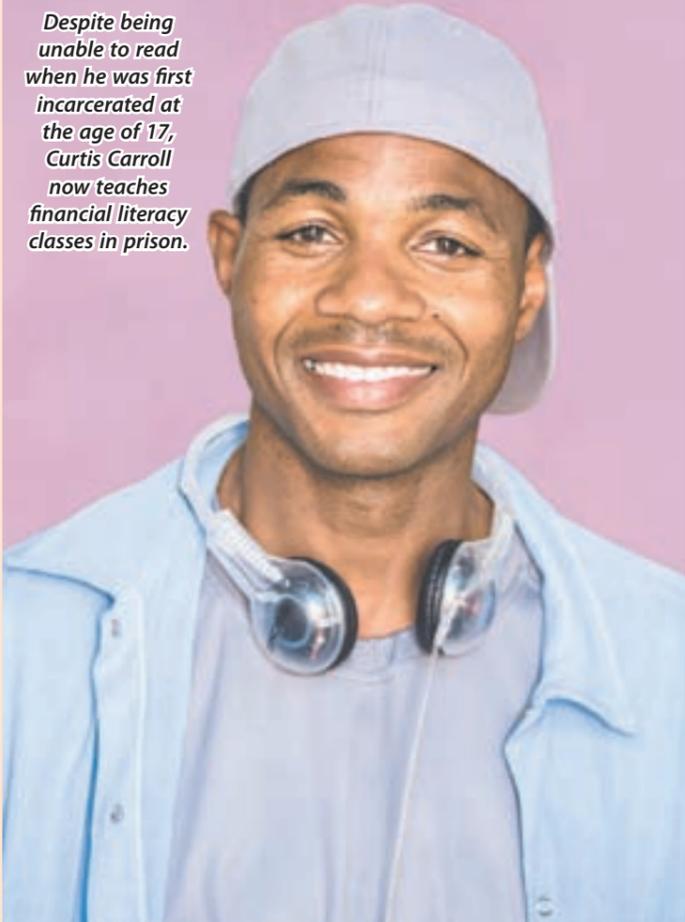


Larry's new life

EASTER CHANGED ME FOREVER

Despite being unable to read when he was first incarcerated at the age of 17, Curtis Carroll now teaches financial literacy classes in prison.



Jailed for murder, now I'm known as "Wall Street"

BY MICHAEL ASHCRAFT

For his first crime, Curtis Carroll was congratulated. "It was the first time that I was told that I had potential and felt like somebody believed in me," Curtis says on a TED Talk. "Nobody ever told me that I could be a lawyer, doctor or engineer. I mean, how was I supposed to do that? I couldn't read, write or spell. I was illiterate. So I always thought crime was my way to go."

Learning on the mean streets of East Oakland that crime was the way to get money, led him to a 54-year-to-life sentence in San Quentin for a robbery that backfired and ended in murder.

Today, Curtis has served 24 years on that sentence, gotten saved, taught himself to read and learned about financial investment.

His success at picking stocks earned him the nickname "The Oracle of San Quentin," but inmates call him "Wall Street"

because he teaches a financial literacy class based on the idea that teaching convicts how to make and save money through legitimate modes will keep them from resorting to illegitimate means once they're out.

Curtis Carroll grew up in a vicious neighborhood devastated by the crack epidemic of the 1980s and 90s. His mother donated blood to get money to feed her kids. His uncle taught Curtis to steal quarters from arcade machines.

On one occasion a security guard spotted him stealing the quarters and Curtis ran, climbed a fence, but the weight of the quarters in his backpack caused him to fall back to the ground.

When he was released to his mother from juvenile hall, his uncle told him to be smarter next time: "You weren't supposed to take ALL the quarters."

Larry Clements was told over and over by his father that he was worthless, would never amount to anything and would end up in the penitentiary. Those words set the course of Larry's life. But one Easter, while he was in prison, he unlocked a truth that changed the course of his life.

In a CBN video on YouTube, Larry describes the rejection he experienced in his own home as a child.

"I didn't feel loved," he recalls. "I know my mother loved me. I mean, my mom was always there for me, but my dad, I never heard 'I love you' out of his mouth."

Larry wanted to join the Boy Scouts as a child, but with four other siblings money was tight and his father didn't want to spend money on the uniform. So Larry hung around with his friends, who started smoking weed, drinking and taking pills. He committed his first armed robbery as a teenager and was sent to juvenile detention center.

As Larry got older, his drug use also progressed and he began selling drugs to keep up with his addiction.

"I don't know how I got caught up in heroin, but when I did, I fell in love," he shares. "And then once you're hooked, it's like there's no return."

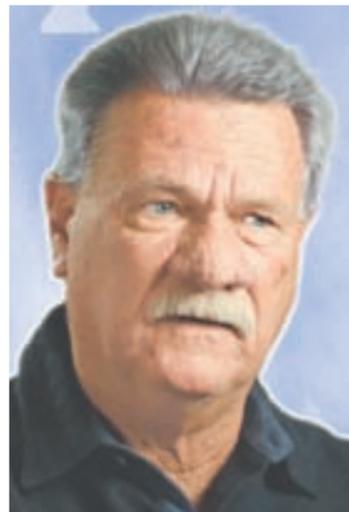
His drug use led to other risk-taking behavior. One time he was arrested for trying to firebomb a police station after an officer gave him a ticket.

"Being on drugs, you think you're King Kong and you can do anything," he explains.

"So I park my car across the street, I walk over to the gate. So I lit it and I threw it and I turn around and I start running, well, I turned around to look to watch it blow up and the rag is sitting there burning from where I threw it."

Then after he was pulled over for a routine traffic stop, Larry was arrested again. He remembers the state trooper writing out his ticket and he noticed the gun in the officer's holster.

"I knew I had warrants out of Kern County and Orange County and I heard it come back over the radio," Larry explains. "So when that happened the gun came out of the holster. He had it, I



Larry Clements. Photo: YouTube/The 700 Club

had it, we were wrestling for it and one shot was fired, and thank God it just grazed his knee. When they booked me into the county jail it was attempted murder. I went to trial and they found me guilty of removing a firearm from a police officer and brandishing a weapon."

California had a three-strike law, so Larry was looking at a long sentence.

"I'm like, 'I can't do 80 to life. I don't want to die in prison,'" Larry remembers. "So I just kept on fighting it until the judge dismissed a strike and he gave me 13 years."

While in prison, Larry was invited to a free meal at the prison chapel, followed by an Easter service.

Larry believed in Jesus after hearing about Him when he was teenager at the juvenile detention center, but he didn't follow Him.

"I always believed in Jesus, but I lived like the devil," Larry admits.

"I didn't have an understanding of what it was to be a Christian."

At the prison chapel Easter service, Larry recalls the inmate running the service holding up the Bible and saying, "I don't think this is the Word of God."

"He paused and I'm like, 'What do you mean you don't think that's the Word of God?'"

Even I believe that's the Word of God," Larry says.

