That was my first time I "drove" a hot rod. In the years that followed I often thought of owning hot rods and muscle cars like the ones I had seen, read about, and also talked about with my younger brother and with friends.

The first time I was around someone that "raced the motor" of a car was when our family took a vacation trip to "The YMCA Of The Rockies", in Estes Park, Colorado. I was fourteen (14) years old and we were traveling in our *1973 Pontiac Grand Ville* sedan. Meck was driving up a two-lane mountain highway, pulling a small camping trailer behind us. Mary (my mom) was sitting next to him. Russell and I were in the backseat, sleeping. I was shaken from sleep to experience these three (3) sensations: 1) The feeling of my body being pushed back in the seat, 2) The loud howling of the four-barrel carburetor, and 3) Seeing the "*blind curve*" of the road disappear around the mountain. After Meck tired of waiting on the slower car, he made his move to drive around it, though he could not see if there was oncoming traffic. It was a shock then, but he managed to complete the pass without anyone getting hurt or killed.

I found that the thrill of racing and competing in powerful street machines would at times consume me. The day of my 16th birthday I received my driver's license and went for my first "solo" drive in the Grand Ville, which Meck relinquished to me for my use. Meck gave Russell a small Suzuki motorcycle, but he liked to sneak my car out at night. One evening we agreed to trade vehicles, and Russell went drinking and driving with friends. He *punched it* at a park, and the big-engined sedan "*got out from under him*". He fishtailed through an intersection, hit a curb, drove over a chain link fence, and smashed into a tree. Russell folded the car's hood, and that was the *last* time that he or I drove the Grand Ville.

When I was seventeen (17) years old I had the opportunity to purchase a *1971 Pontiac GTO Judge* that I spotted around the corner from my best friend's house. My friend is Claud, and he *too* was excited about this classic car from Pontiac Motor Division. The car was equipped with the 455 H.O. ("high output") engine, a "pistol grip" shifter, and bright red paint. It also came with "Judge" racing stripes and decals, an 8,000 r.p.m. hood "tach" (tachometer), and "ram air". The GTO Judge became my *dream car*. The red one that was owned by the "Judge Man" – as we called him – had an "asking price" of \$5000.

Project Firebird Formula

I approached Meck (Dad) to help me with a \$5000 loan so that I could buy "The Judge" from Judge Man. He did not think that lending me money to buy the car was a good idea, so I had to face one of the

harsh realities of life: *I was going to have to save up money from my part-time job at the grocery store if I was going to buy a car.* After saving money for several months I bought my first car: A Julep Green 1972 Pontiac Firebird Formula 400. I got the car for the low price of \$1,000. What I found most attractive about this classic Pontiac was that it had twin hood scoops that reached to the hood's leading edge, which allow cool air into the engine bay, for more efficient combustion. The Pontiac Motor Division called this "ram air" induction, and it was a cheap and simple way to make extra horsepower.

The young man who sold the Formula to me was named Darryl, and he also owned a 1969 Pontiac GTO. He said he was driving his GTO to a job interview one day when another driver broadsided him and totaled it. So he took the opportunity to remove the tired old engine out of the '72 Formula, and replace it with the higher compression "fire-breathing" 400-cubic-inch engine from the '69 GTO. There was one problem though: Darryl *never completed* the engine installation. What this meant to me was that even though the motor sat in the engine bay, it had yet to be mounted to the frame of the car. It also meant that various parts that belonged in the engine bay – like the radiator – remained in the car's backseat. Even though the car was in pieces, I found it to be an exciting prospect with great potential, and I welcomed the challenge. I wasn't about to let minor details like miscellaneous loose parts keep me from going fast!

Since I couldn't drive the Formula back to my parents' house, I hired a wrecker to haul it. He secured the car with the lift, and Claud and I got into the cab of the wrecker and started home, with the Formula in tow. When Meck saw the old green car, he didn't want it in the driveway, but within two (2) days he had me bring it to the rear of the house and park it next to the garage. He took the project *under his wing*, making it one of his own. A pastor I had known for years said, "*Most dads wouldn't volunteer to turn a wrench on something [a car] like that*". I felt blessed that the car, which was of such interest to me, would matter so much to him. Meck was not the only one that helped me work on the Formula, Claud's dad and several friends from school also showed an interest in lending a hand with this *would-be hot rod*.

Project Firebird Formula presented us with some challenges that Meck and I were unable to handle ourselves, so he saw to it that two different mechanics attended to the issues at their shops. We found a sprint car driver/mechanic to help me deal with a parts problem we had. The motor needed to be bolted in to the car, but I learned from the mechanic that the motor mounts that were on the *top* of the frame of the '72 Formula, and the motor mounts on the *bottom* of the '69 GTO engine, *did not match*. More than this, the mechanic said that the parts I needed were not even available from the dealer. So he gave me the unorthodox option of having the *bottom* mounts welded to the car's frame, and having the *top* mounts welded to the car's transplanted motor, so that the top and bottom mounts could then be bolted together. I said, "Do it", and he did it. Darryl had added heavy-duty coil springs to the front of the Formula, which made it ride too high. So I had a second mechanic cut the top coil from each of the two springs, which brought down the ride height and provided the car with a lower "stance". The combination of the stiff, shortened springs and the absence of vibration dampening motor mounts gave the car "*road feel*", *a firm ride, and a lower center of gravity*. After about six (6) months of work, I was driving my very own little "hot rod" down the streets of our high school "stomping grounds". But I was not finished. I ignored the expired registration tags and inspection sticker until I was cited for them.

GTO Graduation

Russell and I took turns driving each other's transportation, and *the Formula* was no exception. Meck invested a great deal of money into it, and after a year he bought it from me and gave it to Russell. I was tired of the old car, and ready to move on to another project. I had graduated from high school the previous year, and because I was impatient, I bought the first car I looked at: a 1979 Chevy Monza. I modified and drove it until a friend of mine named Greg borrowed it and blew it up during a night of drinking. Seeing that I was without transportation again, Meck decided to give me a car as a graduation

gift. He wanted me to be pleased with the car that he was going to give me, so he allowed me to pick it out. While looking through the newspaper I noticed an ad for a 1970 Pontiac GTO. This captured my interest, but when I called to speak to the owner, I had a hard time believing everything that he told me. He said that he bought the car only weeks before from the original owner: *A sixty-five (65) year-old woman*. She was the person who drove it, and it was equipped with a 400 engine and a 4-speed (manual) transmission. After I agreed to meet with the man selling the GTO, I had a change of heart. I just *couldn't see* an elderly lady driving a GTO and “speed shifting” it with a *4-speed gearbox and a heavy clutch*. It was just *too hard to swallow*. And the claim that it was all-original reminded me of the fable of the “*little old lady from Pasadena*” that car fans have spoken of. That is the fable of the *little old lady* who keeps her pristine classic car in the garage, and then *only takes it out to drive it to the grocery store once a week*.

I called to tell the man that I had changed my mind about seeing his car, and he suddenly became angry. So I asked Meck to take me to meet him, and we drove out to his place. So we made a search along the man's street that day, and as Meck began making a U-turn, I spied a *pristine*-looking GTO in the corner parking lot of an apartment complex. Upon inspection, the car appeared to be all-original. The exception, I was told, was that the car had been repainted about six (6) years earlier. I had only glanced at the car and was convinced that I had *almost passed up* a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to find an originally owned, professionally maintained, and new-looking classic Pontiac GTO. Meck bargained with



1970 Pontiac GTO

the man on the price of the car, and the purchase was made. The car that sounded too good to be true turned out to be a *real deal*. I had to drive the man back to his apartment since the car had been bought and given to me. We got back in the car and we left for his place. As we were driving down the freeway, I told the man that I was having a hard time believing that I was really the car's new owner. A teenage longing had become a reality, and was really driving a *Detroit dream: a gold-toned Pontiac GTO*.

Part-Time Christian

When Meck gave me the GTO (“*The Goat*” as my friends called it) I had a job making pizzas at a nearby Godfather's Pizza restaurant. I would park my gold machine by the front window of the pizza parlor, where I could admire it as I worked. I remember feeling a sense of pride and excitement about having a clean classic car to drive, after having hoped to own one since the time I began to drive. My job as a pizza maker was an alternative to the expectations my parents had for me, which was to get a college degree that would enable me to provide a comfortable lifestyle for myself. I enrolled at the University of Houston right out of high school and I commuted to classes with my school friend Ricky, but I dropped my classes after tiring of the coursework one (1) month into the 2nd semester. Although many of my high school classmates showed an interest in business or professional work, I did not. I began to fill up my free time by drinking beer and smoking pot with other young people that I attended high school with. My drug use and abuse served as an escape from the *disappointing and purposeless nature* of my life.

During my time at Godfather's, I worked a side job on Saturday afternoons for a man we called “L.C.” He was the pastor of the Methodist church that my mother had us attend after we arrived in Houston. I am very thankful for this, because as my Sunday School teacher was reading the Bible to us one morning, I was convicted that I was a *sinner*, and I accepted Jesus as my *Saviour*. As a child, I regarded Jesus as my “hero” and my role model in my life, from that day forth. Yet my church did not empower me with the Word and the Spirit so that I could *live for Him*. I regularly attended church and had an outward appearance of holiness, but inwardly I felt like a *hypocrite*. When I turned sixteen (16) I left that church

and I took advantage of my newfound freedom of transportation and began dating a girl. Since L.C. was a bachelor himself, he spent more time fellowshipping with single men than most pastors do. Though I spent many hours fellowshipping with him and working for him, he was not aware that I was abusing alcohol and marijuana, even though I was high on the job at times. He knew about me quitting college, and he suggested that I enroll at *Stephen F. Austin State University*, the home of the “*Lumberjacks*”.

A Loaded Lumberjack

I was able to make some friends at Stephen F. Austin. My roommate was Wade, from Sulpher Springs, Texas. He was a very kind and polite person who I always enjoyed. I was also befriended by roommates from the Houston area who stayed at another dorm. Their names were Stuart and Mark. I really liked hanging out with them because they had the same affinity for smoking pot and drinking beer that I did. Mark loved to listen to rock ‘n roll music, and I spent many hours drinking, smoking, and listening to rock n’ roll with him. When the weekend rolled around, I nearly always returned to Houston, to have the freedom to drive around my old stomping grounds and to drink and get high with familiar friends of mine.

Labor Day weekend was one of those weekends. I had just spent Saturday and Sunday with my friends and on Labor Day afternoon I got in my GTO to head back to college. I was about half way back when I passed through the Diboll, Texas city limits and saw a patrol car coming toward me on the other side of the highway. I noticed my speed was about 70 mph, at a time when the posted speed limit was 55 mph. We passed each other, and I checked my rear-view mirror to see if I was due to be pulled over. The cop car turned around, and in my rebellion I *punched it* to get a jump on him. I had alcohol in my system, as I had consumed a single wine cooler that afternoon. It was enough to give me *beer muscles*. Note: The term “beer muscles” refers to the boldness and false sense of security that intoxicated alcoholics experience.

Bustmaster With A Mustang

While I had experience making full throttle passes on Houston freeways, up to that time I had never been so bold as to try to outrun the cops on the open highway. With the influence of the alcohol, I felt confident that the GTO was able to outdistance the patrol car. As the scene returns to my mind, I see *daylight* as the patrol car begins its pursuit. But as I set my eyes toward the highway, *darkness of night* is around me and the shimmering rain on the blacktop surface. I steered the car around a gradual curve on the wet highway as my speedometer indicated 130 mph. I had the thought that if the swaying car were to slip off of the highway while going that speed there would be *great wreckage*. Yet I drove on.

I drove the car at full throttle for a distance of ten (10) miles before I came up on a traffic light that I had to slow down for. When I had returned to a speed 50 mph, flashing lights suddenly appeared in my rear-view mirror. It seemed that the car headlights that I had noticed a great distance behind me had suddenly overtaken me. A low-profile DPS “*Interceptor Mustang*” had reeled me in. After I was arrested and handcuffed I was taken back to Diboll where I was booked and jailed for the night. The next day my parents were notified by a fraternity president and friend of the family who happened to come looking for me at school. Meck came for me, and paid off my \$600 in traffic fines.

I learned a lesson returning to Stephen F. Austin that day, which was not to try to evade the cops on the *open highway*. But Meck was not convinced of this. I’m sure he did not want to see me get costly speeding tickets, abuse the car, and risk my life by driving that way. This was apparent to me, since he took the GTO away from me and allowed Russell to drive it. This left me without a car again, so I began making my weekend trips to get high with friends in Houston by way of the Greyhound Bus Lines. Meck returned the GTO to me a short time later, and I didn’t try to outrun the police on the highway again, but I continued to abuse drugs and alcohol. One afternoon Stuart wanted me to take his girlfriend Alice and

roommate Mark along to hunt and pick psilocybin (psychedelic) mushrooms at a cow pasture near the University. After smoking some pot, the four of us got in the car and drove by some woods on a familiar dirt road, where Stuart thought he noticed something in the woods. He wanted me to back up, and in my intoxicated state, I gave in to the temptation to “light” the tire. I dropped the clutch, and the rear tire began to bounce *violently*. When I depressed the clutch, the wheel hop stopped. Then I rolled out of the driver’s seat to see if I had done any damage to the car. That’s when I saw gear lube flowing out from the bottom of the gearbox (transmission casing). It must have cracked from the rear spring suspension pulling against it during the wheel hop, or by me suddenly releasing the tension by stabbing the clutch.

The mishap put an end to our afternoon *mushroom hunt*, as I sought to return to the dorm before all of the gear lube streamed out of my car’s gearbox. I later applied a “cold weld” compound called *J-B Weld* to the cracked casing, in an attempt to seal it. After I had done that, I only used the car to make short trips around the campus. In February 1985 I tired of school again, a month into the second semester, and *called it quits*. I loaded up my possessions to return to my parents’ house in the GTO. The *J-B Weld* seemed to assist me in making the 140-mile trip back to Houston. I took the car to the sprint car racer/mechanic once I was back home, and he said he had never seen a set of gears that were as *chewed up* as ones he saw out of my car. All of the gear lube had leaked out of the transmission box, so I just had metal on metal, gears grinding on gears. The mechanic had to put a new transmission in the car so that we could drive it again.

Interceptor 500

In the Fall of 1985, I found myself with a lot of free time after leaving school. I was living at Meck’s house, and he said that I needed to work. Since Meck was letting Russell use the GTO, he decided to buy me a motorcycle so that I would have a way to get to the job he helped me get at the *Baylor College Of Medicine* bookstore. After searching the want ads, I found a 1984 Honda Interceptor 500 for sale. Meck and I went to look at the bike the following Saturday. We discovered that the young man who owned the Honda lived in a beautifully well-kept neighborhood, a short drive from L.C.’s home. The owner gave me a short history of his Honda before I got aboard to take a test ride. After I accelerated down the open boulevard and became comfortable with the way the Honda functioned, I tried to guess my road speed. When I glanced at speedometer I expected to see a reading near the posted legal limit of 35 mph, but the arrow on the dial pointed skyward, indicating I was doing 85 mph. It was due to the Honda’s wind-breaking quarter fairing, full-face helmet, and the silky-smooth V-4 engine that achieving *speed* was done easily, efficiently, and quite comfortably.



Honda Interceptor

Throughout high school I dreamed of having the thrill of riding my own motorcycle, and riding the great looking and high-performing Honda made me want to *pinch* myself. When Meck was young he had to borrow money from a neighbor so he could buy a motorcycle to ride to work. So when Meck gave me the Honda as a gift, I sensed the love that causes a father to give (John 3:16). I loved riding the Honda, but Meck intended it to be more than fun, it was to be transportation to my new job at the Baylor College of Medicine bookstore located in the Houston Medical Center. Before that job began in the Fall, I experienced mechanical failure as I rode the motorcycle home from my Summer lifeguarding job one afternoon. It was a sudden and persistent rattling that caused me to turn off the motor. A Honda mechanic told me that the top of the engine had dropped an exhaust valve into one of the combustion chambers.