"But then he goes, 'I know it's the Word of God. Just because my finite brain can't figure out an infinite God; doesn't mean this isn't the Word of God.' And from that moment... I asked God to forgive me and He did... I started reading my Bible ... studying. I mean, getting studies and studying them [for] hours on end, you know? I didn't know what was happening."

Larry says after that, his heart and mind began to change.

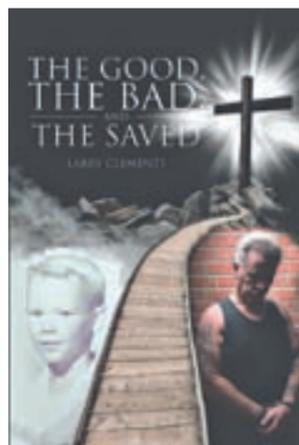
"I said, 'Lord, forgive me for doubting Your Word – just because I can't figure it all out doesn't mean it's not Your Word. Forgive me for that. After that I was like, 'Teach me your word, reveal to me your truth, God.' And I started reading Scriptures and they made sense. And that was the moment that I repented. Repented is to change your mind, to turn."

Larry was granted an early release and, with God's help, forgave his father and shared the Good News about Jesus with him.

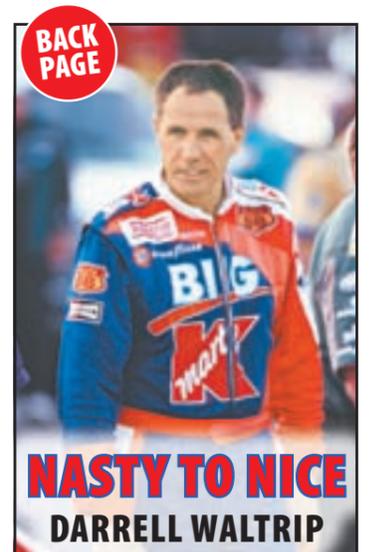
He has written a book about his life called *The Good, the Bad and the Saved* and runs a ministry to prisoners in California.

"Had I felt God's love or knew more about God when I was younger, I wouldn't have had to go through everything that I went through," Larry says. "He loved us just because that's who He is. God is love. It's unmerited. We don't earn or deserve His favor. He loved you so much that He sent His only Son to die on the cross for your sins. He took your sins upon Himself. That's how much He loves us. The grace of God is amazing. It's just amazing." •

ONCE YOU'RE HOOKED, IT'S LIKE THERE'S NO RETURN



Larry Clements has written a book about his life.



• Turn to page 2

FROM SATANISM TO SET FREE

As a child Brian Cole didn't want to be at home and he didn't want to be at school. He was physically and emotionally abused by his father and bullied by his classmates. When he fell into a crowd of older children who were experimenting with drugs, criminal activity and Satanism, he finally felt accepted. But it came at a cost.

As his drug use developed into a full-blown addiction and his crimes intensified, he spent 27 years behind bars. But it was there that he found a way out of the anger and shame he had harbored since he was a child. In a YouTube video sharing his story, Brian says he was about 10 when he met the older children.

"I found out these kids were involved with something called Satanism ... so I got caught up in that," Brian shares. "They used me to break into churches and stuff to steal communion bread, especially from churches, which we would desecrate in our rituals."

As a child Brian's mother took him to church, but he hated it as he felt judged. The resulting hatred for Christians led him to destroy tombstones in graveyards that had religious symbolism on them.

"If you had Nativity scenes out in your yard at Christmas – they were gone," he admits. "When I started doing major burglaries when I was 17/18 years old I wouldn't just rob the houses I'd go into when I saw religious symbolism on the walls, but I would destroy the house."

As Brian ventured deeper into the occult, he started cutting and mutilating his body for blood sacrifices and used a variety of drugs in order to alter his mind.

Before he was an adult, he spent time in psych wards, juvenile facilities, group homes and foster homes. But then, at 18, Brian was arrested in a sting operation. Prior to that, he had been involved in about 200 burglaries in the space of about six months, so he was given a lengthy sentence.

"From that point on, for the next 23 years as an adult I spent time behind bars, in and out of the prisons for crimes ranging anywhere from possession of meth to attempted murder, when I shot a man," Brian admits. During one of the times he was not imprisoned, Brian ran into a man called Eric. They had first met 10 years before, and Brian had introduced him to marijuana. This time, he introduced him to meth. Brian says Eric was "an automatic fiend" from the moment he tried it. Eric spent the next six days

and nights awake on meth. When he finally did sleep, he was too close to a heat register and burned to death.

From there, Brian hit rock bottom. "Two weeks after that happened, I lost my car, I lost my house, I lost my job and, already believing that I didn't belong in this world because all the time I had done, I just didn't want to live anymore," Brian shares. "I attempted to commit suicide through the use of drugs from 2007-2009."

He almost succeeded three times, including when he fell asleep in a snowbank during a blizzard while coming down from meth. The next day, he was arrested again.

"It was my last arrest and the best day of my life," he shares. "I had a thought in my mind I had never had before: 'I don't want to live like this

anymore.'" In prison Brian decided to get help for his addictions.

"They had a 14-week-long drug and alcohol program in the jail but I found out it was a faith-based program and I really didn't want anything to do with that. But after thinking about it, my need for change overwhelmed my hatred for Christians." On the first day Brian attended the program, he was sure to let everyone know he was only there to help himself get off drugs – not to hear about any of that "Jesus stuff." But Brian discovered he needed a Bible to be able to do the fill-in-the-blanks homework, so he got a Gideon Bible from the prison library.

"I went from filling in the blanks to my blanks being filled in by Scripture," Brian shares. He still had a lot of questions, but one day, he found a copy of *The Case for Christ* by Lee Strobel in his prison cell.

"That totally validated Scripture for me," Brian says. He went on to attend faith-based anger management and shame classes. He discussed his questions about God with the prison chaplain but got stuck when it came to forgiveness.

"How could God forgive me for personally saying the things I said and did against Him?" Brian wondered.

The chaplain directed him to Psalm 103:12, which says, "As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us."

"I dropped down on my knees right



Brian Cole spent 27 years behind bars but now enjoys freedom in more ways than one. Photo: Facebook/SetUsFreeMinistries

then and there gave my life to the Lord in January 2009," Brian shares, with tears in his eyes. "Since then I have soaked up the Word and I have lived for God. I spent 33 years of my life working for the devil, there is no way that I would do anything less for the Lord." Brian is now a pastor, a drug and alcohol counselor and is involved in motorcycle ministry and

prison outreach. On his website, setusfree.org, Brian writes, "I feel as if Isaiah 61:6 is my calling: 'The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and freedom to the prisoners.'" •

Jailed for murder, now I'm known as "Wall Street"

• From page 1

Ten minutes later, they burglarized another arcade game because they needed to buy gas to get home. At age 17, a botched robbery turned fatal, with Curtis pulling the trigger on 22-year-old Gilberto Medina Gil. Curtis turned himself in to police and was sentenced to prison for the murder of Gil.