The most likely cause of the dropped valve was the performance enhancing *octane boost* that I added to my Honda's gas tank. *Moroso 104+* octane boost allowed for higher compression and increased power in my GTO, but I was unaware that many octane-boosting products contain lots of *lead*. I learned that exhaust valves in older engines were equipped for the presence of *lead*, which helps to reduce carbon buildup on exhaust valves. But later model engines (like the one in my Honda) are designed for *unleaded gasoline only*. Lead damaged my engine, so I had to leave the bike with a Honda mechanic who installed new valve seats in the engine. Ten (10) days later it was ready for pickup.

“Hell Ride”

I picked up my bike on a Friday, and that night I joined a few of my friends for some “cruising” on Westheimer Boulevard, our *main drag*. Claud took his little Mazda pickup and brought our friend Tommy with him. Claud wanted to borrow my motorcycle to take Tommy for a ride, so he took the bike and I took the truck. We raced and chased down the “strip”, like cat and mouse. I was able to stay ahead of them in traffic, but it was not long before Claud was able to find an opening, and leave me behind. He later told me that he took Tommy downtown at speeds up to 100 mph. Some of our friends referred to this kind of quick trip as a “*hell ride*”. This term was used to describe a method of driving through the streets and neighborhoods at high speeds to produce *thrills* and *chills* in one's passenger(s). If the vehicle wasn't *wrecked*, then surely the passenger became a *nervous wreck*. A “hell ride” was sometimes the manner in which a new friend was brought into the fold, or a risky way of bonding with an established friend. I can now better recognize the dangers we created by participating in this kind of behavior, and I am truly grateful that the Lord protected and watched over us in our *thrill seeking*. I'm also grateful that Claud and others who lived to tell about times like these and still have an opportunity to *receive Jesus and live for Him*.

Adrenaline Rush

I had a keen interest in speed then, and riding my motorcycle with a *heavy hand* allowed me to get my *fix* of adrenaline. At *nearly every* opportunity, I sought to indulge my *lust* for speed, and get the *rush* that came with it. I found this part of riding to be very intoxicating, but along with the *thrills* of street racing came the *chills*. I am speaking of fear. Yet it was a *healthy* fear that I got while riding, and it was very evident by the disoriented and shaky feeling I had when I pulled in and parked at home after speeding. That seemed to be the place to relax, but because of my extreme riding style, fear and tension lingered, *like I was high on cocaine or caffeine*. The way I decided to deal with the fear produced by my full-throttle passes on city streets was to get “high” on pot before I got on my Honda. When I was “high”, I could engage in the wild kind of bike riding that I enjoyed without being bothered by the fear. The down side was that I became a greater danger to myself and to others when the healthy fear was not present.

The day after I picked my bike up at the motorcycle shop I prepared to leave for work at L.C.'s place. I ate lunch and took my pot pipe out on the front porch to smoke before getting on my Honda to leave for work. I had two (2) tokes on the pipe when my brother's friend Bryan pulled up in our driveway. Meck stepped out of the house and greeted Bryan before I let him take the motorcycle for a ride around the block. As Meck and I waited for Bryan to return we had a few moments to ourselves. I made an extra effort not to say much to Meck while I was *high*, to prevent him from discovering my intoxicated state. If Meck did happen to notice I was acting different that day, he did not say anything about it.

The Accident

I rode northward on the freeway, and since marijuana causes slower reaction time I *limited* my speed to 85 mph. After several miles I exited and pulled up to stop at the light in front of the Fair Haven United Methodist Church. I made good time on the freeway, but when I arrived at the stop light on the boulevard

I thought to myself, “I’m just two (2) blocks from my turn – take it easy”, while the intoxicating *spirit of marijuana* was telling me to “open her up ALL THE WAY.” When the light turned green, I let out the clutch and left the light as *quick and fast* as I could. As I passed a grocery store parking lot after riding through the intersection, out of the corner of my eye I noticed a police car parked at the edge. I took this as greater incentive to *stay in the throttle*. I set my eyes forward, and I didn’t look back.

I shifted through all six (6) gears, trusting in my teenage “invincibility” to deliver me from any situation that might develop. As I approached the intersection where I needed to turn, a *tan* full-sized car pulled out of a driveway and stopped in the middle of the street, about seventy-five (75) yards out in front of me. It was *then* that I came to know that my *invincibility* as a rider and driver was just a *youthful illusion*. The driver of the *tan* car was waiting for the driver of a *black* car to turn left and merge with the Saturday afternoon traffic. Normally this would have given me enough space to slow or stop for unexpected traffic, but at my approximate speed of *100 mph* the pavement gets eaten up *quite rapidly*.

I had to make a crucial decision in a very short amount of time: 1) *Remain in my lane*, and drive my bike and body into the *tan* car. 2) *Go left*, and drive my bike into the car positioned in the left turn lane. 3) *Go right*, and travel through a gas station surrounded by a chain link fence. 4) *Lay the bike down*, and endure road burn from tumbling and sliding across the unforgiving pavement (I was dressed in a sleeveless shirt and a pair of shorts). I picked *choice #2*, and aimed for the black car in the left turn lane. I hoped to leave the bike in the rear quarter of the car, and fly over the bike’s handlebars, and land on the grass median that lay just beyond the turn lane: This was the softest landing I could hope for.

The last thing I remember about the accident was the moment I took aim for the black car in the turn lane. I skidded eighty (80) feet before striking the rear quarter of the car. *L.C.* happened upon the scene of my accident as he drove from his house towards Fair Haven. Witnesses reported that my motorcycle was “smoking”, as it was seen laying on the pavement by the damaged black car. I was twisting back and forth on the ground as I tried to remove my *helmet*. Paramedics at the scene strapped me to a backboard and took me just down the street to Memorial City Hospital. I remember the brief moment when I returned to consciousness, as I saw a doctor treating the cut on the side of my knee that I got in the accident.

I suffered trauma to my spine and spinal cord at some point in the wreck, and I was given morphine for pain. I was in the ICU (Intensive Care Unit) when I returned to consciousness in a *morphine fog*. The doctor’s report was given to my parents first, and then to me, which was, “He’ll never walk again”. Paralysis such as mine is called *paraplegia*, which is “the partial or total paralysis of *two* limbs” (the condition of quadriplegia is “the partial or total paralysis of *four* limbs”). Due to the damage to my spinal cord, I no longer have voluntary motion below my mid-chest/mid-back *injury level*. Note: The spinal cord is the bundle of nerves within the spine that carry electrical signals from the brain to the various parts of the body that permits motor function. The human spinal cord is estimated to contain 10,000 nerve fibers.

Surgery And Rehabilitation

I remained in the ICU for three (3) days after X-rays were taken of my back (a period of time that allows the body to recover from “*spinal shock*”). At that time a surgical team worked to reconstruct my spine, adding permanent support by attaching a pair Harrington Rods (steel rods) to the reconstructed spine. Several of my friends came to visit me at the hospital, and at least five (5) of them helped me to get high by passing a joint around. They smoked cigarettes to cover the smell of the pot, and a nurse came in and asked us give the smoking a *rest*, saying, “*The fumes are rolling down the hall.*” This was a reminder that my abuse of marijuana served as an instrument in getting me paralyzed and into that hospital bed.

The Memorial City hospital staff showed me a list of local rehabilitation hospitals and asked me to pick the one where I wanted to be admitted. I was familiar with the hospital and research facility called *T.I.R.R. (The Institute For Rehabilitation And Research)* because it was right next door to the *Baylor College Of Medicine* bookstore, where I was employed at the time of my accident. I was told that T.I.R.R. was regarded by many as being the most progressive rehabilitation hospital in the city of Houston, and possibly in the world. I felt a sense of awe and blessing from having access to this high caliber medical and research facility. I was admitted to Memorial City hospital on September 21, 1985. I was discharged after twelve (12) days and admitted to T.I.R.R. on October 3, 1985. During my season at T.I.R.R. I continued to drink and get high with help from guys who were quite like *me*: Drug addicted, risk-taking “heads” who were paying the consequences of self-destructive living. It was after I began suffering the consequences of being paralyzed that *I desired to look deeper within myself, and to know more about the inner workings of the mind of man, interpersonal relationships, and the meaning of life.*

I regarded myself to be relatively happy and carefree prior to my accident, during the three (3) weeks I worked at the *Baylor College Of Medicine* bookstore. The truth of the matter is that I was broken-hearted. I was suffering because of my infatuation with a young woman who was just as *restless and rebellious as I was*. I met her in December of 1984 when she came to spend Christmas with her father in Houston, and after writing her, we began a long-distance relationship. At least it was to me. Four (4) months later I discovered that I was more interested in her than she was interested in me. I felt rejected at that time, and because of the pain, I had a “death wish” that manifested on the day of my accident. In retrospect, I believe this contributed to my recklessness and disregard for safety in Houston Saturday afternoon traffic.

My rehabilitation at T.I.R.R. included working out five (5) times a week with *physical therapists*, who were referred to as “*P.T.s*”. Physical Therapists are licensed health care providers who strive to help patients with medical conditions return to *full and functional movement*. A few of the patients at T.I.R.R. jokingly referred to physical therapy time as “*physical torture*”. As it is said, “No pain, no gain”, and it was a *necessity* for me to see therapists and workout in the exercise room to rebuild my broken body. I learned a lot of about living with a spinal cord injury, including techniques for getting around barriers at home and in and around public buildings. I am grateful for the training I received during my stay at T.I.R.R. Nurses instructed me in self-care to promote healthy tissue and prevent infection and breakdown. P.T.s coached me on how to transfer myself from my wheelchair to a car seat, how to stand from a sitting position in a walking gate (parallel bars), how to walk with long braces and forearm crutches, and how to drive a car with hand controls. I even practiced pulling myself back up into my wheelchair from the floor, a move that requires some practice and a great deal of effort. Because of the challenges I have faced living with paralysis, I have a greater appreciation for gymnasts who make events like the “pommel horse” and “the rings” look easy, when they really require a lot of strength and a great deal of balance.

I was discharged from T.I.R.R. on December 15, 1985. After living in the hospital for three (3) months it was great to be home again. Soon life became more normal as I celebrated my December 20th birthday and the Christmas holidays with my parents, my brother, and my 3-year-old black cat, Sam. Once I was settled in again, my friends came over to pick me up and take me out to *drink and get high*. That is when I found that I was able to go out and get wasted and make my way home about as well as I ever had. In fact I was able to take advantage of having to sit in my wheelchair, by relaxing and “vegging out”, as it were.

Death Of A Friend

As I rehabilitated my damaged body at the hospital that Fall, Russell was living in Austin and attending the University of Texas as a freshman. He returned home on Thanksgiving weekend that year with his roommate, Daniel. When Daniel noticed that I wasn't around, he asked about me, and my mother told him that I been in an accident. She later told me that when Russell first arrived at her doorstep, she

had to support him since he collapsed from a loss of strength. Since Daniel had to learn about my motorcycle accident from my mother, Russell must have been afraid to tell even his closest friends about it, because of the grief and maybe even fear he began to feel about riding bikes himself.

At the time of my accident Russell had been riding his mopeds and motorcycles for three (3) years, as opposed to the three (3) *weeks* that I had *my* motorcycle. As brothers, hot-rodding cars and racing bikes was a big part of the life that we shared. By each of us striving in competition with each other, we seemed to sharpen the skills and knowledge of one another. Street racing and riding was a *pursuit of passion* for us and also for friends. Russell had a friend named Brad, who owned a bright red *Kawasaki Ninja 900*. He and Brad often took turns riding it, and of all the motorcycles, that seemed to be the Russell's favorite. He appreciated the power and torque the bike had on tap, and was known to ride it back and forth down the street and do wheel stands ("wheelies") on it. Russell eventually bought a black and orange *Honda CB900F*, which enabled him and Brad to ride side-by-side on Texas streets and highways.

Russell rode his big Honda motorcycle home after completing one semester at UT. Meck agreed with Russell on plans to sell the bike, and Russell gave him the keys. A short time later Russell asked Meck for the keys, so that he could take the bike for a ride around the block and test the brakes. For whatever reason, Russell did not return the keys to Meck after he returned to the house on the motorcycle. Several evenings later, he went with friends to a local restaurant and bar to drink "dollar (\$1) margaritas". Russell was dropped off at home by his friend Eric, who later told me that when they arrived at the house, Russell said he was not tired. He had the key to start the bike, and left the house again on his motorcycle. Before sunrise on December 28, 1985 my mother received a phone call from the hospital, saying that Russell was in an accident.

Since Russell rode his motorcycle helmet *free*, the risk of serious injury increased. I knew him to live for the thrill of alcohol in his blood, the wind in his face, the open road before him, and the traffic behind him. His doctors gave him coma-inducing drugs to slow the swelling of the brain. But modern medicine could neither undo the trauma, nor reverse the swelling. Though Russell's heart and lungs functioned with the help of a ventilator, the swelling took its toll on the brain. The doctors pronounced my brother "brain dead" five (5) days after the accident. Russell's longtime friend Roy told me that what happened to Russell did not surprise him. He said it was a common occurrence to see Russell get on his motorcycle at college parties and drop it from drunkenness, get back on it, and say, "*The man's gotta ride.*" Like myself, Russell liked to get high and race on city streets. He went out on Westheimer Boulevard early morning, and he too found himself in a situation that he could not work his way out of. It should be obvious that street racing is very risky and dangerous. Drivers of other cars are not likely to see another car and even less likely to see someone on a motorcycle that is moving at a high rate of speed.

L.C. spoke about Russell's tremendous potential, and since we lost him, I was going to have to live for *two* (2) people. Indeed, losing Russell was a great loss for his friends, for me, and especially for his (our) parents. To see one son lose his life and to see the other one survive, yet having to reconcile himself living with a crippling injury, had to be very difficult to say the least. My school friend Rick mentioned that he did not know how my parents survived. Looking back, I recognize that my way of dealing with the losses was to "numb out" and cover up the pain and depression with drugs (alcohol, marijuana, and almost anything that was available). I attribute my *parents'* strength and survival to the *grace of God*.

Drug Dependent

Drug abuse was my method for coping with pain and frustration, and my habitual marijuana use seemed to be my greatest enemy. When I had my own supply of pot, I was not able to leave it alone. It seemed that I was ever mindful of my pot supply, where it was stashed, and how I would prepare it for the

next “hit” or “joint”. The *most pressing* thing in life was getting my next *fix*. It was an overwhelming temptation I could not resist. The spirit of marijuana called out to me. It was a “monkey on my back” that controlled me. One day when the reality set in that I was a *slave* to the drug – I felt *outrage* – especially since I believed I was made in God’s image (created to communicate with Him). Yet I found myself returning to smoke dope again, and again – feeling void of the power I needed to overcome this *stronghold*.

In 1987 my parents enrolled me in the *Dale Carnegie Course*, which I took at a local Houston chapter of the *Dale Carnegie Institute*. The course is designed to increase a person’s self-confidence and improve their public speaking skills. My class met once per week for fourteen (14) weeks, and each week we had to give a three to five (3-5) minute original speech in front of our class. Since I was hooked on marijuana, each week I addressed the class in a “stoned” condition. One evening the class was on a short break when I ran into a dear friend of mine named Leslie. Leslie said that she came to the Institute because she was considering taking the Dale Carnegie Course. When I asked her if she thought she would do it, she said that she wanted to wait and see how it helped others she knew who were taking it. At that time the cost of the course was \$700, and I gathered that Leslie would be paying the tuition herself if she choose to take the course. So it seemed like a wise thing to wait and see some *real results* in the life of someone she knew, before she made that commitment. Since Leslie and I were friends, I expected her evaluation of the course to be heavily influenced by what I got out of the course. This was a thought that bothered me, because not only was I reminded of my responsibility to apply myself to the course I was taking, but that a friend of mine might decide *against* taking the course because of *my own* laziness, complacency, and drug-addicted behavior. Leslie did not know I was using drugs, and I must confess that I did not have the bravery to admit to her that I was helpless to overcome my *drug-dependent* lifestyle.