Because he was illiterate, he would let his cellmate read the sports page to him. But one time, he accidentally grabbed the business section. An older inmate casually asked if he traded stocks. Curtis couldn't read, much less know about stocks, so he asked.

"That's where white folk put their money," the older inmate replied.

"It was the first time that I saw a glimpse of hope, a future," Curtis says. "He gave me this brief description of what stocks were."

Curious to learn more, Curtis, at age 20, taught himself to read.

"It was the hardest thing I'd ever done in my life. It was the most agonizing time of my life, trying to learn how to read, (facing) the ostracism from my family, from the homies," he says. "Little did I know I was receiving the greatest gifts I had ever dreamed of: self-worth, knowledge, discipline."

Next, he studied finance in general and the stock market in particular. He scoured the business sections of the prison newspapers and checked out books from the prison library. His role models changed from drug pushers to William Bennett and Bill Gates.

Curtis started investing in penny

stocks, with the help of family members on the outside of prison. He used the money he got from selling unused postage stamps and selling tobacco to his fellow inmates, according to MoneyWise. As he earned small returns, he made bigger picks.

Outside prison, his money was growing. He will be well-positioned to become a tax-paying member of society contributing to the economy once he gets out – unlike so many other inmates who are expected to "make it" outside without support or money.

"A typical incarcerated person would enter the California prison system with no financial education, earn 30 cents an hour, over \$800 a year, with no real expenses and save no money," Curtis says. "Upon his parole, he will be given \$200 gate money and be told, 'Hey, good luck, stay out of trouble. Don't come back to prison.' With no meaningful preparation or long-term financial plan, what does he do? Get a good job? Or go back to the very criminal behavior that led him to prison in the first place?" Curtis explains.

In response, Curtis led the charge to add financial education to prison reform. And prison staff responded,



Curtis Carroll discovered more than just financial knowledge in prison.

making arrangements for him to teach about finances in San Quentin's chapel. Curtis not only picked up financial knowledge in prison. He also picked up Jesus.

"I want to give all glory to God, because without Him I wouldn't look or feel like this," he says on Inside the Rift. "Real freedom is a mental state, not a physical one. I remain cheerful due to God's grace and the gift He's chosen to give me. I stay focused because with this gift I have been given, there is a job that needs to be done."

"I stay motivated because my life's calling is to be of service to others. There is no better feeling or honor than to be of service to others. Like any Christian, I fall short every day, but I try my best to spread the gift that He's given me to empower others. All glory to God." •

This article first appeared on godreports.com and is used with kind permission.

Coffee Break

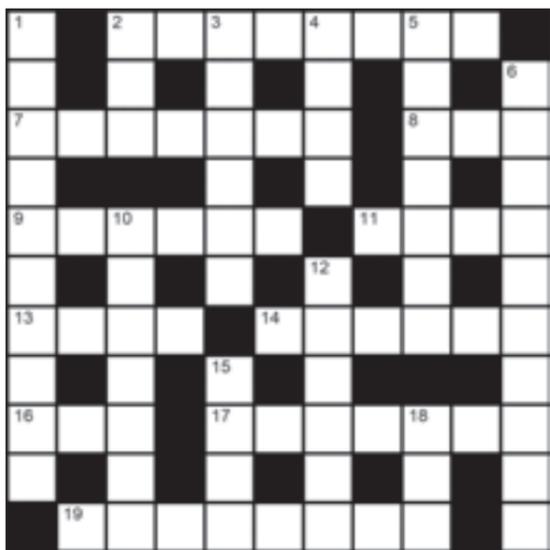
CROSSWORD & SUDOKU

ACROSS

- 2 Energetic type
- 7 Failure, fiasco
- 8 Take to the slopes
- 9 Chicago gangster
- 11 President after Reagan
- 13 A wild mountain goat
- 14 Flower patch
- 16 Signifying maiden name
- 17 Ocean direction
- 19 Five-armed sea creature

DOWN

- 1 Habit formers
- 2 Scientist's work place
- 3 Not lived in
- 4 Gardener's annoyance
- 5 Redeemed, saved



- 6 Stranded, helpless (4,3,3)
- 10 Stop happening
- 12 A kind of sausage
- 15 One that uses
- 18 Volcanic fallout

SOLUTIONS PAGE 7



"But I promised the guys I wouldn't shave!"

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SINGING A NEW SONG

BY GRAYSON POPE

Richard Andrew was once a clarinet- and trombone-playing marching band geek. But then his parents bought him a bass guitar and an amp, and he crossed over to pursue a different genre of music – and a different life journey.

“I had dreams of being in a rock band and touring the world,” he remembers. And then it happened: A gig. For one glorious night, the California teenager played with his sister’s boyfriend’s band at a backyard party.

“I came home, and I was just on cloud nine,” Richard says. “I mean, it felt like I had just played a huge arena even though it was just this dingy old backyard on a stage made of plywood and milk crates.”

But the next morning, Richard’s parents had made a decision: His dreams of global punk rock stardom would have to wait. Their teenage son was simply too young for late-night, live-music gigs – and all the temptations that might come with them. They said he could not continue and must put his music “career” on hold for a few years. Devastated, Richard took matters into his own hands and left home. At first, he thought he had it made. Pursuing his music, he moved from place to place and couch to couch. To make sure his parents couldn’t find and stop him, he dropped out of school. Very quickly, Richard plunged into drugs.

By the time he was 18, cycling in and out of homelessness, Richard was a drug-addicted, narcotics-dealing teen father of two daughters.

Still chasing his music dream by any means necessary, Richard landed in prison. He recalls his only option was “... to look up because I cannot fall any further. It was in that moment that the rescue mission started to unfold in my life.”

Richard started receiving what would be life-changing messages – via mail. One day at mail call there was a letter for him from someone he didn’t know. He excitedly ripped open the envelope.

“What I pulled out is what I would call a ‘Christianese’ Hallmark card. ... It had a lot of religious overtones telling me that I was loved by God and that kind of stuff,” Richard says. “And I remember being a little disappointed – ‘My first piece of mail, and it’s this? This is what I get?’”

To his surprise, the cards continued to come twice a month, every month for over two years – every card talking about God, love and Jesus. One day, sitting in the back of the prison chapel, Richard reluctantly bowed his head and closed his eyes, as the speaker had instructed.

“In an instant ... I saw two images right there, right there behind my



Richard now uses his musical talents to tell people about the hope he found while he was incarcerated.



Richard Andrew’s music dream was derailed by his drug addiction, but is now a recording artist and runs a music ministry.

eyelids, and they were the faces of my two daughters.”

Suddenly, a wave of guilt and shame flooded him, he recognized he had been on a destructive merry-go-round: Get high, see or think about his girls, “then feel so guilty that I would want to get higher and higher. And it was this vicious circle.”

Richard felt a tap on his shoulder. Another prisoner asked, “Hey, man. You want to go up?” Not really even knowing what that meant, Richard agreed. Moments later, Richard prayed to receive Jesus as His Savior.