Caught In The Act

Oft times I drove by an infamous spot near our high school, known as *Hagar Park*. “Hagar” was located behind an elementary school and is equipped with swings, basketball goals, and a backstop with bleachers for playing baseball. I was one of the young people who sought to meet there for the purpose of drinking and socializing. Sometimes there were those who came to get drunk and pick fights. One night I drove by Hagar with my buddy Dan in the 1980 Buick Electra that Meck gave me after my accident. Dan and I always drank beer and smoked pot when we got together, and that night must have been the same. I recognized a group of our schoolmates gathered on grounds at Hagar, and I parked by the bleachers. Soon a couple of them came to greet us through the window of the car. A young man named Mark N. offered to greet Dan with a handshake, but Dan refused to shake his hand. There were hard feelings between Mark and Dan, because of a previous encounter at a neighboring park. After Dan refused to greet Mark, Mark wanted to fight. Dan was the bigger man, but there were several other young men present who I did not trust to stand by and be spectators only, if Dan and Mark got into a fight. I knew some of the people who were present there to be angry drunks who liked to fight, and fight *dirty*. I could offer Dan no defense as I was confined to a wheelchair, so I started the car and left the park. Dan quickly became upset after being threatened by Mark, and not allowed the chance to avenge himself. He wanted to make *war!* Dan may not have been totally prepared and battle-ready, but he was *much provoked and plenty angry*.

I felt responsible for the pent-up frustration that Dan experienced that night. So I took it upon myself to avenge him. Mark N. lived a short distance away, and I began trenching the lawn in front of his house. One night I was using the Buick to trench Mark’s lawn, when I was “*caught in the act*”. I had one of the car’s wheels in the lawn and the other wheel straddling the curb, when a car approached from the rear and pulled up beside me, deliberately boxing me in between the yard and his car. A man came around to the passenger side of my car and tried to pull the door open, but I had locked the doors a few minutes before, and he was unable to gain entrance. I pulled forward to drive off of the lawn, but the other driver quickly

cut me off. Then I put the car in reverse to leave that way, and collided with the other car in the street as it traveled in the same direction. Finally, I put my car in drive and was able to make it down the street and find my way into an adjoining neighborhood just on the other side of the boulevard. Hagar Park lay ahead of me, and I approached it at a right angle. I was about to make a right turn and drive around its west perimeter, when the other car rammed me from behind. I was headed toward the curb and unable to turn, so I hit the brakes to slow down. But I quickly got off of the brakes before hitting the curb head-on, and coasted over the curb without causing any apparent damage to the front of the car. The other car continued to pursue me across the interior of the park, and I headed for the curb at the opposite end. Once I was near the end I made a sharp right hand turn and followed it immediately with a left turn, I angled the car off of the curb, and drove back onto the street. Once I was driving along the east perimeter of the park, I looked over my shoulder and saw the other car sitting of about fifty (50) yards from me in the park's interior, and saw the driver of the car begin to run toward me. I believe that he resorted to pursuing me on foot after striking a small tree. The tree seemed to be close to the spot where I turned sharply to prepare to exit the park, and since he was traveling close behind me I must have led him into the tree before turning.

With the chase ended, the adrenaline could cease and my heart rate could slow to normal. I had escaped yet *another sticky situation*. I was relieved that God saw fit to bail me out of trouble again. I marveled at the way I was protected by my door locks that night, since I rarely use them when I drive. The man who attempted to gain access to my car that night was angered by my actions, and tried to get revenge on me. It would not have been difficult for the two men to join together to hurt me, steal from me, or even kill me. But the conflict came to an abrupt halt when something brought the other car to a dead stop. *The Lord reached out to protect me again that night, even in the midst of my reckless and vengeful ways.*

I vented my aggression when I was behind the wheel of my car because I was afraid to verbalize it and express it properly. As a child, I came to regard the Lord Jesus as always being peaceful and loving towards others, never displaying any anger toward anyone. I mistakenly believed that expressing anger toward another was a *sin*. I did not know about *righteous* anger (anger caused by sin and hypocrisy), or that the Holy Scriptures reveal moments when Jesus *did* express anger toward others. Because of my habit of holding on to my anger I was afraid of it and thought that if I did not carefully contain it I might lose control and live to regret my rash actions. When my parents and former pastor L.C. learned that I vented anger behind the wheel of my car by tearing up neighborhood lawns and destroying people's trashcans, they were shocked. When I think of personal acts of my own where I ran red lights to escape a security van that I water-ballooned, and ran stop signs to escape an undercover police car that I egged, I determined these unrestrained driving habits of mine to be *insane*. Yet I continued on this way, and it eventually caught up with me.

Burned-Out Beside The Band Aid

I continued to take the risks of drinking, drugging, and driving into the following year (1988). The Spring season began, and like many other high school and college kids our age, we sought to make a run on the beach. My house in Houston was about 50 miles from the beaches of Galveston Island. With a little effort, my friends and I could enjoy meeting in the warm and sunny atmosphere of a place called *Jamaica Beach*. It was there that we sought to indulge in such things as beer drinking, pot smoking, and girl watching. But April 23, 1988 was a day in time that I will always remember – a day that I was *changed* under the *Son*:

That morning two (2) of my high school buddies drove to Jamaica Beach, and once we found a place to park on the beach, we got out of the car and began to relax. I was sitting with my friends in between

two (2) parked cars when suddenly a young lady walked up to me and greeted me. Her name is Angie, and she was one of our classmates from high school. Angie was part of a dance team called the “*Band Aids*”. The Band Aids performed a half-time routine at each of our school’s football games. Angie and I had a history class together, and I asked her if she remembered me. She said that she did, and that seemed to be an opportune time for the two of us to talk about things we had in common, but at that point I felt *dumb*, muzzled, and sedated (unable to speak), and said nothing more. Instead, Angie spoke up and said, “I want to dance.” She looked happy as she made a few moves and kicks there on the beach.

It was a couple of hours later that I sat alone near the entrance to the beach and found myself reflecting upon my life. I felt that I was at a loss for words because I was with one of my friend’s in Houston the night before, which caused me to be clouded by a *marijuana fog* and unable to say anything more to Angie. It was one of those times when I sought to smoke pot to relieve my *queasy* stomach and “hangover” from the previous day. The feeling that I was unable to communicate with Angie that day caused me to think, “That pretty and gifted girl from school gave me the chance to speak to her, and I blew it.” Seeing the clear evidence that pot handicapped me to that degree frustrated and disgusted me. For me this was a “*reckoning day*”.

Kicking The Habit

I had spoken with a drug abuse counselor and attended an AA meeting (*Alcoholics Anonymous*) the previous year (1987), but my *chemical slavery* had not become revolting enough for me to do something about it. The outrage I felt about my drug-addicted behavior on the beach that day – in combination with the “hammer” of my motorcycle accident – was what I needed to lay my pot pipe down and *fight it*. For the first time in nearly 4 years I set out to stay “clean” for 30 days. Fighting the cravings for the drug was very difficult the first month, but once I had accomplished that the biggest part of the war on my drug habit was won. The afternoon of April 23, 1988 was not *just another day* at the beach. It was a *setup* – a “*kairos*” moment (appointed time) that was ordained by *the Lord*. I did not know it at the time, but the Holy Spirit had brought *conviction* to my heart and life.

I had been told over and over that I had much potential with which to *do something meaningful* with the life that *God had given me*. Do I throw away the gift that only God can give?! God forbid. Determination to use one’s gifts to glorify the Lord can be simply but powerfully expressed in a few words spoken by the late Pastor John Osteen, who said, “*I’m gonna do something, lest I do nothing...*”

In 1989, I began seeing a psychiatrist by the name of Dr. Arlinghaus (“Dr. A”) at the T.I.R.R. hospital. Without the pot and beer, I began to feel the depression that I had previously treated (covered up) with the drugs and alcohol. Dr. A got my attention during the first week of November, after I attended a rock concert with some high school buddies of mine: On the night of the concert, I drank and drove around with my friends. When I told Dr. A about it, she became upset with me, saying, “You might have run over my *mother*.” I doubt that her mother was on the streets *between midnight and three (3) in the morning*, but the *important thing* for me was that the words spoken by Dr. A got my attention. So that was the time when I chose to change my drinking and driving ways. I began attending AA meetings on a regular basis.

Note: I extend a word of caution concerning AA and similar 12-step programs. These programs can become an idol (object of *worship*) in a person’s life, because “God” (the “higher power” of AA) can be *any* “God” that one chooses. I benefited from the AA meetings I attended because the **Lord Jesus Christ** used them to bring added conviction to my heart. I must give the credit and the glory to the Lord Jesus, who has been faithful to help me and guide me in being free from alcohol and marijuana. The Lord Jesus is the only begotten Son of the *true and living* God, who said, “**...I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.**” - John 14:6 (KJV)

JACK In The VAN

I knew that if I drank and drugged, I was going to end up driving my car in an intoxicated condition. And I knew that if I was going to cleanse my life of the alcohol and drugs, I had to make changes in my lifestyle – meaning the people who I chose to socialize with. So I stopped going to gatherings where I knew that there was going to be drinking and pot smoking. Giving up alcohol was difficult at first as with the pot, but it got easier with each passing day. On a few occasions, I drank a beer while reclining in front of the television. That’s when I found that I did not want to have more than one drink when I was *alone*. Dr. A told me that she had a male patient in a wheelchair who was interested in meeting other disabled people, and said that if I was willing I could meet. She said that if it was acceptable to me, she could have him give me a call and we could get acquainted. Within a day or two I met a young man named Jack.

Jack was also involved in a traffic accident that left him with the medical condition called quadriplegia (total or partial paralysis of four limbs). Jack is what is called a “high functioning quad”, because he has strength in his arms that enables him to push a manual wheelchair. Jack and I had no trouble getting around, in fact going places and meeting people was the most fun for Jack. He and I got along pretty well, and we found some exciting things to do in the big city. But when Dr. A learned about the type of entertainment Jack and I were engaging in, she let us know that *it was not what she had in mind*.

Jack wanted to meet people, *girls*, in particular. Jack was a successful running back for his high school football team, and he was well received among the young ladies at his high school. He once told me that he could approach a random line-up of ten (10) girls, and he could have his “pick” of them. I had no reason to doubt this, since Jack was gifted with good looks (ladies verify this, though Jack is *presently engaged*). When I went out with him he always took time to see that he looked his best. I also found him to be a person of *strong will*, who *didn’t give in* quickly when it came to having something he desired.

Jack had a full-sized van equipped with a wheelchair lift that made it easy for us to go out together. I was able to roll into the van behind him and wedge my wheelchair in between the seat and the side door. Jack and I got into a partying routine where we were going out four to five (4-5) nights a week. Our routine included sleeping in late and getting out of bed in the late afternoon, in preparation for nights on the town. I would eat and wait for nightfall before driving to Jack’s house. We loaded up in his van there, and often made our way to the *Yucatan Liquor Stand* (a popular singles bar at that time). *The addictive atmosphere* there combined strobe lights, loud music, alcohol, and attractive, available young women.

During some of our outings, Jack either tired of singles bars where we hung out, or became dissatisfied with the amount of attention that he received. Jack’s statement about having his “pick” of women was made during a time of frustration, when he felt he no longer appealed to the ladies as he had in times past. But Jack was not a person to *give up* easily. One way we sought to remedy the feeling of neglect and rejection was to attend strip clubs (topless bars) in our area. We began to visit and take pleasure in these places of “*adult*” entertainment (“*live*” pornography).

One of the things that made going out exciting for Jack and I was the danger regarding traveling on the streets combined with an intoxicating alcohol “buzz”. Jack enjoyed drinking and loosening up at the bars. I also enjoyed getting out and interacting with Jack and others, within the bar scene. Yet I chose to abstain from drinking because of my lack of control with alcohol (*alcohol tended to control me*). Over time, I became less comfortable riding home with Jack since he drove the van *buzzed and feeling good* and giving less than his full attention to driving. Both of us were full of youthful exuberance and seeking excitement in those days, but after two (2) Summers of carrying on like this, I stopped going to the bars

with Jack since I was uncomfortable with the *drinking and driving*. I felt that we had become another *motorized accident* just waiting to happen.

Porn Star Devils

There was a certain strip club that Jack and I were partial to, which I began visiting by myself. One night in November of 1993 I visited a strip club on the far side of town. The attraction for me that night was a "*porn star*" (person that stars in "triple X" rated films) that was going to perform as a *stripper*. Club patrons were given the opportunity to have their pictures taken with the porn star after she did her strip routine. I was ushered to the front of the line to have my photo taken, and asked by one of her crew if the woman could sit on my lap for the picture. I said "Yes" and the woman sat on my lap (she was wearing a stripper's thong) and we had our picture taken together. Within two (2) weeks, I began having bizarre symptoms that included dizziness, fatigue (my body mass felt extra-heavy), and a persistent feeling of faintness. It took great effort to fight the symptoms and keep from *keeling over and passing out*. The only physical evidence I could produce that something was happening was to show that my forearms became *numb*. I showed this to my mother by *pinching* my wrist with a pair of pliers. It was evident to both of us that there was more to this than just mere thoughts or feelings. Something was really manifesting in my life.

For two (2) months I stayed in bed and slept when I didn't have to be up to eat or go to the restroom. I was not even able to sit through the two (2) elective classes I signed up to take at the community college. Two months later (January 1994), I ran into a familiar young woman named Cassie while waiting on a doctor to give me a physical at an office next door to T.I.R.R. I originally met Cassie through our mutual friend, Cindy. Cassie was feeling depressed after her mother was killed by an enraged boyfriend. Cassie and I renewed our friendship and offered support to each other as we struggled to cope with depression.

I often spent time with Cassie over the next few months, and we smoked pot to *get high*. Once I gave in to the temptation, it seemed like I was getting high every day. I found that when I was high, the faint feeling did not affect me, and I was staying conscious during the daytime hours. Before I began getting high with Cassie, I was sleeping my days away. I was for all practical purposes *nonfunctional*. What was most disturbing about these experiences was that I could have explained them away, had I been high on drugs. What I began doing to "mask" these strange symptoms was drink a certain kind of cough syrup on top of the pot I smoked. Some friends helped me to learn about the powerful combined effect of the two drugs in our earlier experimentation. Cassie and I started doing the drug combination. One afternoon I pulled in to the parking lot of the apartments where Cassie was staying, and had a *most bizarre* experience. It was early in afternoon, and I was *completely sober*, with nothing to smoke or drink. I opened the car door and told Cassie, "I don't expect you to believe this, because it's happening to me, and *I don't believe it: I feel like I'm high on the cough syrup*". These symptoms of mine had become so *strange and so strong* at that moment that I could no longer *tell the difference* between the powerful "mind-altering" combination of the *cough syrup and marijuana*, and being *stone cold sober!* This is the kind of awful and elusive symptom(s) that were handicapping me, every day of my life.

Demonization really happens to people. It is the *influence of sin and Satan* that drives people to both participate in *unholy behaviors* and to lose their *minds*. What I experienced as the result of my perverse behavior (sexual sin) in 1993 was far beyond anything that I had lived with before. It was many months later that I was able to accept and understand that it was by *my own choosing* that my life had been plagued by these "demonic" manifestations. It was not me that had suffered a forced invasion, but it was through exercising my own will and giving into the sinful enticement of the *strip club* that I became *ensnared by the devil*. I alone had to bear the responsibility for the physical and emotional bondage that I had fallen in to. It is only by God's grace and love that I escaped the strongholds that resulted from my

frolicking about on “Satan's playground”. I am one who has learned that disobedience to God (sin) can result in bizarre and tragic happenings.

Prodigal Come Home

In March of 1994, my high school friend Cindy invited Cassie and I to attend the San Antonio Miracle Crusade, held by Benny Hinn Ministries. Cindy gave us a thirty (30) day notice before the event was to take place. Then Cindy called to give us one (1) day's notice before the time we were to leave for the Crusade. Cassie was reluctant because she did not think she had time to get ready for the trip. Through persistence and tenacity Cindy talked Cassie into committing to the trip. *I'm so glad that she did.* Cindy and her husband Jeff drove in their car, and Cassie and me followed behind them in her car. After we left the Houston City limits and approached the setting sun, I had a *strange sense of well-being*, that there was *goodness* waiting for me, and that I was *receiving a blessing* on this journey.

Cindy had an aunt that lived in San Antonio, and a sister named Gloria who drove down from Iowa. The five of us all stayed at their aunt's house for the weekend Crusade. Being in San Antonio at that time was very different for me, in that I remained conscious during the daylight *hours without the use of marijuana*. The bizarre symptoms that I had been feeling were *peculiarly absent*. After four (4) months of living with the harrowing symptoms, being loosed from them was like *living in a dream*. I thought to myself, *“This is great!”*

The Miracle Crusade took place at the San Antonio Coliseum, and consisted of three (3) weekend services: Thursday night, Friday morning, and Friday night. Thursday afternoon I was cleaning up in the bathroom in preparation to go to the first service. I was feeling good while playing *Pearl Jam* on my boombox, when I was suddenly interrupted by a voice from another part of the house. It was Sister Gloria, and speaking these words from the kitchen: “You're going to give up that *rock n' roll*, and start listening to *Christian music!*” I had a strange feeling when I heard those piercing words from Gloria. The strangeness was not in being addressed through the closed door of the bathroom from another part of the house - but in *the content of the message*. The words that Gloria spoke rang of *truth*. I didn't know how she knew I would change the way I listened to music, *but somehow I knew that the words she spoke were going to come to pass.*

Sister Gloria and I took her car to the service that evening, and we arrived early. After we were seated, Gloria left me with the seats for a while, before returning to sit down a short time later. During my moments of solitude, *something beautiful* happened. I began to *weep* in my chair for no apparent reason. The Bible declares, “**...In thy [God's] presence is fulness of joy...**” - Psalms 16:11 (KJV). Amen. The choir had not yet begun rehearsing for the service, yet I sat there *weeping tears of joy* in the presence of the Lord. After members of choir gathered behind the platform and began rehearsing, I noticed a young Hispanic man pushing his wheelchair down the aisle next to where I was sitting. I call him by the name of “Juan”. Juan had a thin-looking face, and he wore a tan suit that draped over his slight frame. He appeared to have lost so much weight, as to be on “death's door”.

Eyes Of Understanding

The service began, and the congregation was led in a worship service *to the Lord*. As Pastor Benny led the service, he encouraged those who felt the healing touch of the Lord to *begin lining up* on either side of the platform. The young Hispanic man that had passed by me before the beginning of the service was the third (3rd) person to appear *standing* on the platform. Upon seeing this, I opened my eyes *wide*, and under my breath I uttered a few words of *awe*. I desired to stand up on my feet, so that I might get a better view of this awesome event. In Acts 2:11 the Bible declares, “**...We do hear them speak in our tongues the**

wonderful works of God.” Although I had no knowledge of divine healing before that moment, I had come to know the **“...Demonstration of the Spirit and of power.”** - 1 Corinthians 2:4 (KJV).

Young Juan had been welcomed onto the platform by a minister named Joan. Joan spoke to the congregation about her efforts to move Juan closer to the platform, but that she had to seat him once again, because of his pain. Juan’s physical problems were related to the A.I.D.S. virus, and he was convinced that he was healed during the worship service. He showed the pastor and the congregation the I.V. he had in his chest and the morphine pump he wore on his side. He reached into his shirt and pulled out the I.V. before Pastor Benny could stop him (so that he might be examined by a doctor), but Juan was *just too fast*. He testified that God performed a miracle in his body by delivering him from the killer disease of *A.I.D.S.* Pastor Benny asked Juan if he had any children, he said, “No, but that’s going to come to an end [I’m going to live! I’m going to have kids]!” When the Spirit of *life* comes, even A.I.D.S. must *die*! The Bible says, **“[That] the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his [Jesus’] inheritance in the saints...”** - Ephesians 1:18 (KJV)

The Greatest Miracle

Seeing the *love of the Lord Jesus Christ revealed through His willingness to heal sinners seemed like the thing I had been waiting for all my life*. When I saw Juan struggling to push his wheelchair from one end of the building to the other *then saw him standing and miraculously restored, my unbelief toward God as the One who heals was shattered*. This is the event that created my desire to *glorify Jesus*, by giving my life to Him. I was also able to see that through serving the Lord, I could receive a miracle in my own life, witnessing to the goodness of the Lord. I made a public surrender to the Lord Jesus Christ at the time of the altar call on Friday night, during the third (3rd) and final Miracle service. The date was March 4, 1994. Since that time I have been striving to seek and serve the Lord through His Spirit of grace.

“Therefore if any man *be* in Christ, *he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.*” - 2 Corinthians 5:17 (KJV)

I returned to Houston *forever changed*. I had experienced the beauty and presence of the Lord that weekend as *never before*. It was a “*close encounter*” of the *God kind*. After coming “*face-to-face*” with Jesus Christ, the closeness one feels is unlike any experience with even those people who we feel *closest to* in our lives. Amen. For Jesus is *ever-present*, and He knows our *every thought and desire*. He is the Author and the inspiration for the *holy desires* we have! I was given a tape of the Crusade Choir by Sister Gloria, and I took it back home with me. It seemed that I couldn’t go to sleep without playing it beside my bed. It brought the *joy and the wonder* of the Crusade experience back to my room: **“When my body has been broken 'til it's racked in misery - when the doctors shake their heads and look forlorn - He (Jesus) makes my bedside a cathedral of hope and love - He sends peace in the midst of the storm...”**

Room To Grow

The week that followed the Crusade was *the greatest week* of my life. But I found that after being back at my parents’ house a short time, my mysterious symptoms returned. I was 29 years old, and changes were taking place. I had always lived with my folks, except for the 6 months I lived on campus at college. My mother felt that it was time that I begin living on my own, and my turn came up on the waiting list for an the apartment at *Independence Hall*, a place for the disabled and elderly. It took me several days to go and see the place, because my symptoms were *incapacitating*. But I accepted and rented the apartment the same month that my friends took me to the Miracle Crusade where I gave my heart and life to Jesus Christ. Moving to my own apartment at that time was a relief for my parents, for I had just been “*saved*”,

and my newfound zeal for the Lord created tension between them and me. But this can be expected. I believe this was God's timing, for the Holy Spirit was taking over as *my Comforter and my Teacher*.

My encounter with the Lord Jesus *changed my life*, and He gave me a thirst and a desire for the things of God (His Word and His Spirit). One of the things that I hungered for was to watch the television program "*This Is Your Day With Benny Hinn*". The show included portions of Miracle Crusades just like the one I was saved at. When I watched the program, I felt energized – as in the "wired" feeling – that I experienced over the *four (4) months prior to the Crusade*. But the energized, wired feeling seemed to be *appropriate* at the moments I watched clips of the Miracle Crusades, as in *the anointing* of the Lord reaching forth to touch people's sin-sick hearts and disease-afflicted bodies. God had come into my life *like a flood*, and He continued to have me sacrifice the things in my life that were not good for me. One of those things was my decision to stay sober, no matter how weird my symptoms got. With the Lord's help, I have been drug and alcohol free since May 5, 1994. The Lord also dealt with me through Gloria about turning in my rock n' roll music for *holy and anointed (Christian) music*. I had collected about two hundred (200) rock music CDs in the 5 years prior to the Miracle Crusade. One afternoon I asked my friend Alicia to help me throw them in the trash dumpster. Even though Alicia and I knew each other from church, she was astonished to see me *trash* my secular and rock music CDs. "You're really *serious*", she said. She was right. I determined I was "*goin' on with Jesus*", and that I would not forsake the Lord.

Two (2) months after I attended the Miracle Crusade in San Antonio, a friend of mine named Doug began taking me to Lakewood Church in Northeast Houston. This was another case of God's providence in my life, as the Lord used Doug to help me begin growing in Him through church attendance and teaching. After I received a glorious and wonderful revelation of the person of Jesus Christ, I was hungry for all that He had for me. I attended an A.L.I.V.E service that included an altar call for those who desired prayer to receive the Baptism in the Holy Spirit. The Lord had been dealing with me about *fear* that week, and when the minister gave the altar call I knew why. I felt fearful intimidation come at me. But because the Lord prepared me for the fear, and I desired the gift of God (the Holy Spirit), I pressed through the fear and the minister laid hands on me and prayed in the name of Jesus for me to receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5). He told me that the gift of tongues (Acts 2:4) was a channel used by the Spirit of God for prayer and praise, and he encouraged me to *yield my tongue* to the Spirit of the Lord, and speak what I felt bubbling up inside me.

After waking the next day I reflected on the ministry and experience I had at church the previous night. *I desired to use my gift, and I raised my hands to heaven and I began to worship and praise the Lord*. I remembered how the minister encouraged me to yield my tongue to the Spirit of the Lord, and that *Jesus would give me a prayer language that would function as praise and praying the perfect will of God*. As I began to meditate on this, I felt unintelligible syllables echo in my mind, and as I yielded my tongue in faith, I began speaking in "other tongues" for the first time in my life. *I raised my arms in praise and thanksgiving toward God, and I felt a tingling sensation like that of electricity in both of my forearms*. That is when I had the thought that *the numbness I experienced in my forearms the previous year was an attack of the devil in anticipation of the day I would receive "power from on high"* (Luke 24:49) for ministry. The date was May 28, 1994.

Strategy Of Satan

During the first three (3) years I lived at the *Independence Hall* apartments, the *Summer* months were particularly difficult from a spiritual perspective. The demonic opposition and oppression became greater from one Summer to the next. During the first Summer (1994), I experienced a ten (10) week period in which my concentration became incredibly weakened. It was so poor that I was unable to make a list of tasks to perform for the day, and it was plain that if I was *incapable* of even making a list, then I *certainly*

could not do any tasks. I spent many nights feeling “wired” to the extent that I couldn't sleep, and a few times *I couldn't even lie on my bed*. The unrest I felt was such that I wanted to *jump out of my skin*.

Fall 1995 to Fall of 1996 was a period during which I suffered from the fallout of a series of events that brought me to my *spiritual knees*, as it were. A friend of mine named Paul was a member of my home church, and he also had a ministry at a nearby Spanish Church, serving as youth pastor. Paul felt led of the Lord to invite me to give my testimony to the youth of the Sunday School class he taught at the Spanish Church. It was through Paul's invitation to speak to the Spanish youth that I met Sister Miriam, one of the members of the Sunday School class. A few weeks later I was back at one of the young adults services at my church, when Miriam walked into the room. I was pleasantly surprised to see her, and that she had decided to visit us. After the close of the service I was able to greet and speak to Miriam while the other young adults continued fellowshiping. Miriam spoke with me and another Sister named Annette, before she began walking toward a group of young adults that were heading out for local restaurants to get something to eat. A Brother named David approached me and began a short conversation with me as I was walking Miriam out toward the parking lot. I allowed myself to be distracted from my conversation with Miriam, and at that time I failed to excuse myself from the conversation, or to say “goodnight” to her. I felt that I had “snubbed” Miriam in this way, and that it was a poor way to treat a guest. The devil took advantage of this and used it to harass me with feelings of guilt and self-condemnation.

When most everyone had left the church, Brother Charlie and I were driving through the parking lot to go home, when we ran into our good friend Brother Kirk near the main lobby of the church. This gave me the opportunity to speak about the guilt I felt for neglecting Sister Miriam. After speaking about the way I felt about turning away from Miriam that night, it became clear to me that my behavior was very similar to the way I often found myself reacting to the presence of another Sister at the church who I was fond of.

Before Charlie and I left the parking lot that night, Kirk suddenly stepped in front of me and *delivered a prophetic word to me*. As he turned the palms of his hands upward, and stretched them toward me. He said, “*In a few days, someone is going to reach their hands out toward you, like this. When they do, take their hands.*”

Guilt Trip

I was convinced that what Kirk spoke of me referred to me receiving prayer for my healing. Two (2) days later I received a call from Rebecca, who was a Sister I met when she gave a testimony at an A.L.I.V.E. service one night. Sister Rebecca called and told me that during her time of prayer, the Lord told her He had healing for me. She said she would pick me up and take me to an African church, for their Sunday morning service (Rebecca is *Caucasian*, and almost all of the church members were first-generation *African* immigrants). I replied that I was tired from staying up late the night before, but I would attend the evening service with her, later that day. She picked me up in time to make it to the evening service, and I got my first taste of an African church that night. After the pastor's wife led an anointed time of *praise and worship*, the pastor gave an altar call to those who wanted to receive *prayer*. He asked those of us who had come up for prayer to stand side by side at the altar, and he would go from person to person and pray for us by the *laying on of hands*. I wheeled up to the altar, and remembered the prophecy spoken by Brother Kirk the previous Friday, saying, “*In a few days, someone would stretch their hands toward you like this...take their hand...*” Almost immediately the devil attacked me with *fear and guilt* about my awkwardness with Miriam that weekend. The devil reminded me that the Halloween outreach Paul invited me to attend at Miriam's church was two (2) days away, and that if I got healed, I was going to have to face her: The dread of facing Miriam was effectively blown out of proportion, and I was intimidated by it. I aborted my opportunity to receive prayer that night, by keeping my eyes closed as the pastor approached me. I was overcome by the *wiles* of the devil.

When I perceived that I had missed my opportunity for my miracle, I was distressed and downcast beyond what words can describe. During the ride back to my house, Sister Rebecca chastised me for my failure to receive my healing. When we pulled up to the curb, she told me that it would be a long time before I had another chance to be healed. This caused a stronger belief and sense of regret in me that I *really had* missed out on what God wanted me to have that night. After listening to Rebecca a while longer, she unloaded my wheelchair from her car, and I went inside. I felt that through my inaction that night I had *failed God, my friends, and myself*. I went before the Lord and worshiped Him with a song and a cry from my heart. I longed to give Him glory for who He is, and felt that if I did not praise Him, that I would *perish*. Feeling that I failed the Lord in this way was very difficult, but I survived the ordeal and looked to the Lord for a *second chance* to see His will fulfilled in my life. I am also thankful to the Lord for my spirit of love and forgiveness toward for my beloved Sister, Rebecca.

One November Night

Three (3) nights later was the 1st of November (1995), and Brother Charlie headed over to pick me up for church. I also had my mind on our friends and fellow church members, Elder and Lanette, who were at the hospital expecting the birth of their first child. I called the hospital to check on their progress, and on the other end of the line I heard the voice of my *bright, young, and bubbly Sister, Tyara*. She was at the hospital to offer support to the mother and parents to be. After Tyara gave me an update on the status of the *parents-to-be*, she said that her grandmother had recently passed away and that she needed to see me. I said, *"I'll be there."*

Charlie and I got in his Mazda pickup truck to head out toward the church, and the devil attacked me, immediately. He filled me with guilt and regret over my missed opportunity to be healed, *with agonizing and paralyzing results*. As we drove toward town, I thought about Tyara and what an encouragement it would have been for her to *see me walking*. But I found myself wallowing in *spiritual darkness and despair*. It seemed to be beyond my ability to speak up and ask Charlie to take me by the hospital so I could keep my promise to Sister Tyara. In my despondency *I kept silent*. Within myself I wanted to *die*.