The next day, he was a man on a mission: He was going to call the twice-monthly card sender. When he finally did reach her, “I told her my name, and before I could get my last name out, she cut me off and said, ‘Have you given your life to Jesus yet?’ I said, ‘Well, I went up last night. Does that count?’”

She began to praise God. Richard walked free out of prison January 8, 1994. As a condition of his parole, he joined a 12-step program at a local church and became active with its men’s ministry. There, God began rewriting Richard’s story.

“He started to undo every selfish thing I had ever done. He started to

restore every broken relationship that I had abused and neglected ... He remade me,” Richard testifies.

With Richard’s new life came a new life’s mission.

“I got plugged into a local church, and I was passionate. I wanted to serve. And I told the pastor, ‘What can I do? I’ll park the cars, scrub the toilets.’”

What he ended up doing was playing guitar for Bible study. And when the singer was out sick, Richard’s pastor called on him to sing. “He just kept poking and prodding and telling me, ‘I don’t know why I’m feeling this way, but I really think you should try,’” Richard recalls. Finally surrendering, “On a Thursday night, in a living room of a Southern California home, for about 10 people, I sang for the first time in my life. ... I never sang before, and I have not stopped singing since.”

Richard is the first to admit God has transformed his life. But one thing didn’t change: Music remains a central part of Richard’s life. He is now a recording artist and runs a music ministry. Richard met the sender of those cards he received in prison. Her name was Rose Gunn, and the two kindled a friendship that would last until Rose’s final days.

Today, Richard stands in the spotlight, singing and telling people about Jesus – and Rose’s impact on his life lives on.

Story from Prison Fellowship

Deep peace in a prison cell

BY TYLER (FORMER PRISONER)

I was adopted when I was one-and-a-half years old from Colombia. When I was in sixth grade, I started to use drugs and alcohol. I was raised in a Christian home but I started to rebel against everything my parents taught me. I started working when I was 15 years old. I always had a good work ethic. But I spent my whole check on drugs and alcohol.

I dropped out of high school in 10th grade so I could work more hours. I started to get into trouble with the law and I was put on probation. I had to do drug testing twice a month. I still continued to use drugs.

After a few failed drug tests, my probation officer sent me to Western Michigan Teen Challenge. I entered the program when I was 18 years old. I really didn’t want to be there, but I figured it was a way to stay out of prison.

After a few months of adjustment, I started to pay attention to what the pastors were preaching on. Teen Challenge is a place where they accept drug abusers. They had chapel every day and two one-hour classes a day about each book of the Bible. We had a regular work assignment every day for five hours. We also had two hours of study hall for the homework we received that day.

We had exams at the end of the month.

When I graduated in August of 2002, I started to attend church and youth programs. The first Sunday I attended, I met a guy that offered me a job at a bakery. I started work five days after I graduated. I was also blessed with a car from my parents.

Life was going good for the next few months, until I got too prideful, and I started to drink again. I soon stopped going to church, fellowshipping with people from church, reading the Bible, and praying to Jesus, the only mediator between God and man. I soon started to get into trouble with the law again. This continued for the next few years.

In April of 2005, I was driving a stolen truck and I got into an accident on the highway. I remember the tires grabbing the dirt, but when I came to, I was outside the truck. I was not injured. I knew I couldn’t run, so I just waited till the police came. I was arrested for possession of a stolen truck. I felt kind of relieved.

That night in jail, I was thinking about my life and where I went wrong. I knew I had to give my whole life to Jesus Christ. I cried out to Jesus that night and told him, “Only you can change my life, I have only been able to mess it up.”

Jesus gave me his Holy Spirit that night. I knew I still had to pay my debt to society. I was sentenced six months later for 23-60 months in prison. I didn’t like to hear those words, but I had a deep peace that everything was going to be fine.

In prison, I attended service and Bible study faithfully every week. I also did a lot of Bible study correspondence courses. I had a daily prayer time so that I could talk personally with Jesus. I read the Bible daily and meditated on the Scriptures. The time in prison was a blessing because it gave me the time to get my life straight with Jesus, build a strong foundation, and change my way of thinking.

When I was released from prison I was greeted with a new outlook on life and my family was there to pick me up. I have been staying at Alpha House and I have been blessed here; for it gives me freedom, but it also has some rules that are very helpful to me. I have Bible studies every Saturday morning with the Executive Director. He is a great blessing and he really cares about the residents.

There are two verses that let me know who I am in Jesus and how I am to live for him: “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!” (2 Corinthians 5:17), and, “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is – His good, pleasing and perfect will.” (Romans 12:2)

Used with permission from Alpha Prison Ministries

About Crossroads

The Crossroads Prison Ministries mentorship program connects you with mentors who help you study the Bible.

Mentors write to you, answer your questions, share stories from their own lives, help you see how God is speaking to you through His Word and encourage you to continue to grow in your faith.

Through the mentorship program, Crossroads offers more than one dozen different correspondence Bible study courses that each contain up to 14 lessons.

Each course is designed to help you learn more about God and how to follow Him.

If you are interested in joining the program, please fill out the attached application form and mail it to us today!

Name: _____
First Last

ID #: _____

Date of Birth: _____ | _____ | _____
MM DD YYYY

Earliest Release Date: _____ | _____ | _____
MM DD YYYY

Gender: _____

Referred by: **CHAL**

Prefiero el curso en español.

Complete Mailing Address:
 Institution: _____ Housing: _____
 Street or PO Box: _____
 City: _____ State: _____ ZIP: _____

STUDENT COMMITMENT

I will finish each lesson I receive in a timely manner and, with the help of my mentors, I will complete each course that I start. I agree that Crossroads may use anything I submit, such as my picture, testimony, writings or artwork, for promotional purposes or to further its mission.

Student Signature: _____ Date: _____

When you have completed this form, please return it to:
 Crossroads Prison Ministries | PO Box 900 | Grand Rapids, MI 49509-0900
 Crossroads Prison Ministries Canada | PO Box 5037 | Burlington, ON L7R 3Y8

A love letter helped me get clean



Trudy Makepeace read a love letter while in rehab and knew she had finally found the love she had always been searching for. Picture: Facebook/TrudyMakepeace

Trauma as a child led Trudy Makepeace to seek an escape – something she found in drugs. But that took her down a long and dangerous journey of crime, prostitution and prison time. After 30 failed attempts at getting clean, she came to the end of her rope.

Trudy shared her story at Woodlands Church in a YouTube video. She explains she was the eldest of five siblings and when she was four she discovered she was adopted.

“I thought it was great news,” she recalls. “I remember running to my mom and saying, ‘I’ve got two moms!’ Mom’s reaction was one of anger and she just walloped me across the ear and I went flying.”

Her mother’s reaction had more than just a physical impact on her.

“It said to me, ‘There’s a sense of shame about who you are – you’re not free to speak out.’ From that moment I knew it wasn’t safe to speak out. I knew it wasn’t okay to be me.”

Then from the age of five until she was a teenager, Trudy was sexually abused.

“This left me feeling very violated,” she explains. “It left me lost, feeling alone and confused. I was traumatized, I was in shock. I didn’t know what to do with it and I just began to internalize it.”