I failed to ask Charlie to take me to the hospital to see our friends. Instead, we continued driving on the freeway and we arrived at church a short time later. Once inside, I remember sitting in the lobby of the church where I could see the platform on the opposite side of the sanctuary. I thought to myself that I should be rejoicing and demonstrating encouragement to the church members with the miracle I should have received from the Lord that week, but instead I found myself sitting there in the church lobby and thinking that I let the miracle get away from me.

I was painfully aware of the pay phone that stood across the floor from me, and that Tyara was waiting for me at the hospital. I felt I at least owed Tyara an explanation of what had caused me to miss seeing her that night, but I did not make the call. The pain of failure seemed so profound that it caused me to be fearful that I would lose my composure if I told her about the things that had happened. Later that week I called her and said that I had gone to church instead of seeing her at the hospital.

It was five (5) months later (April 1996) when I felt that Tyara showed some hard feelings toward me. It happened after a Sunday morning service, as I was about to exit the church sanctuary. When I saw Tyara walking toward me, it seemed that she turned to walk in the opposite direction. That is when I began believing that she was avoiding me because I had stood her up and neglected her at the hospital. Of course, the devil was willing to promote this belief and view of her behavior, and my failure.

For one (1) week I called Tyara's place each day and left a message on her voice mail in an attempt to

encourage her. I was really motivated to do that because of the guilt I felt for standing her up at the hospital. At the end of the week, I learned that she was dating a Brother named Rey, who attended church with us. Rey and Tyara became close during a mission trip to Mexico that they both took part in. After learning that Tyara was seeing someone, I felt foolish in my efforts to encourage her, and like I was on the outside looking in.

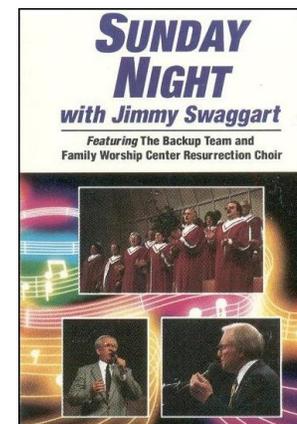
One day Rey drove over to my place and asked me to come over to Tyara's place, where she would cook lunch for the three (3) of us. Tyara cooked and served us a satisfying lunch. Rey and I sat down in the living room while Tyara cleared the table. During the time we talked, I noticed Rey picking at Tyara about having a facial feature similar to the one he saw on one of the cover girls featured on a magazine that was laying out. The following day, I told Rey that he should apologize to Tyara for teasing her that way. He did, and something unexpected happened. She *blew up*, and they had been fine until he took my counsel to apologize to her. I blamed myself for their apparent break-up, and was overcome with guilt. The *spirit of suicide* invaded my life, telling me that I was not worthy to continue living. But I was able to resist the spirit of suicide, thanks to my faith in God and His word, knowing that suicide puts one in a much worse and also an eternal form of suffering.

My decline into the depths of depression developed through the following perceived failures and losses: 1) Fearing Miriam's face, which resulted in my rejection of the African pastor's prayer for my miracle. 2) Breaking my word to Sister Tyara when I stood her up in her hour of need. 3) Feeling inept in my attempt to make up to Tyara by leaving daily phone messages for her. 4) Ruining Rey and Tyara's relationship with my advice (yet they were still dating at the time of Rey's sister's wedding in 1998).

Praise And Breakthrough

I lived alone in my apartment and other than the church services I attended, I was nearly always at home. The depression and strong demonic influence on my life caused me to hope for *night* when it was *daytime*, and for *day* when it was *nighttime*. I *dreamed of a vacation from Satan*, where I could relax on a beautiful, breezy Caribbean Island like *Trinidad*, the birthplace of one my Sisters at church.

Over a five (5) month period my condition "snowballed", and just got *bigger and badder*. The depression became so bad that it seemed like I felt *no emotion, seeming as if I were dead (separated from God)*. I was *emotionally numb, and life seemed to be gone*. I had been living on frozen food that was quick and easy to prepare, and after the depression caused me to lose my appetite, I began to force myself to eat three (3) meals a day. I was only able to do that for a short time before I saw I needed help from another person. So I called my mother and I told her I had *no appetite*. She came and took me back to her house, where she cooked and cared for me. I readily ate the food that Mom cooked for me. Several days after being back at Mom's I awoke from a nap to find myself under severe demonic oppression. It felt as though someone were tightening a *metal band* around the top of my head. It happened to be Friday the 13th (September 13th, 1996). The *devil* backed me into the *proverbial "corner,"* I was forced to *fight back*.



"Jesus Is With Me!"

I made my way into the front room of our house to play a *praise and worship* video on our VCR. I picked up my *Sunday Night Live* tape that I had purchased from Jimmy Swaggart Ministries the year before (1995). I began with a slow song called "*The Love Of Jesus*". The second song is an up-tempo song assisted by the Family Worship Center *Resurrection Choir* and it's heavily anointed (rubbed) by the Spirit of God. It's called "*Jesus Is With Me*". Praising God through the power of the Holy Spirit became

my weapon to *reverse the attack* against my spiritual enemies. The powerful praise (on the tape) and the anointing, the presence of God (in the room) *flooded in* like never before – Awesome!

Holy Ghost Deliverance!

As the music played and the praises went forth, I began to pray in the Spirit (in tongues), and it was as if I had stepped into a *river* of the anointing. **“And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.”** - Revelation 22:1 (KJV)

My prayer language flowed with an ease and fluidity such as I had never experienced: **“And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever...”** - John 14:16 (KJV). I seized the moment and spent plenty of time praying that afternoon, as I sensed my opportunity for a breakthrough. Since it was Friday, I went to the A.L.I.V.E. (*Adults Living In Victory and Excellence*) church service that night, where Brother Larry Hixon ministered to us on “Pulling Down Strongholds”. After Brother Larry had preached, he prayed over us, and the congregation prayed over each other, by the laying on of hands. The power of God was present to deliver. The Bible declares:

“For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds.” - 2 Corinthians 10:4 (KJV)

Following the service, some of the group went to a Bennigan's restaurant for food and fellowship. As I entered the restaurant and waited for others to arrive, a young man named Rene' approached me and spoke to me. Rene' was a married man that attended the A.L.I.V.E. service that night. After a few moments, I recognized that something was different. It was *me* that was different. *I was enjoying the conversation and fellowship that I was having with Brother Rene' – I was no longer depressed.* For most of the Spring and all of the Summer I had not been able to enjoy *anything*. I couldn't *read my Bible*. I couldn't *pray*. But on *Friday the 13th* it felt like a 200 pounds had been lifted off of my shoulders. Sweet Lord Jesus! He's the *Waymaker*, the *Sea-Walker*, and the *Blind Man Healer*! He broke through the bondage, and now I can walk in the *Light*:

“But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.” - 1 Peter 2:9 (KJV)

One Friday night after church service let out, I spoke with a man named Greg who was a member of the street evangelism team at Lakewood. I told him I had just had the 2nd *greatest week* of my life (Greg acknowledged that the *greatest* week of a Christian's life is the week he meets the Lord and surrenders his life to Him). Through this amazing *deliverance* the Lord afforded me, I gained first-hand experience *of the awesome potential and power of praying in “tongues”*. For **“He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself...”** - 1 Corinthians 14:4 (KJV).

Three (3) days after my deliverance from those awful strongholds, I found myself sitting down to lunch with my parents. My mother was trying meat from a different store, and I had an unusually tough piece. I was working on the meat with my steak knife. I thought to myself, “I'm going to *tear down* my muscles by cutting up this meat, and *build them back up by eating it.*” I shared the thought with my parents, and the *amusement* of the thought about the toughness of the meat was *amplified* when I spoke it out loud. *The atmosphere suddenly changed.* The *joy* I felt at that moment was like when a person is caught up in *waves of laughter* as a result of being physically *tickled*. I did not have a person tickling my physical body, nor was I laughing out loud, but I had a sense of *swelling joy and laughter* within - and a *lightness and release* from the *cares* of this life. They seemed to be *swept away* in the presence of the

Lord. The wound from the “browbeating” Sister Rebecca gave me over hesitating to be healed was *washed away by the anointing of the Holy Spirit! This joy that I felt as I sat at lunch with my folks was such a welcome and beautiful feeling.* The Lord set me free *again!* This time, from a wounding of words:

“When the LORD turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream. Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing; then said they among the heathen, The LORD hath done great things for them. The LORD hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad.” - Psalms 126:1-3 (KJV)

Five (5) days after the demons attacked me on my way to the Friday the 13th deliverance, I was laying on the same bed and reflecting on the time when I *stood up Tyara* at the hospital. I was feeling regret over that, and I longed for a way I might somehow make it up to her. I thought, “*I feel separated from her...*” Immediately the *Holy Spirit* finished my thought – as if He were standing and speaking to me in the open door – saying, “*But you will never be separated from Me...*”

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.” - Romans 8:35-37 (KJV)

Nothing compares to the flood of the Lord’s *peace and presence*. It was and *is* better than anything my human mind *could or can imagine*. I felt like I “*surfed*” on the word, “*But you will never be separated from Me*” for *three (3) weeks*. I felt like I was on a “*honeymoon*” with the *Holy Ghost* for a total of *six (6) weeks*. What power! I refer to the presence of the Lord that brought deliverance to my life a “*lingering anointing*”, because I continued to experience unprecedented fellowship and revelation of the Holy Spirit in the weeks that followed.

The Name And Fame Of Annette

“The LORD hath taken away thy judgments, he hath cast out thine enemy: the king of Israel, even the LORD, is in the midst of thee: thou shalt not see evil any more. In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem, Fear thou not: and to Zion, Let not thine hands be slack. The LORD thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing. I will gather them that are sorrowful for the solemn assembly, who are of thee, to whom the reproach of it was a burden. Behold, at that time I will undo all that afflict thee: and I will save her that halteth, and gather her that was driven out; and I will get them praise and fame in every land where they have been put to shame. At that time will I bring you *again*, even in the time that I gather you: for I will make you a name and a praise among all people of the earth, when I turn back your captivity before your eyes, saith the LORD.”- Zephaniah 3:15-20 (KJV)

The Lord gave me a most remarkable revelation two (2) weeks after He delivered me from depression. I attended Friday night “A.L.I.V.E.” at my church, and directly afterward many of the young adults participated in helping fellow church member Sister Elizabeth celebrate her birthday. I rode to Elizabeth’s house with a Brother named Mike, where we met with the others who gathered in Elizabeth’s living room. I wheeled inside and parked my wheelchair in between the front door and front window of the house, next to a reclining chair.

A short time after people began arriving, guests paired off or formed small groups for fellowship and conversation. I was sitting quietly by myself near the front of the house when my eyes met *another pair* of eyes. These eyes belonged to a familiar young woman named Annette, whose *namesake* happens to be

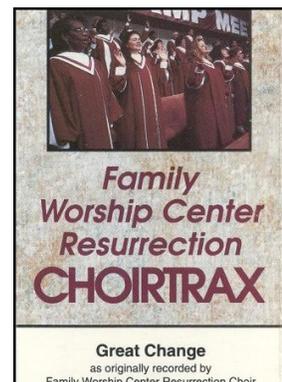
the famous Disney “mouseketeer” *Annette Funicello*. Annette was at the party with her boyfriend, Louis, but was not in his company when she was leaning against the opposite wall when our eyes met.

It seemed like each of us was waiting on the other to speak that we might *break the ice*. After an awkward moment I ventured to pose a question to Annette, saying, “Is there anything *new* going on?” Annette said, “Yes, I have a *new job*.” Just after she spoke those words she was called to the back of the house, and as she left the room she motioned that she would return in a moment. It was then that another young lady who was unfamiliar to me (she may have been Elizabeth’s friend or neighbor) walked up to me and started a conversation. She said, “What do you like to do?” Without thinking, I said, “I like to race cars and motorcycles.” As I was engaged in conversation with the woman, Annette returned and took a seat on the arm of the reclining chair at my side. The “perch” that Annette selected was *within my reach and view* – yet moments later I was stunned as I recognized that it was *really her sitting there*. *How did she get there?* I had to look to see that it was her that was sitting by me. It seemed that Annette just “*materialized*” on the spot, though I know that she took a seat as people normally do. I believe Annette was able to slip in “*under the radar*” as she did with me, because I find her presence so *fitting and comfortable*. Seeing Annette there, it appeared as though it was a *comfortable place for her, too*.

Later in the evening the young adults continued the fellowship in the front yard, playing a game of *touch football* in the street. I remember seeing Annette in the street with the others, and I watched as I sat in the yard by the driveway. Later, Annette and Louis stood under the carport a short distance from where I was sitting. I had the thought to ask Annette for a hug, only a minute or two later Annette said, “*Bye, Alan*”. She was letting me know that she was leaving for the night. Annette awakened me from my meditative state, and I looked in her direction and said, “*Bye.*”

As I made my way home from the party that night, I was gripped by an empty, knotted feeling – a *void* – deep down in my belly. It felt like the *conviction* of the Holy Spirit when I recognize I have disobeyed the Lord. First thing after waking the next morning, I lay in bed *pondering the dark and empty feeling I had* the previous night. What came to my mind was the time that Sister Annette and the youth pastor, Brother Paul, were dating each other. I remembered the afternoon that he invited me to give my testimony to his Sunday school class at the Spanish Church, and him giving me a ride back to my place afterwards. Then, when we arrived, he asked me if he could give Annette a call. I recalled that as Paul spoke on the phone, I had the strange impression that *he and Annette were not right for each other*. I did not *understand* it, I just knew that they were not meant to be together. It seemed that the Holy Spirit had prompted me to ask the question about my funny feeling the morning after the birthday party, because the next moment He spoke the words, “*You knew they were not right for each other, because you and she belong together...*” The power of that word hit me like the proverbial *brick*. With that word, the *lights were turned on!* The Holy Spirit *did* lead me to ask the question about my recent feeling of emptiness, so that He could reveal that Annette and me were to form a partnership. It had been a *setup* – so that He could speak *the will of the Father* to my heart. Praise God for His amazing and life-changing word.

The date on that day was September 28, 1996. I determined to be patient and wait on the Lord to bring about a meeting between Annette and myself. After another month of living in the *renewed freedom and fellowship of the Holy Spirit*, my mother said that I must *go back to work!* So I re-applied at Goodwill Industries, where I had worked a short time after I moved into my apartment. I was hired, and I started back on the *first Monday* in November 1996 – six (6) weeks after the Lord brought me out of depression. I was able to speak to the Goodwill employees of my *marvelous deliverance from spiritual bondage*, when I performed a song called “*Great Change*” in their annual *talent show*. This was a song recorded at *Family Worship Center* in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.



It boldly testifies to what Jesus *can and will* do for us, if we commit ourselves to seeking and trusting *Him*. Being delivered from deception, darkness, and eternal judgment is the *greatest change* that could ever be!!!

Before I performed the song at the talent show that day, I testified of God's power to deliver from depression and deception. The spirit of suicide is a *lying, deceiving* spirit. I told them that I became so depressed that I wanted to commit suicide. *The devil of suicide said I should kill myself*, but the devil is a *liar*, and suicide is a *lie*. It comes as hopelessness, and succeeds in persuading many people – especially teenagers – to give up and *kill themselves*. As it is said, "Suicide is a *permanent* solution to a *temporary* problem". Suicide is not the solution to life's problems. *Trusting Jesus is*. He is the One who will see us through.

Campmeeting And Calling

I worked as a trainee at Goodwill Industries for six (6) months. Then my rehabilitation counselor recommended me for their Business Skills (computer literacy) class that I was in for another six (6) months, until the time of my I graduation. I finished my year at Goodwill, with only a few days to spare before the beginning of the Thanksgiving Campmeeting at Jimmy Swaggart Ministries. I was thrilled to have the opportunity to attend Family Worship Center and experience the Resurrection Choir "live", as I had been looking forward to being part of the unified praise of the Choir and church members. It was God's will that I be there and meet Bruce Hallman, founder of the *FMH Children's Club International*.