The idea that it was not safe for her to speak out was reinforced.

“Life was very dysfunctional at home. My parents were very broken – they didn’t know how to show love. I didn’t feel safe, I wasn’t protected and I was subject to their mood swings and violence.”

At school things were no better as children bullied her for her poor appearance and smell.

“Because of my abuse I used to wet the bed so my mom would send me to school smelling and kids were just cruel.”

As she grew older, Trudy started running away.

“I was trying to run from myself,” she explains. “I started trying to take my own life because I couldn’t cope with what was going on – I didn’t know how to process it.”

She ended up in the foster care system and the help she received from well-meaning professionals only intensified her pain. It was then she looked to drugs as a way to escape. Searching for love and acceptance, Trudy got involved in co-dependent relationships. She also developed an eating disorder.

“I moved on to heroin and then crack cocaine ... my lifestyle meant that I was out stealing every day – getting arrested was an occupational hazard for me.

“Spending time in prison was just a way of life for me. It wasn’t long before I ended up selling my body.”

Soon Trudy was living on the streets, which brought

more danger: “I’d be raped, I’d be left for dead, nearly cut up, nearly shot up ... I was completely desensitised to the danger because it was what I was used to and I accepted that.”

By the age of 33 Trudy had tried more than 30 times to get clean – trying everything from rehab, to detoxes, to methadone.

“I came to a point where I realised I couldn’t fix myself. I was hopeless and I was hopeless to do it in my own strength.”

When she was arrested and ended up in a Christian rehab, Trudy heard the Good News about Jesus Christ. Trudy recognized Jesus had died for her sins and accepted Him as her Lord and Savior. But a few weeks later, she began to feel the pull from her old life.

She left the rehab and went back to using drugs. But something had changed. When she used drugs she was unable to get the high that

she was used to. She felt a warning within in her spirit that she was going to die if something didn’t change. Again she was arrested and the same Christian rehab offered her the opportunity to go back.

“I went back to this rehab and it was there that I had a personal encounter with God my Father.”

She was given a compilation of Bible verses called *The Father’s Love Letter* (see right).

“As I read this I just knew I just knew in my heart that I had come home. I just knew that I had found the love that I had always been looking for.”

The letter explained that God sent Jesus to die in our place for our sins so we could be reconciled to the Father and know peace and forgiveness of sin.

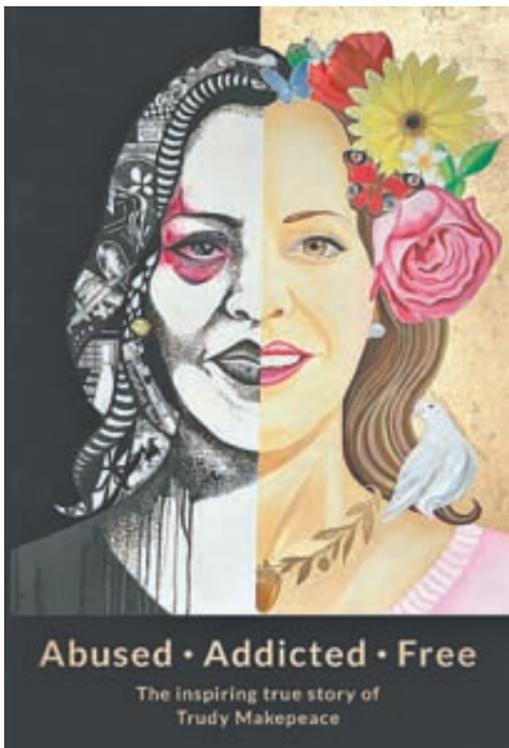
“We carry the weight of our sin, the guilt, the shame, the regret, the pain and the sorrow. God doesn’t want us to carry that baggage through life and there He was saying to me you can lay it all down at the foot of the cross and you can have a fresh start if you would accept the free gift of my Son. I asked Jesus into my heart and my life and He came. From that moment everything changed.”

Trudy experienced inexplicable peace, joy and love. She felt pure after being cleansed from her sin. She also had no desire to use drugs ever again. She says she experienced a healing process which included forgiving those who had hurt her and learning to love herself.

“You couldn’t give me £1 million to trade what I’ve got, because I have got the most precious thing in Christ,” she attests.

Trudy’s life completely changed after becoming a Christian. She went on to manage a girls’ home and share her story in prisons. She also attended – and excelled – at Bible College and has written a book called *Abused, Addicted, Free*.

GETTING ARRESTED WAS AN OCCUPATIONAL HAZARD



Trudy’s book, *Abused, Addicted, Free* features a portrait of Trudy by Emma Holloway and is part of a series called *The Untold Story*. Emma painted the portrait after hearing Trudy share her story.

Father’s love letter

AN intimate message from God to you...

My Child

You may not know me, but I know everything about you. (Psalm 139:1) I know when you sit down and when you rise up. (Psalm 139:2) I am familiar with all your ways. (Psalm 139:3) Even the very hairs on your head are numbered. (Matthew 10:29-31) For you were made in my image. (Genesis 1:27) In me you live and move and have your being. (Acts 17:28) For you are my offspring. (Acts 17:28) I knew you even before you were conceived. (Jeremiah 1:4-5) I chose you when I planned creation. (Ephesians 1:11-12) You were not a mistake, for all your days are written in my book. (Psalm 139:15-16) I determined the exact time of your birth and where you would live. (Acts 17:26) You are fearfully and wonderfully made. (Psalm 139:14) I knit you together in your mother’s womb. (Psalm 139:13) And brought you forth on the day you were born. (Psalm 71:6) I have been misrepresented by those who don’t know me. (John 8:41-44) I am not distant and angry, but am the complete expression of love. (1 John 4:16) And it is my desire to lavish my love on you. (1 John 3:1) Simply because you are my child and I am your Father. (1 John 3:1) I offer you more than your earthly father ever could. (Matthew 7:11) For I am the perfect father. (Matthew 5:48) Every good gift that you receive comes from my hand. (James 1:17) For I am your provider and I meet all your needs. (Matthew 6:31-33)

My plan for your future has always been filled with hope. (Jeremiah 29:11) Because I love you with an everlasting love. (Jeremiah 31:3) My thoughts toward you are countless as the sand on the seashore. (Psalms 139:17-18) And I rejoice over you with singing. (Zephaniah 3:17) I will never stop doing good to you. (Jeremiah 32:40) For you are my treasured possession. (Exodus 19:5) I desire to establish you with all my heart and all my soul. Jeremiah 32:41 And I want to show you great and marvelous things. (Jeremiah 33:3)

If you seek me with all your heart, you will find me. (Deuteronomy 4:29) Delight in me and I will give you the desires of your heart. (Psalm 37:4) For it is I who gave you those desires. (Philippians 2:13)

I am able to do more for you than you could possibly imagine. (Ephesians 3:20) For I am your greatest encourager. (2 Thessalonians 2:16-17)