After being blessed by the music and the preaching at the Campmeeting, I continued to wait on the Lord concerning Annette. A total of fifty-five (55) weeks passed before I sensed it was God's timing for me to give her a call. I called Annette's place of work where I left her a message on her voice mail, asking her if we could make a date. She returned my call and after confirming that I was asking for a romantic date, she told me that she was engaged to be married. I congratulated her, and asked her if she still attended A.L.I.V.E. services. After saying that she did, we agreed that she should return to her work.

A-Rose 25

Following the "double 5s" the Lord gave in the "55" weeks that I waited to give Annette a phone call from the time of the Lord's revelation that she and I belong together, I was led to count 555 days forward from the same day of revelation (September 28, 1996). The target date was April 6, 1998. One afternoon in that Spring I visited the florist located in the hospital next to the professional building where I was headed for a doctor's appointment. I wanted to look at their red roses while I was there. Then as I made my way outside of the building onto the outside walkway to the street I was stunned by an open vision of myself offering Annette a bouquet of red roses in a translucent green vase! So it was five hundred and fifty-five (555) days after the Lord gave me the word that Annette and me "belong together" that I made the move to get her red roses, as Jesus directed. The Lord often deals with me through numbers like this. Annette got her roses on Easter, and the date of April 6 (4/6) coincides with "**...Not by might, not by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord.**" - Zechariah 4:6 (KJV)



That April afternoon I began searching the florist who would provide Annette's roses. "Valentine Florist" (in Houston) delivered the bouquet of twenty-four (24) Colombian red roses on Good Friday. They also delivered one "24k gold" dipped rose. I gave Annette a total of **25** roses. Strong's Bible Concordance indexes Biblical words and definitions with *numbers*. The New Testament word for God's *self-sacrificing* love is "agape". Since I gave Annette the roses I learned that *agape* is Strong's number **25** (G25). Amen. One (1) plus twenty four (24) also represent this



amazing verse: **“But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power [Spirit] of God, and the wisdom [Word] of God.” - 1 Corinthians 1:24 (KJV)**

The following Sunday afternoon I ran into Annette's parents after our Easter Sunday church service. I feared their face after sending flowers to their daughter at their house, while Annette was engaged to another man (Louis). I expected a response of *rebuke* for sending the flowers, but instead I was greatly pleased by the reception they gave me. Moreover, Annette's mother mentioned how beautiful the roses were. Her father noticed my “faithball” and built my faith with his word of encouragement about it, since he recognized it represents the promise I have from God to walk out of my wheelchair.

My “faithball” is an official NFL “signature” football that my friend Brother Donald got me as a “point of contact” to receive my miracle from God. Donald approached me after church one day, and said that *the Lord told him* to give me \$50 – so that I may *buy a football and running shoes* [to use by *faith*]. The football is a reminder of the promise God spoke to me, that if I will live by *faith* and *believe* (obey) Jesus in every area of my life I’ll walk again: “All things are possible to him that believeth.” (Mark 9:23)

The “faithball” is labeled with three (3) Scriptures that the Lord impressed upon me from 1996-2000. Years later He showed me that each of the verses is a promise for a different need – #1 is a promise for relief from *depression*, #2 is for relief from *oppression*, and #3 is for *jumping out of wheelchairs*:

#1 **“When the LORD turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream. Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing: then said they among the heathen, The LORD hath done great things for them. The LORD hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad...” - Psalms 126: 1-3** (KJV)



Faithball

#2 **“In righteousness shalt thou be established: thou shalt be far from oppression; for thou shalt not fear: and from terror; for it shall not come near thee.” - Isaiah 54:14** (KJV)



#3 **“He sent his word, and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions.”** Tailwind - Psalms 107:20 (KJV)

Firebird For Father

Another medical condition arose in my family which gave me yet opportunity to stretch my faith toward God. Meck (Dad) was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease in 1996, after he began showing signs of short-term memory loss. Alzheimer’s is a *terminal* disease, and my prayer to God was to do the impossible: to heal my Meck of the *diabolical affliction of Alzheimer’s*. In 1998 I sensed that it was the Lord’s will for me to *step out in faith* for my father. The vision I received was to search for and get *a car* for Meck to use by faith, much the way Brother Donald had helped me “stand” for a miracle in my body – with the *football and running shoes* to use by faith. Meck drove our family cars for three (3) years after he was diagnosed with *Alzheimer’s* that added to his *hair-raising* driving style. My mother finally got Meck into a nursing home, which she determined was the only way to keep him from driving. *So in order for him to return to his right mind and be able to drive again, he needed a miracle from God.*

The Lord brought some of Meck’s own words and actions to my attention as a way of giving me the instructions to follow to see him delivered. The quest became clear when I was reminded of something my friend Drew witnessed one afternoon. Meck worked as a chemical engineer, and I was used to seeing change out of the old T-shirt he would wear to work on cars before he jumped in his car to drive in public. But Drew saw Meck drive my old 1972 *Julep Green Firebird* past the high school, *wearing a white T-*

shirt and a big grin. In addition, my mother told me about the experience of shopping for the 1999 Oldsmobile Intrigue they bought, after we had admitted Meck to the nursing home. She said that they looked at a *gold* version and also a *green* version of the car. Meck was two (2) years into his diagnosis of Alzheimer's when they bought the gold Intrigue, and she said that Meck was adamant about the *green* one. So Drew spoke to me about the *Firebird* that Meck enjoyed driving so much, and Mom spoke about him desiring the *green* car when they were car shopping. The pieces of this puzzle came together through what Drew and my mother spoke on two (2) different occasions "*clicked*" to form a clear picture: Seek the Lord concerning an order for a new *green Firebird* for Dad – his "miracle" car – to drive by *faith*.

In December 1999 I laid down on the bed in my apartment, and I had a *vision*. What I saw that afternoon was the front end of a green car – from its side-view. It resembled a newer model Firebird, and the dimly lit background had the familiar feel of a closed garage. I saw the fore-end (nose and fender) of the car, from the spot where the nameplate would appear above the "rocker panel". I regarded the vision as a God's prompting for me to see the Pontiac dealer about a new Firebird for Meck. I called the Metrolift van service and arranged to be picked up and taken to *Barnett Pontiac* the following day. A few hours later I left for the Friday night prayer service at my church. As Brother Dan (the pastor) led the service, he spoke a *word of knowledge*, saying, "Who is believing [God] for transportation?" I raised my hand, being the only person in the room that did, for it was only me who was seeking the Lord for a car at that time. Brother Dan joined hands with me, and agreed with me in prayer to receive the car that I was believing God for. I regarded this *word spoken by Brother Dan as confirmation to seek Him and believe Him for a car for Dad. And the word came just hours before I was to go to the Pontiac dealership.* When the Metrolift pulled up to my curb Saturday afternoon, a big, jolly salesman by the name of Willie stepped up into the van and said, "What can I do for you, today?" The Metrolift driver quickly replied, "He wants to buy a new car!"



2000 Pontiac Firebird Trans Am Firehawk

As Willie and I walked toward the Firebirds, he told me that it had been two (2) years since the Lord delivered him from drugs and alcohol. *I was amazed at the way things were developing that afternoon.* When Willie went back into the dealership to get a set of keys to let me test ride a Firebird Trans Am, I noticed a red "Mecham" Trans Am pull out of the parking lot (*Mecham Trans Ams* are a street legal "tuner" car equipped by *Mecham Performance*). Willie and I went driving down the feeder of the freeway in a Trans Am "demo", and I mentioned seeing the Mecham Trans Am pull away from the dealership, and also *Firehawk* – the "tuner car" equipped by *Street Legal Performance (SLP)* – that I had read about in magazines. Willie's reply was, "*We have a Firehawk*".

My reaction to Willie's reply was *shock and silence*. The reason for that was due to the Firehawk's *limited production numbers*. I have since learned that the ratio of Firebirds to Firehawks produced for the *model year 2000* was just 1 Firehawk for every 220 Firebirds (*Note*: a total of approximately 32,000 Firebirds, Formulas, and Trans Ams were made that year – compared to just 500 "Firehawks"). Willie drove me back to the dealership parking lot and took me around the side of the building. That's the spot where he parked his Honda Goldwing motorcycle, and it was because he used that spot for parking, that

he knew about the Firehawk. Willie asked the service manager when the car was delivered to the lot. The service manager said that he did not know anything about the car. That struck me as strange. Willie and I went inside the dealership to talk to Rick, the *sales* manager. Rick had no knowledge of the car, either. The thought that ran through my mind was the chances of that car being overlooked, instead of being the object of a month's long waiting list or immediately being snatched up by a dealer, manager or some other "insider" was *unthinkable* to me. I assumed that it was a new arrival, and had the awesome thought, "This car must have arrived just in time for me to find it. These circumstances had me in awe and asking myself, "Could it be that the Lord has this car here waiting for me to take possession of it?"

Rick and I sat down and he spoke with me about a purchase price and financing for the car. I showed him the two *High Performance Pontiac* magazines that I brought along to the dealership that contained photos and details about the Formula and Trans Am Firehawks of the previous model year (1998). He looked at the photos and replied, "You're obviously an enthusiast." He told me that I could get financing to help pay for the car, even though I did not have a job. He said that all I needed was someone to co-sign a loan with me, and he could get me *into the car*. I told Rick that I thought I knew the person who would help me to do this. The person that came to mind was my pastor Brother Dan, who had spoken the word of knowledge and prayed with me about transportation.

I called Brother Dan to ask him if he would co-sign on a car loan with me. His reply was that the Bible tells us not to be a "...Surety for a stranger..." (Proverbs 11:15). He reminded me that if we signed a loan together and I was unable to make the payments that he would have to make the payments *for me*. I did not tell Dan that I had been led to the car by acting in prayer and of faith for Meck's healing. Neither did I remind him that he was the person who spoke the "word of knowledge" concerning *transportation* at the Friday night prayer meeting, that was given a few hours after I arranged a trip to the Pontiac dealership. Nor did I ask him to pray about helping me to buy the car by signing on a loan with me. I just accepted the decision that he made (not to be "surety for a *stranger*"), and I looked to the Lord for a way He would show me to receive the car by faith for *Meck*. Note: This situation can serve to remind us that it is very possible for Believers to fail God *by failing to seek Him and His will through prayer*. Failure to pray and then do God's will results in there being *less of the Divine nature* in a "Believer", and more of carnal nature (sinful flesh). Was it God's will for Brother Dan and me to sign a loan for the *Firehawk*? *Yes!* It was a *setup!* The Lord ordained it as a *test* for Dan, to "*prove*" his faithfulness to *the will of the Father*.

After speaking with Brother Dan, I called Rick and told him that the person I asked to co-sign on the car loan with me had declined my request. Rick said that he would give me ten (10) days before putting the *Firehawk* on the showroom floor, to give me the exclusive option of buying the car during that period. I held out hope that the Lord had a way to make the vision come to pass. But at the end of (10) days I got a call from Willie, who told me that the car had been sold. I was thankful that Willie took the time to let me know.

It was a relief that I was not holding on to an empty hope any longer. *Yet I was devastated that I had missed the Lord*, and I took my failure (not getting the car for *Meck*) to mean that he lost his opportunity to both be healed, and to drive again. But what I considered to be *infinitely worse* than Meck's life being cut short by the disease of Alzheimer's was *that I would be at fault for my dad losing his soul (he was not walking with the Lord at that time)*. I took it that my failure ended all hope for *my miracle as well*.

This feeling of profound loss and regret triggered a much longer period of depression for me, than the depressive episode in 1996. Even so, the month following its onset (January 2000) Brother Dan gave me a prophetic word, saying, "You're going to *hit the mark*" (Philippians 3:14). I was in bad emotional shape then, and it looked impossible for what Dan had spoken to come to pass. But I marked that *word of hope* that was spoken over me and I looked for it to happen in my life, for it was a ray of light I had to stand on.

Note: On December 20, 2004 I told Bruce about the pain the devil was inflicting by telling me that I should have done more to *win my dad to the Lord*. How surprised we both were when the Lord said, “He received *salvation* before he died.” I couldn’t hope for a greater birthday gift than this. Thank You, Jesus!

Spiritually-Sound Or Psycho-babble?

I entered the New Year (A. D. 2000) in a state of emotional numbness and depression. In February, my condition was apparent to my mother when she visited me at my apartment. I was also physically afflicted in the form of a pressure sore from sitting in my wheelchair without providing adequate pressure relief for the skin over “*bony prominences*” (Note: a “pressure sore” or “bed sore” is a skin ulcer caused by a lack of adequate blood circulation in people who remain stationary for hours at a time). With my trials of life mounting, my mother and I discussed my options. My emotional condition was obviously serious, and we called Dr. A’s office at T.I.R.R.. She had been transferred to the VA (hospital for veterans), but we were referred to a psychiatrist in private practice, named Dr. Netscher. I told Dr. Netscher of my days of feelings of faintness, where all that I could do is lie down and sleep. I told her I often felt “wired” at night and was unable to sleep, and sometimes I was even *unable to lie down on the bed*. The same day I met with Dr. Netscher she gave me her diagnosis, and *I was feeling depressed and “wired” at the same time*, which is clinically called a “*mixed state*”. I related to Dr. Netscher the brief episode at my parents’ house when the thoughts that were coming to my mind would normally not be regarded as amusing, but at that moment I found them to be hilarious. It’s a bizarre feeling when *everything* is funny. She recognized that to be *euphoria* (Merriam-Webster’s dictionary defines *euphoria* as “a feeling of well-being or elation”). Bizarre and unexplainable feelings such as this caused me to wonder if I was going *crazy*.

I told Dr. Netscher that I was a *Believer in Jesus*, and that the Lord told me to give a bouquet of roses to Sister Annette and that He impressed me to give a car to my Alzheimer’s-stricken father, Meck. The doctor replied that she believed in Jesus, and was a member of the Episcopal Church. When I spoke to her about the “*baptism in the Holy Spirit*”, she told me about Pentecostal people she was around in her youth, who she described as being “*inspired*” by the Spirit. She also referred to them as a group of “*crazy Pentecostals*” who would *sing* as they *strolled* down the road in the middle of the night. Dr. Netscher did not show any interest in the Holy Spirit other than her amusement with the *midnight singers*. She said she was *satisfied* with her religious experience (she was not interested in the gift of the Holy Spirit). Dr. Netscher *claims* the Lord Jesus Christ, but she does not have an understanding of the *things of the Spirit*, which are His *supernatural manifestations* and the One who brings sanctification (holiness) to the lives of men.

“[Jesus taught them, saying,] Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.” - Matthew 5:6 KJV

“And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him.” - Acts 5:32 (KJV)

Even though Dr. Netscher claims *Christ and the Episcopal Church*, she did not regard the flowers I gave Annette and the car I sought for Meck to be acts in faith *inspired* by the Holy Spirit, but instead that I was *delusional*. That is the reason she gave me the clinical diagnosis of *schizoaffective disorder*. This can be seen as a combination of the two diagnoses, “*schizophrenia*”, and “*bipolar disorder*”, which combine to make “*schizoaffective disorder*”. *These three (3) terms are clinically defined as follows:*

- 1) “Bipolar” – Indicates the two extremes (“*poles*”) of mood: *depression* and *mania*.
- 2) “Schizo” – *Disintegration* (fragmentation) of the personality; delusional or disordered thinking.

3) “Affective” – Relating to, arising from, or influencing feelings or *emotions*.