I am also the Father who comforts you in all your troubles. (2 Corinthians 1:3-4) When you are brokenhearted, I am close to you. (Psalm 34:18) As a shepherd carries a lamb, I have carried you close to my heart. (Isaiah 40:11) One day I will wipe away every tear from your eyes. (Revelation 21:3-4) And I’ll take away all the pain you have suffered on this earth. (Revelation 21:3-4)

I am your Father, and I love you even as I love my son, Jesus. (John 17:23) For in Jesus, my love for you is revealed. (John 17:26) He is the exact representation of my being. (Hebrews 1:3) He came to demonstrate that I am for you, not against you. (Romans 8:31) And to tell you that I am not counting your sins. (2 Corinthians 5:18-19)

Jesus died so that you and I could be reconciled. (2 Corinthians 5:18-19) His death was the ultimate expression of my love for you. (1 John 4:10) I gave up everything I loved that I might gain your love. (Romans 8:31-32) If you receive the gift of my son Jesus, you receive me. (1 John 2:23) And nothing will ever separate you from my love again. (Romans 8:38-39)

Come home and I’ll throw the biggest party heaven has ever seen. (Luke 15:7) I have always been Father, and will always be Father. (Ephesians 3:14-15)

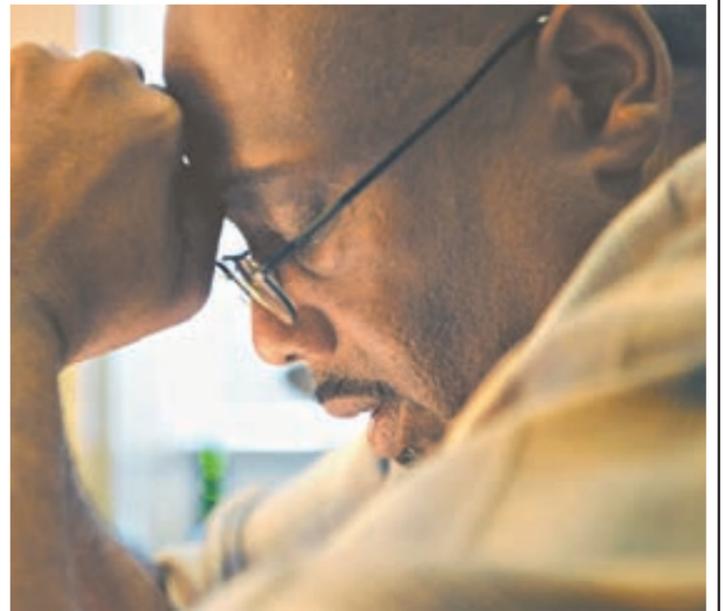
My question is... Will you be my child? (John 1:12-13)

I am waiting for you. (Luke 15:11-32)

Love, Your Dad, Almighty God

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Thankful for a second chance



Army Veteran Derrick Green says a prayer at the start of his Bible study in his apartment at the Civic Center Apartments, in Denver, Colorado, in 2010. After the combat engineer was honorably discharged in 1981, he developed a drug problem and eventually found himself in prison and then homeless. A faithful man, Green appreciates the housing and the opportunity he has been offered. He says, “Christ gave me a second chance. Cause where I was going – if it wasn’t for Christ I wouldn’t be here. I had one foot in the grave and one foot on a banana peel.”

Photo By Craig F. Walker/The Denver Post via Getty Images

RUNNING FOR HER LIFE

Sharon Dutra was a runaway. As a child she ran away from foster homes, girls' homes and convents. As an adult her drug addiction caused her to run away from her marriage and family and instead live on the streets. But at 29 she found herself in prison, where she met Someone she could run to.



Sharon Dutra ran away from everything until she found Someone she could run to.

Photo: Facebook/BeTransformedMinistries

In a video on her YouTube channel, Sharon shares that she felt worthless, rejected and abandoned after her mother left when she was five years old. She was moved from foster home to foster home before running away at the age of 15.

"I lived on the streets until I was arrested and this began my life with the law," Sharon recalls.

She was in and out of a juvenile hall in Los Angeles for several years, before being transferred to an open placement girls' home. But she ran away and was arrested again.

"I was a ward of the court by now because my father and stepmother didn't want to have anything to do with me," Sharon shares.

She was placed in a closed convent facility but, despite it having 12-foot high walls, she managed to escape. She recalls feeling self-hatred and overwhelming anger.

At 19 Sharon began working for the California Conservation Corps. One of her responsibilities was serving meals to firefighters and prisoners as they fought major fires. It was there she met Bill, who was a prisoner. They corresponded by letters and when he was released, they moved in together. They married and had two children.

"At this time I was drinking heavily and smoking pot," Sharon admits. "For years I had used every drug that I could get my hands on but little did I know that Bill was also using IV cocaine and speed and it didn't take much to convert me into an IV drug user. I would spend the next six-and-a-half years with a needle in my arm... I had lost all interest in life – in working, taking care of my kids, my husband, my apartment and especially myself. The only important thing now was using."

She marvels now at how many times she was miraculously spared from death – despite overdosing on drugs and trying to take her own life.

"I ended up sharing needles with people who later died from AIDS. Over time my veins were so scarred from injecting myself, I started shooting in my hands and feet. On several occasions I had another stoned addict shoot drugs into my neck veins... I wasn't having fun at all – I was just trying to deaden my pain." Sharon and Bill divorced after eight years of marriage.

"After a six-month attempt at sobriety I left my family and headed straight for the street so I could continue my addiction. I harbored guilt for this for years afterward because I helped to destroy that marriage and I abandoned my children just as I had been abandoned as a child."

She lived on the streets for two years, venturing into the projects at night for drugs.

"I occasionally scoured garbage cans for food but I usually just sold my body so I could survive and keep up my drug habit... Twice guns were pulled on me and once I told the guy: 'Shoot me and put me out of my misery.'"

Sharon was arrested for the 13th time when she was 29 when she was found trespassing at an army base. Due to her lengthy record and multiple recent crimes and arrests, she was sent to prison. It was there that she read a book called *Al Capone's Devil Driver* by George H. Meyer, who was the mafia boss' chauffeur.

"This man had killed many people and landed in prison but he found hope in that dark place and his life changed so much he began to help other prisoners."

After finishing the book, Sharon got on her knees and cried out to God. "I wept for all the things I had done to people and all the ways that I had rejected God and hated myself," she shares.

Sharon met with the prison chaplain, who bought her a Bible.

"I read it for hours every day – I just couldn't get enough of it... The truth was like a stream of cool water in the desert for me. The Scriptures spoke wholeness and hope to my heart. They gave my life meaning and purpose and stability. I began experiencing the peace and joy that I had always wanted."

When Sharon was transferred to a minimum-security prison, she began teaching the Bible to other prisoners there.

After she was released she met her now husband Michael. Sharon went back to school and earned her registered nursing degree – with honors. She started teaching Bible studies for women from all walks of life and in writing material for these classes, she wrote a book called *Be Transformed by the Spirit of the Living God*.