I have been exposed to the onslaught of the devil’s devices, and I have learned that he comes to bring battle to the minds of people. This is a part of his job, and he is especially geared toward warring in the minds of *God’s people*. This battle between *light* and *darkness* (good and evil) was inadvertently illustrated by my Texas Rehabilitation Commission (vocational) counselor, who said that there is a “*spectrum*” in which mental illnesses are. It is *ironic* that my vocational counselor used a term (*spectrum*) that is a reference to *light*, when the practice of psychology and psychiatry are *completely void of the Light of God*, and therefore is helpless to affect permanent change in the mind of man. Psychology is man’s wisdom (“*the wisdom of the world*”) – it is comprised of *man’s ungodly theories and ideas*, and as a familiar Brother put it, it amounts to *man attempting to play God*.

Psychology puts labels on mental and emotional challenges of the mind which are rooted in *Satan and sin*. What we are dealing with in the area of human thought and behaviors is *spiritual darkness*. Psychology and psychiatry may pick some unwanted *fruit* (behaviors) from the lives of people, but it cannot get to the *root* of man’s problem: the *sin-sick soul*: “**The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?**” - Jeremiah 17:9 (KJV)

“For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?” - 1 Corinthians 1:19-20 (KJV)

“Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness. And again, The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain. Therefore let no man glory in men. For all things are yours...And ye are Christ’s; and Christ is God’s.” - 1 Corinthians 3:18-21, 23 (KJV)

Only God can change the depraved and evil soul of man, through His Word and His Spirit. Sadly, the modern church has removed The Word and The Spirit (Jesus) from its midst, and replaced Him with the psychologist.

Jesus Christ is the Answer. He is the *Light of the World* and the *Creator of man*, who is our only hope for the salvation of mankind: “**Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.**”- Matthew 4:4 (KJV)

During the period of extended *depression* I experienced, I felt at the same time an almost unbearable *anxiety*. I spent the days shut up in my bathroom, sitting with my face toward the wall. I continually had the thought of putting a pistol to my head to end the *torment*. But I was a Christian, and that was not an option for me. I remember the awful *restlessness* of the anxiety, which caused me to “pace” the floor, back and forth, in my ’chair. It made me think of the pacing of a *large caged cat* in a zoo. With the beginning of each day I sought to endure my symptoms, until I could have some *relative peace sleeping at night*. Other than eating and sleeping, this is the way I spent several months of my life.

My psychiatrist prescribed drugs for me, and I took them according to the directions on the labels. I am convinced that *humanistic psychotherapy* and taking *psychoactive drugs* is not the answer to a person’s problems. It’s true that situations can become *extreme, and fear can set in*, but Christians going to psychiatrists and psychologists is going *deeper into darkness*. And taking drugs that affect brain chemistry is going to create more problems for the patient. An important one being that when narcotic

and psychoactive drugs are added to the body, a spirit begins to affect the mind, by drugs being added to the body. *This is how narcotics create “strongholds” and control peoples’ lives.* Drugs block the voice of the Lord, who is to be the one to guide us down the “strait and narrow” path (Matthew 7:13-14). This is a great concern, for the voice of God is the “light” (1 John 1:5) that enables us to straighten out the “crooked paths” (Isaiah 40:4) of fleshly, sinful desires that reside in us (Read more about the *shamanism known as “psychology”* at psychoheresy-aware.com, and the *sorcery of psychoactive drugs* in the sermonet “*Marijuana: The Weed God*” at www.fmh-child.org).

I believe that when the Lord has a plan and a calling for a sinner to come out of darkness or after a person commits their life to Him, the devil very often stages an attacks against their lives. I believe that the devil was allowed to “hit” me *harder* after I became sober and especially after I gave my life to God. The response that the Lord looks for is that we trust Him to help us *overcome whatever circumstances He leads us in to* – that is – if we are *walking in His will. Faith must be tested in order for it to become stronger.* By extending faith toward the Lord we shall be able to see *the Light* at the end of the tunnel, if we believe *He is faithful to do it. Jesus cannot deny Himself (He cannot be unfaithful).* He is the One who is called “*Faithful and True*” (To read more on the subject of trials for the Believer versus trials for the unbeliever, search for the expose’ “*Tribulation Horror Show*” at www.fmh-child.org).

The same year I was introduced to Dr. Netscher (2000) I met with a male psychiatrist at T.I.R.R. hospital, named Dr. Jarvis. He would be the doctor to administer the *Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (M.M.P.I.)*. The test serves as a psychological profile, and one of the things they claim it is good for is to give us an indication on whether or not a person has sustained a head injury (doctors suspected I injured my brain in my 1985 motorcycle accident). One of the questions I was expected to answer on the test was, “Do you believe the Old Testament prophets”. I didn’t have to think about whether I believed the Hebrew prophets, *because they served as a voice for God.* I hesitated on this question, out of wonderment as to why this was on the psychological profile I was taking. Since *humanistic psychology* is designed to pull society *away from* faith in God Almighty and the Lord Jesus Christ, answering “yes” to the question, “*Do you believe the prophets?*” would no doubt label Believers as “*religious*” at best, and “*psychotic*” at worst.

The steps I took toward giving roses to Annette and buying a car for my Meck, I took *prayerfully and carefully* – by seeking the Lord – over a period of 18 months, and a period of 15 months, respectively. I am not surprised that others might regard my actions as irrational or impulsive. Prophets are told to do *some crazy-sounding and crazy-looking things.* I know that I patiently sought the Lord for His will concerning the gifts to Annette and Meck, and I am going to put my faith and trust in Him.

“That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.” - 1 Corinthians 2:5 (KJV)

Project Reentry

After I completed the M.M.P.I., I was interviewed by a neuropsychologist named Dr. Pollack. He was the director of the *Project Reentry*, that is a program designed to rehabilitate people who suffer from brain injuries. With the help of his staff, he charted a cognitive therapy program for me that consisted of such things as doing math problems and solving puzzles. I was not sure I needed to be in the program, because I did not find the tasks any more difficult or challenging than similar exercises I had done in the past. I told my friend Drew about the test results and the concerns the doctors had, saying I had a mild brain injury. Drew was also a street racer, and we had been friends during high school, up to the time of my motorcycle accident. Drew’s response to the doctors’ reports was, “*Man, you’re the same as you always were.*” By that, I believe he meant, “*You’re just as crazy as I’ve always known you to be.*” I

shared Drew's comment on the doctor's concerns with my friend Eric as he drove me home from church one night. Eric's response was, "*Yeah, it takes a gearhead [‘car nut’] to understand a gearhead.*"

Two years after Dr. Netscher diagnosed me as *schizoaffective*, she recommended that I take part in a program that provided *group therapy*. In my depressed condition, I feared being around new people, and hesitated to participate in group therapy at the county psychiatric clinic. Within a week I began receiving services at the outpatient clinic. I became a patient of a psychiatrist named Dr. Aponte', who prescribed an antidepressant drug for me. I took the drug as prescribed but was still depressed for the year that I took it. We measured our mood in the group each day, on a scale of "1 to 10", with "10" being the *best*. During that year, my mood was never more than a "6", or 60% of what I considered to be my best and most positive mood.

Between Two Camps

About a year later Brother Bruce Hallman (FMH Children's Club International) left his home in El Paso and set out on a God-ordained journey to meet and speak with one of the preachers at Jimmy Swaggart Ministries (Baton Rouge, Louisiana). Bruce was to stop and pick me up in Houston, on his way to Baton Rouge. The Lord had ordained that the two of us go there as prophets to deliver the Lord's message to the ministry. My mother wanted to keep me away from Bruce, because she considered him to be *schizophrenic*, because he says "God told me...", and he said I needed to get off my antidepressants. She called the county constable, and a deputy was waiting for him when he arrived. The deputy constable questioned Bruce, who passed the "attitude test", then he *witnessed to the deputy about the Lord*. Then came the *tug of war* in the driveway that night: Bruce on one side, and my mom and our neighbor, Colleen, on the other – *with me in the middle* – forced to decide between the two camps. My mother told me that if I left with Bruce I would have to find another place to live. I was still burdened with the spirit of depression, and the thought of having to find shelter in that condition greatly intimidated me from getting on board with Bruce for the mission at hand. I was in the midst of a *great test*. I finally went into my room to pray so that I could escape the confusion and hear God's voice. The deputy told Bruce that he would be ticketed for trespassing if he returned to my mother's house, but he obliged Bruce by going up to the house to see that my mother and neighbor were not holding me against my will. The deputy knocked on the door to my room and asked me if I was all right. I came out of my room to join Bruce several minutes later, but found out he was long gone, and that I had missed my opportunity.

Losing Adrian

It was about a year later that tragedy struck the life of my long time friend and best buddy, Claud. On January 30, 2003, he lost his only brother, Adrian. My mother received the news about Adrian from Claud's ex-girlfriend, Tisha, who called us the next day to tell us what happened. Adrian had been critically wounded in a *hit-and-run*, and he died several hours later. I was told of the events that led up to Adrian's death that day, by his brother Claud, and his close friend, John. This is what they said:

Adrian was at a Southwest Houston singles' bar with a woman/girlfriend of his when the other man approached them. Apparently the woman Adrian was with had dated the young man, who felt that Adrian was moving in on his territory. An argument began, and the strife continued outside the bar, when Adrian exited through the front entrance, around closing time. That's when Adrian saw the other man sitting in a sport utility vehicle. Adrian challenged the man by approaching the vehicle. The conflict ended in violence when the man stepped on the throttle and struck Adrian. He was thrown into the air, and sustained a head injury. Adrian was taken to the hospital, where he was later pronounced brain dead. Claud later told me that that the man that hit Adrian was convicted of manslaughter, and was sentenced to eight (8) years in prison.

Of course this was a very painful event for Adrian's family and friends. Tragedy struck again the day after I received the news of Adrian's death. On February 1, 2003, the Space Shuttle Columbia exploded in orbit, killing all seven (7) of the astronauts on board. Yet I was unable to feel that pain, because I was focused on the loss of Adrian, and the impact it would have on the lives of those who were closest to him. There is a term known as "survivor guilt" that I was told about after my brother Russell passed away. "Survivor guilt" describes the responsibility that a *surviving* family member or friend feels for the death of another person. It is not unusual for it to happen in the case of an early death of a friend or family member.

When I think about Adrian I remember an occasion in 1998 when I was disobedient to a command that the Lord gave me. Claud's sister, Lisa, invited a few friends over to celebrate Claud and Adrian's birthdays at their pool in July of that year. The Lord moved on me to give both Claud and Adrian a copy of a book called *A Divine Revelation Of Hell*. The book gives one woman's account of 40 consecutive night time visits to various parts of Hell. Because of the strong content of the book, and the implication it would make that the brothers needed to repent before God, I chose not to obey the command of the Spirit that day. I was afraid that Claud and Adrian would take offence, and a rift would be created in the relationships we enjoyed. I allowed the enemy of my soul to *intimidate* me. Sometimes I think about how Adrian's life might have been changed had I been obedient to the Lord by delivering the books. In 2005 I gave Adrian's brother, Claud, his copy of the book. Only the Lord can say if things would have been different for Adrian if I had been obedient to give him the book that day. Though I missed God in this instance, all I can do about it now is ask God's forgiveness, and strive to do better in the future.

Enter Not Into Temptation

Later that same year, Pastor Dan and his wife, Debbie, shared a dream with me following one of our regular church services. She and Brother Dan had just spent a weekend in Cancun, Mexico, which was a gift from the church. In the dream she saw a group of church members on a pier that overlooked a beautiful white beach with clear blue water, like the beaches in Cancun. The pastor then handed a gold pocket watch to each of us who were standing there. She said that through this dream, God was telling us "*I'm tuning you up...*"

At the time Debbie shared the dream I was in a *spiritual draught*. I took the dream and the words she shared as a message from the Lord for me. The word was like a drink of clean, cool water, after so many months of depression without the "*water*" and "*light*" of *God*. Prophetic utterances given in desperate hours have caused me to value them in a way that I could not have, before the day of temptation. Several years ago I heard a prophet from South Africa make a statement about the prophetic Word of God, which I came to *greatly appreciate* during periods of sore testing and spiritual darkness. He said, "God can illuminate something in a dark place in a way that He could not if you were in the light." Another way to say this is that *when the situation becomes darkest, God's illuminating Word shines brightest.*

One afternoon in August of 2003, I was sitting in my mother's house when I had a memory of seeing a photo of a nude model from an issue of the best selling pornographic "men's" magazine. This caused me to be curious about the possibility of finding the "pin-up" model once again. I did not have to look long before I discovered and viewed old photos of the model, again. By yielding to the temptation of the moment, the spirit of pornography took hold of me, after the Lord had helped me abstain from *porn* for a period of seven (7) years. Because I chose to sin at that time, the pornography stronghold became full-blown in a single night's time. The following afternoon I could feel the oppressive presence of demons around my head as I sat in the lobby of the psychiatric clinic where I was being treated for depression.

The Sunday prior to Thanksgiving 2003 I attended church where I was serving with the worship team once again, after leaving the team due to my depression. The worship leader (Jesse) spoke to me, saying that God was *promoting me back* to the worship team. Although I was reluctant to rejoin the worship team because I was depressed, I did it. I played the bongos during the music portion of the service. As I played and praised God with the others, the thought that *grated on me* was that the spirit of pornography was yet again a plague in my life, and it was in my mind to visit a certain “adult” bookstore in my area, for the first time.



“Praise Ye The Lord”

Victory Through Obedience

The thought that temptation would drive me to the “dirty” book store troubled and disgusted me at this point in my life, because in three (3) month’s time I was supposed to celebrating the *10-Year Anniversary* of the day I surrendered my life to the Lord. A battle raged within me. The Bible declares,

“The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary to the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.” - Galatians 5:17 (KJV)

When the music and worship portion of the service was complete *I was exhausted from the battle that had taken place between the Spirit and my flesh* (my “divine nature” and my “fallen nature”). So much so, that I wanted to go home. But since I did not have my own transportation, I did not have that option. So I circled around the platform area of the sanctuary, and took my position for the preaching of the Word of God. Once I pulled into my place I recognized that something was different. What was different was *me*. *Depression was gone! Sweet liberty*. The deliverance manifested just 4 (days) before Thanksgiving Day. *I was miraculously set free and was able to enjoy the Thanksgiving and Christmas season for the first time in four (4) years*. I was amazed, after being squelched by depression for so long, that I no longer held out in hope that the coming holidays would be any different. I was convicted of sin. I chose Him. And then *God gave me back my tomorrow*:

“God gave me back my tomorrow
 [After] I threw tomorrow away
 He took this life
 Full of sorrow
 Suddenly everything changed –

The moment it happened
 It was the moment I knew
 It was like *walking in the darkness*
 When the *light comes shining through*
 I said that *God gave me back...tomorrow.*”

– Ray Boltz Music



His *light* did shine through, and He fulfilled His word in my life through these Scriptures, which say:

“If iniquity be in thine hand, put it far away, and let not wickedness dwell in thy tabernacles. For then shalt thou lift up thy face without spot; yea, thou shalt be stedfast, and shalt not fear: Because thou shalt forget thy misery, and remember it as waters [of agony] that pass away: And thine age

shall be clearer than the noonday; thou shalt shine forth, thou shalt be as the morning.” - Job 11:14-17 (KJV)

“For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour [out] my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring.” - Isaiah 44:3 (KJV)

It was through my *disobedience* to God's will for my life and bowing to the temptation of pornography, that I was taken *further into demonic bondage*. Then through my *obedience* to God's command (will) for my life to rejoin the worship team at church, I was *set free from the chains of depression*.

In the year and a half before I got on board with the FMH Children's Club International (FMHCCI) ministry, I was overcome by the power of pornography and the devils and my sinful flesh that brought the temptation my way. I found I could resist the temptation for up to a month at a time, but then became overwhelmed by the power of the sin, again and again. This resulted in *guilt and despair, for I continued to fail my heavenly Father. I had no hope of getting complete victory over my sin, and expected it to be a source of suffering for the rest of my life, and therefore I also feared for my eternal soul.*

The Lord gave the FMH Children's Club ministry a simple teaching concerning doing the will of the Father. It is **“Hear God and Obey God”**. This is a necessity in living an *overcoming life*. *By listening to the Lord and seeking to go only where He says to go, and yielding our mind and members to Him and doing only what He says to do – the Spirit has a greater presence and influence – and areas of the flesh that have ruled within us are going to wither and die.* By forsaking temporal things as the Lord requires, and not just hearing His word, but doing it, I've been free from printed and internet porn since October 19, 2005 until the present day (a total of 1 year and 9 months at the time of this writing).

The Lord gave me a message through *numerals*, which came through the space of days between my first deliverance from the spirit of depression (9/13/96) and my second deliverance (11/23/03). As I was looking back on what the Lord had done for me during the Christmas holidays of 2003, I figured the number of days that had elapsed between the two (2) dates I was delivered. The amount of elapsed time is **7 years and 70 days**. This is a reminder for all of us how importance it is for us to *forgive others*:

“Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until SEVENTY [70] times SEVEN [7].” - Matthew 18:21-22 (KJV)

Obey God

On May 3rd, 2003 I was challenged by *the voice of God* to enter *full-time ministry* as I was on my way home from a friend's wedding at our church. The command was actually a response (answer) to the question I asked about the partnership that the Lord spoke of following my deliverance in 1996: *“How is this [marriage to Annette] going to happen?”* Immediately, the Holy Spirit made two familiar words *crystal clear* to my heart, saying **“Obey God”**. This took place at Bayou Bridge Street, just four (4) blocks from my house. I take notice of how God gave me the word of instruction – answering yet another “burning” question I had – as he did the time before when I asked how it was I knew Brother Paul and Sister Annette were not right for each other (when He showed me she and me were meant to be together).

The message to “Obey God” was a clear command from the Spirit for my life. It was God's instruction for me to become part of the *FMH Children's Club International*. Yet it put me in a *dilemma*. Brother Dan (the pastor of *Victory Life Fellowship* church in Houston) said that because Brother Bruce (founding

prophet of the FMH Children's Club International ministry based in El Paso) was not under a pastor himself, I could not have his "blessing" to relocate to El Paso. I felt like I was a rope in a tug of war because I was being urged to *stay put* by church leaders in Houston, but compelled to *pick up and move* to El Paso by the Lord in Heaven. As Samuel was the spiritual father of the "company of prophets" in Israel, Brother Bruce Hallman is the spiritual father and leader – under God – of the FMH Children's Club International "*Eagle Rock School Of Prophets*".

"And when they came thither to the hill, behold, a company of prophets met him; and the Spirit of God came upon him, and he prophesied among them." - 1 Samuel 10:10 (KJV)

Several weeks following my deliverance from depression, the Holy Spirit gave me *another crystal clear* command to "**Awake thou that sleepest..!**" - Ephesians 5:14 (KJV). That was on February 2, 2004, nine (9) months after the Spirit of God commanded me to "*Obey God*" [move to *El Paso*]. This word of "shaking" was spoken to my heart at the same location (Bayou Bridge Street) where the Lord had commanded me to move *the first time!* On February 9 (one week later), I began to experience an *overactive bladder and demonic oppression*.

Inside A Tomb

The Christian "walk of salvation" can be a maddening battle at times, which includes the prophetic calling and ministry. It's the job of the prophets to speak out strongly as in "thus saith the Lord" to help the erring Brother or Sister. On April 2, 2004 the Lord issued these two (2) prophetic messages (the second one is directed at me):

Date: Fri, 2 Apr 2004 10:33:45 -0500
From: "Angie Wall" <dss@gamewood.net>
To: <bruce@fmh-child.org>
Subject: Brother Alan

Brother Alan said:

"It will be more painful to me to be out of God's will than to deal with the repercussions of being in His will."

Is Brother Alan actually in God's will?

Now is the time to hold fast to what you knew you heard Me speak in the secret place of your heart. You had revelation and direction, and you rose up to fulfill destiny. Yet, the enemy has planted seeds of doubt with his question, "Did God say?" And, suddenly you feel lost and without direction. Not only that, but you sense the danger of the enemy's presence to destroy all that has been built. Do not stand in fear and trembling, watching and waiting on the sidelines to see what will transpire!

[Brother Alan said:] "I've got to be 'consecrated' to God and be in His will if I'm going to be of any lasting help to my wife [wife to *be*] or anyone else". It's good to hear that I'm moving forward (I believe it was in Exodus 34 where God told Moses, "Go forward", which was also the title of one of Donnie's Campmeeting sermons, that came out on video).

Love in the Lord Jesus
Angie, John & Baby

Date: Fri, 2 Apr 2004 00:54 +0000
From: <bruce@fmh-child.org>

To: "alan" <alan@fmh-child.org>

Subject: Will You Go Out Without Knowing?

...So, Brother Alan, "will you go out [*to El Paso*] without knowing?"

...[Alan wrote:] "I remember how I began to enjoy my mornings for the first time in my life (with the breakthrough of 11/23/03). Amazingly, I was getting by with 7 hours of sleep, instead of 9 - not suffering through mornings, as I always had."

...So what do you think might be the problem? Well the Lord has given me the very simple answer in the form of one little old verse:

"And when he went forth to land, there met him out of the city a certain man, which had devils long time, and ware no clothes, neither abode in any house, but in the tombs." (Luke 8:27)

...So where is Brother Alan now? Is he in El Paso? Has his "heart been turned to the Father" through his uncompromising walk of obedience to the Father's Word? Did Brother Alan receive that "yoke destroying anointing" that only comes about through "hearing God and obeying God" in all things?

...You see, Brother Alan, your fear of the enemy that God was going to use to break your yoke was greater than your fear of the Almighty...as in "Hear God and obey God!" And seeing how you weren't willing to step out in faith and move to El Paso you have become entombed in a tomb of death. The house that you are living in has become your curse because you weren't willing to walk away from it when your "breakthrough" in the cloud cover came:

"I dislike saying this almost as much as I dislike experiencing it, but my prayer life stinks, and I am sick of being ridden by whatever has been making me feel faint and wired. Been disgusted and tired of it for a couple of weeks, at least. Been difficult to get to sleep, and difficult to stay up (out of bed) in the morning."

So, will the Lord give you another "break through" to fly through? If He does I wouldn't advise you to pass it up again. Pray about it!

We love you Brother Alan. Our phone number is 915-759-8814.

In the Lord Jesus Christ,

Bruce and Sandy

Staying On Course

I am grateful for these strong words from the prophets of God. The month after the Holy Ghost gave me a direct command to "Obey God" by moving to El Paso, He drove home a powerful point about the will of God. It was the last week in June 2003, and the occasion was Sister Annette's birthday. I got Annette a card to send her for her birthday, and I also wrote her a note to go with the card. In my writing, I shared the word the Holy Spirit gave me as I was laying down in our guestroom bed, late one night.

The Lord told me that Annette was called to "teach kids". I included this in the note I wrote, and put the card in the mail on June 27th – in time for Annette to receive it for her birthday – on the 30th. Before the card was picked up by the postman I felt a strong conviction by the Spirit of God that I had overdone the note by speaking of Annette's calling to teach. Yet I fought against the conviction I felt, because I wanted the card to go into the mail *just as it was (my way)*. The card went out with the mail about an hour later, and I knew I hadn't proceeded according to the will of God. The Lord used the opportunity to stress the *important thing* in life. A positive response to the birthday card I sent Annette (what I wanted) was *not nearly as important* as the *ever-important eternal issue*: **God's will** for my life (doing things *His way*). *The will of the Father* is what men and women should be focused on because **it's all that matters**.

What we must understand is that we must do as the Lord has commanded us to do, *regardless of the pain or the loss*, because that is the *only* way we will arrive at my *eternal home* in heaven. Amen.

To my amazement, the Lord repeated this message to me one (1) year later, on the *same day* of the year: *June 27* (2004). I was at church Sunday morning when Brother Dan (my former pastor) stood up and posed this thoughtful question: “What if you are not seeing the results [in you life or ministry] that you expected to see – are you going to change the course? *No!*” Then he went on to say, “We need to have the attitude that it doesn’t matter if we get *disappointed* because we didn’t see what we *expected* to see. We must *stay on course* with [do all that is ordained of] the Lord.”

The Time Is Now

I made two (2) mission trips from Houston to El Paso in July and November of 2004, with the Spanish church, *Jesus Is The Answer*. They have a “sister church” in El Paso, by the same name. Both churches joined forces to hold weekend revivals. Since the Lord called me to El Paso the previous year, I looked at



the July mission trip as a chance to see El Paso, and “*get my feet wet*”. A day after I arrived with the Spanish church that November, I had the unusual challenge to *stay in El Paso*. On the 19th of November the Lord made it clear to me that I *could not* wait until the following year to make the move to El Paso. He did this by speaking the words “**You can’t put this off ‘til next year’ [the time is now]**. And the words of Tennessee preacher Isaac Walker echoed within me: “**This is my time. There’s not going to be another time...**”

Sunset At *Eagle Rock* Ranch, New Mexico (School Of The Prophets)

Gifts And Callings

Since I began working with the FMH Children’s Club ministry, I have been learning more about “... **The gifts and callings of God [that] are without repentance**” - *Romans 11:29* (KJV). Each man and woman is created in the image of God (we are eternal spirits), with gifts and abilities we are to use in service to Him. Too many times though, people become *prodigal* (wasteful) and fail to walk in God’s will for their lives. Continued disobedience manifests itself in undesirable results like the strange things I experienced. I became “*wired*” and at times felt like I was sitting “*beside myself*”, after I got involved in things that I knew I shouldn’t be doing. The more gifted a person is, the more potential for problems in his or her life.

“Fragmentation” occurs in the mind of people that are called of God when they fail to seek the Lord and obey His commands (“**Walk in the Spirit...**” - Galatians 5:16). This allows the “curse” to remain, and manifest in the life of a Christian, which if it is not repented of, brings forth *death*. The pathway that the Lord ordains and commands for our lives is designed to *reverse the curse of the law*, and allow us to experience the *sanctification process* through hearing and obeying the voice of the Holy Spirit of God (to

read more about the *sanctification process* and having a saving knowledge of Jesus through a walk of obedience, do a search for the sermonet "*You've Asked A Hard Thing Lord!*" at www.fmh-child.org).

Faith And The Will Of God

On the subject of **obedience to the will of God**, I've had the difficult assignment of *un*learning some things that pastors and teachers hail as *the gospel*, but these particular doctrines they preach and teach are in fact distortions of Biblical and spiritual truth. I am speaking specifically of the Positive Thinking (Norman Vincent Peale), Possibility Thinking (Robert Schuller), and the Positive Confession/Word Of Faith/Faith Movement (Kenneth Hagin, Kenneth Copeland). Peale (founder of Guideposts Magazine) taught that just as there is a **physical law** of "electricity" there is a **spiritual law** of "faith". Likewise, Hagin taught that there is a "*law of faith*". In the world of "*word of faith*", you can "*have what you say*". The Church has Peale and Hagin to thank for the teaching that by *thinking*, and *speaking*, respectively, man can have whatsoever *he* desires (not what *God* ordains).

Positive Thinking/Positive Confession (Word Of Faith) teachers omit at least two (2) important ingredients of living by faith. The two vital ingredients are prayer (hearing God) and obedience (doing the will of God). In *Pilgrim's Progress*, John Bunyan wrote, "**There is no divine faith without a divine revelation of the will of God.**" While Jesus said, "That whosoever...shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith" (the Positive Confession and Faith Teacher's most relied upon verse), in the *very next verse* Jesus said, "**Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye PRAY, believe that ye receive *them*, and ye shall have *them*.**" - Mark 11:24 (KJV)

Kenneth Hagin maintained that we speak the word ("*rhema*", in the original New Testament Greek language) so that "You can have what you *say*." Hagin taught that "*rhema*" is "the spoken word" [our confession], but that is a misleading definition, because a "*rhema*" is a *living* word (not a *fleshly* word):

Rhema: "A word spoken or uttered; a speech or sentence consisting of several words; a word, command; denoting the operative or all-powerful word or command of God; a report, account. *Rema* stands for the subject matter of the word, the thing which is spoken about." – *The Complete Word Study New Testament* (AMG Publishers, 1992). A "rhema" from God is the "*now*" word of for one's life!

The issue here is **God's will** (Divine design) *versus* the **will of man** (the lust of the flesh). "Rhema" is a word from God, which is spoken by the Holy Spirit *directly* to the heart of an individual, or the Lord speaking a holy and righteousness word *through* a Believer (a yielded, earthen vessel) to another person. **Modern Faith Teaching** is *appealing and convincing*. Even after I had been alerted to the *deception within them*, I find that I am easily drawn back in the popular doctrines, especially since they have been engrained in me from *years of preaching and teaching* (To read more about faith, obedience, and the spirit of error, see "*Jesus Died Spiritually, The Word Of Faith, And The Error In Dan Peters*" at <http://www.fmh-child.org/FallingStars/dan.html>).

Overcoming error is no easy task. It takes determination, seeking God's truth in prayer, and then obeying His instructions on a *daily basis*. I have found it very helpful when Brothers and Sisters who seek to *believe* God have another committed Believer to assist them in their pursuit to *obey* the truth.

The following words are from *The Pursuit Of God* (1982), written by an outspoken 20th Century prophet:

“The Bible is the written word of God, and because it is written it is confined and limited by the necessities of ink and paper and leather. The Voice of God, however, is alive and free as the sovereign God is free. 'The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.' The life is in the speaking words. God's word in the Bible can have power only because it corresponds to God's word in the universe. It is the present Voice which makes the written Word all-powerful. Otherwise it would lie locked in slumber within the covers of a book...This universal Voice of God was by the ancient Hebrews often called Wisdom, and was said to be everywhere sounding and searching throughout the earth, seeking some response from the sons of men.” - A.W. Tozer (1896-1963)

The key to finding eternal life is, **“...That he [Jesus] might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word [rhema] that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live.”** - Deuteronomy 8:3 (KJV)

“...And this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.” - 1 John 5:4 (KJV)

If Thou Canst Believe

A couple of years after surrendering my life to the Lord in 1994, He gave me this promise: **“If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth”** - Mark 9:23 (KJV). He told me that if I would “worship [obey] Him in every area” of my life, that I could even walk again.

“And Jesus looking upon them saith, With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible...” - Mark 10:27 (KJV). When the Lord gave me these two verses in combination (Mark 9:23 & Mark 10:27), I saw the truth is that through *obeying* Him, I can even have *eternal life*.

Jesus created each of us with the potential to **love** Him, to **reflect His love** toward others. Some people have a *long* life, while others live *shorter* ones. No man knows what tomorrow holds. Yet we know *Who* holds tomorrow: *Jesus Christ* (John 1:3, Colossians 1:13-17), and **He has created each of us to worship Him and give Him the glory due His name**. It has been said that **“Life is a just a dressing room for eternity”**. This means that through pursuing a personal relationship of love with the Lord, and honoring Him through obedience to His will for our lives, we will be sure not to **“neglect so great a salvation”** (Hebrews 2:3). So we must all **“press toward the mark”** (Philippians 3:14) and **“run in [this] race” that so we may “receive the prize”** (1 Corinthians 9:24), which is to receive the **“crown of life”** that the Lord has promised to those who **love** Him (James 1:12).

The Lord gave me the following verse from *“The Yielded Life”* to conclude this testimony of hope and the glory we can partake of by giving our all to the Lord Jesus Christ:

“Only one life, will soon be past
Only what’s done for Christ will last
And when I am dying, how glad I shall be
If the lamp of my life has been poured out for Thee...”

– Floyd W. Hawkins

Alan Wayne Richardson
alan@fmh-child.org

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