"Nothing will ever fill the void in your heart until you surrender your life to Jesus Christ," Sharon says. "Jesus gives life. He heals our wounds. He gives us freedom from fear and bondage to ourselves. You can have new thoughts and ways of relating as you learn to forgive and put others before yourself. No life is ever too broken for Jesus." ●

Anxiety, addiction and cancer finally healed

As a child, Jacob Watson developed crippling anxiety that caused him to be unable to even speak around his schoolmates. Students bullied him because of it and anger began to bubble up within him. In an aim to find acceptance, Jacob started experimenting with drugs. It was a dangerous road to travel, with multiple trips to jail and psych wards. But then he found a new path, which led to healing – in more ways than one.

In an interview with 100 Huntley Street, Jacob recalls a feeling of failure as a teenager. Whether it was schoolwork, sport or even trying to talk to his friends – he felt as though he was missing the mark.

"The kids that everybody liked were the kids that would fight, the kids that would smoke, the kids that would skip school, the kids that would party, the kids that would sleep around," Jacob explains.

He started off smoking cigarettes and marijuana and drinking alcohol during his lunchbreaks at school. The feeling of failure persisted and he eventually dropped out of school at only 14 years old.

He progressed to harder drugs including using needles.

"I was shoving needles in my arms – when I started doing drugs I was like, 'I'll never be that guy'. I ended up being that guy," Jacob admits.

At 18, Jacob started selling cocaine. One day he sold to an undercover police officer and Jacob found himself in jail. It was there that Jacob turned to God. He had been raised in a Christian home but had turned away from God as a child.

"I said, 'God, I don't want you in my life anymore – I'm done,'" Jacob recalls.

Jacob says there was something within him that was drawn to darkness and anger.

"I wanted to be angry, I wanted to be mad. I didn't want anything to do with love... When I was 16 I ended up in the psych ward and I was diagnosed with rapid cycling bipolar disorder. God wasn't a thought in my mind except for every once in a while because I had this bitterness towards Him... I was mad so I said I didn't believe in Him and I didn't want anything to do with Him."

But in jail, Jacob began speaking to God again. One night he offered to pray for his cellmate. He agreed and Jacob prayed.

"I didn't even know what I was doing to be honest," Jacob says. "The next morning we woke up and this man looked at me and said, 'Can I tell you something?' and I said, 'Yeah sure.' He said, 'Last night I was waiting for you to fall asleep because I was going to hang myself and then all of a sudden while I was



Jacob Watson faced crippling anxiety, drug addiction, imprisonment and cancer but found strength and healing in his faith.

thinking about this and you [asked if you could pray for me] – that's why I didn't do it."

After Jacob was released from prison, he continued to seek God and started reading the Bible. Late one night, Jacob went for a walk and asked God to speak to him. He recalls falling flat on his back and seeing a flash of white light. The next morning, he asked God what that was.

"[God said], 'That was me baptizing [filling] you with my Holy Spirit.' I just laid on the ground in my mom's living room balling my eyes out at 5am because I just realized [God's greatness]. I didn't deserve that."

Jacob's drug use had also changed. "I noticed over time that my clean time started growing and my relapse time started shrinking," he shares. "By the time I came to getting baptized I was clean."



Jacob Watson battled stage 4 cancer after his release from prison.

After Jacob was baptized, he thought his life was only going to improve from there.

"I thought I made it through the storm – I was like, 'I'm baptized, I'm saved, I'm clean – I'm doing the best I ever have done.'"

Then Jacob was diagnosed with stage 2 cancer in his neck. His neck had swollen to the point that it was bigger than his head. Doctors initially tried chemotherapy, but it didn't work. So

they moved on to radiation. The swelling went down and Jacob was due to visit his doctor to see if he had the all clear. But, the day before, he found a lump in his armpit.

"I knew what it was right away," he says.

The radiation had worked on the cancer in his neck but it had moved to his armpit, his abdominals and his liver – and it had progressed to stage 4 cancer.

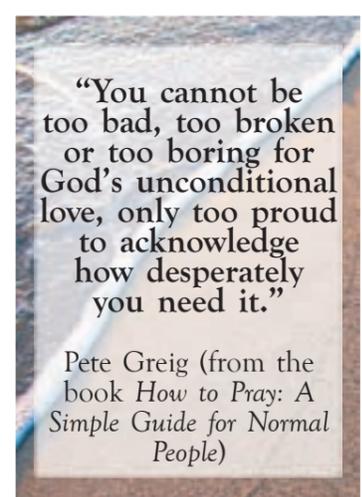
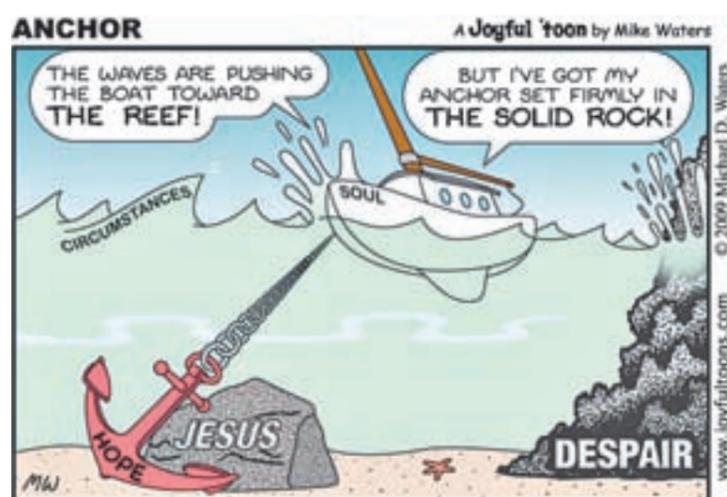
"I was so scared," Jacob admits. One night he was reading the book of Hebrews in the Bible. He read that, "faith is believing in the things we cannot see" in Hebrews 11:1 and immediately felt overwhelming courage to get up and pray for his healing.

"God, You are my answer for this," Jacob prayed. "You've brought me through so much. This medicine's not working – You are my answer."

The next morning, the lump in Jacob's armpit had vanished.

A CAT scan confirmed there was no more cancer in Jacob's body.

"I have total faith and belief that Jesus Christ healed me," Jacob attests. "God has been real in my life. He hasn't been just words in a book... He's carried me through and grown me in times where I did not deserve it... I'm 100 percent sold out for the Gospel of Jesus Christ." ●



WORDS FOR THE HEART

STUDIES IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

Welcome to this Bible Study. Read slowly what I have written. If you have a Bible, look up the reference verses given, and allow the Holy Spirit to minister to your soul through them. – ALAN BAILEY

John 14:16 - 15:2

INTRODUCTION

WE have been reading the words which Jesus spoke to his disciples in what was called “the upper room,” a little time before his crucifixion. He is giving assurance to them as they realize that He is going to leave them. He wants them to trust in Him and carry on with God’s work. The Holy Spirit, who is the third person of the Holy Trinity, is soon to be their teacher and guide; in a sense, taking the place of the Lord Jesus as their guardian. This teaching is of great benefit to us also.

Verses 16, 17 “I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Counselor, the Spirit of Truth, to be with you forever. The world cannot accept this Counselor because it neither sees Him nor knows Him. But you know Him for He lives with you and will be in you.”

God’s work on earth is done by the Holy Spirit. Jesus said that it was the

Spirit’s power that was at work in the miracles that occurred. But up until this point of time, the Holy Spirit had not made His home in the hearts of God’s people. Jesus explains that the Spirit is going to indwell them. Later, in the book of Acts we read about the coming of the Spirit in a new way. The world of unbelievers knows nothing of the Spirit of God.

Verses 18, 19 “I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Before long, the world will not see me any more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live.”

Naturally, the disciples would miss the presence of Jesus, but the Spirit will make them feel His presence. Unbelievers will not see Jesus again, because He is leaving this earth. But the disciples will see Him after He rises from the dead. And, because He is going to rise, they will share in His new resurrection life.

Verses 20, 21 “On that day you will realize that I am in my Father and you are in me, and I am in you. Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him.”

After the resurrection, the disciples would experience a new, close

relationship with God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It is a close relationship because of the Spirit’s indwelling and because of the mutual love and fellowship which they will enjoy. These truths are real to this present day for all who believe in Christ.

Verses 22-24 Then Judas (not Judas Iscariot) said, “But, Lord. Why do you intend to show yourself to us and not to the world?” Jesus replied, “If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. He who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me.”

This Judas, the one asking the question, is not the one who betrayed Jesus. Jesus answers by showing that there is a great difference between believers and unbelievers. Believers are obedient and experience divine indwelling. Unbelievers have no part in this.

Verses 25-27 “All this I have spoken while still with you. But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.”

The disciples had been with Jesus for around three years. Their lives had been powerfully impacted by what they saw and heard. Jesus was a patient and effective teacher. But in His absence, the disciples could easily forget and begin to wander. But the Lord was guarding against this. The Holy Spirit would be their teacher, stirring their memories, leading them in the truths they needed to know and follow. In due time, they saw things clearer than ever, wonderful revelations being given to them and power to become teachers themselves. In the light of all this, these men had nothing to fear but could enjoy the peace of God. It remains a fact today, that true peace is only found in Jesus.

Verses 28, 29 “You heard me say ‘I



am going away and I am coming back to you.’ If you loved me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. I have told you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe.”

It seems plain to us from Jesus’ words that He is going back to heaven to be with the Father and that He will come back eventually to earth. But the disciples were apparently a bit slow to take this in. Simply, they didn’t want Him to go. They loved His presence. But Jesus wants them to hold these facts and recognize them when they happen. In saying the Father is greater than Himself, Jesus is speaking of the way He was subject to the Father’s will in His whole earthly mission.

Verses 30, 31 “I will not speak with you much longer, for the prince of this world is coming. He has no effect on me, but the world must learn that I love the Father and that I do exactly what my Father has commanded me.”

Jesus infers that the time of His suffering is almost upon Him. The ‘prince of this world’ is a reference to Satan. He is also referred to as ‘the prince of the power of the air’ (Ephesians 2). No doubt Satan was moving in people to bring about the arrest of Jesus and the suffering which was to follow. Jesus says the Devil has no claim on Him. Rather, the world will see that Jesus is divine and the conqueror of death.

Chapter 15 Verses 1, 2 “I am the true vine and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that

bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit He trims clean so that it will be even more fruitful.”

Jesus continues to teach His men by using a common figure, a grape vine. He likens Himself to one, and those who belong to him are branches which draw their life from Him. As all vines require pruning, God is at work tending the branches disciplining and training them so that their lives will be more godly and productive.

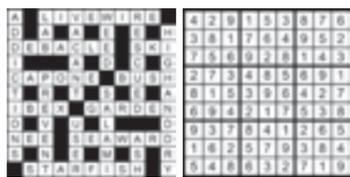
The kind of fruit is mentioned clearly in Galatians 5: 22. There it says, “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.” These great values don’t occur naturally in us, only as the Spirit of God generates them.

Jesus has much more to say to them in this chapter that will affect their lives dramatically.

CONCLUSION

It is a privilege for us to be able to tune in and hear the words of the Lord Jesus. But they are words for us to heed as they show us truths that apply today in God’s kingdom. If we trust in Christ as our Savior, we have acceptance with the Father and blessings beyond our immediate grasp. Believers have passed into a different relationship with God, which can’t be broken. And the teaching Jesus gives His disciples about daily living are for us as well.

It may be a good thing to go over the words again and ask God to make them plain.



HOW DO I BECOME A CHRISTIAN?

What? Salvation is an eternal relationship with God – now on Earth and, after we die, in Heaven.

The Lord Jesus says: “I tell you the truth. Everyone who believes in Me has eternal life.” John 6:47

In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world. John 16:33

Who? Anyone can gain the eternal life offered through Jesus Christ, regardless of how you have previously lived or what you have previously believed.

God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. John 3:16

Why? Because sin separates us from a holy God. Sin is all the wrong things we do, say and think, as well as our desire to be our own boss.

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Romans 3:23

How? The Bible says you become a Christian by confessing with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believing in your heart that God raised Him from the dead.

If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. Romans 10:8b-10

Ready to change your life forever? Here is a prayer you can pray, but you can also use your own words. The words are not as important as the heart attitude – which only God can see.

Almighty God, Creator of Heaven and Earth,

I acknowledge that I am a sinner. Please forgive me for all the ways I have disobeyed and defied You.

Thank You for sending Your Son, Jesus Christ, to earth to live the perfect life I couldn’t, and die on the cross for my sins. Thank You that His blood was sufficient to pay my debt to You, and His resurrection proves that there is life beyond death. I accept that His sacrifice is all I need to get right with You –

I bring nothing I have done but I give you everything I am. Help me to live for You. Please be my Savior and my Master. Amen.

What now?

1. Tell someone - either a fellow prisoner who is a Christian, or your Prison Chaplain.
2. Ask a friend or family member to bring you a Bible. Ask the Prison Chaplain to sign you up to a correspondence discipleship program.
3. Keep praying. Talk to God anywhere, about anything. He is always listening, and you don’t need a formula.
4. Find out if your prison has church services and attend them regularly.

AS A NEXT STEP :

I have prayed this prayer.

Please send me:

- Bible
 Some ‘starting off’ literature
 Information on a helpful church

* Please tick and write clearly *

Name _____ Age _____

Address _____

Send to: Challenge Literature Fellowship, 2634 Drake Road, Lebanon Ohio, 45036

All overseas enquiries are referred onto someone in their own country

NEVER, NEVER, EVER GIVE UP

BY NICO BOUGAS

FAILURE is a fact of life. It is not something we like to talk about, in fact we would rather forget it. But consider that some of the most prominent and successful people that we may know of had their share of failure.

Winston Churchill repeated a grade during elementary school and, when he entered Harrow, was placed in the lowest division of the lowest class. Later, he twice failed the entrance exam to the Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst. He was defeated in his first effort to serve in Parliament. He became Prime Minister at the age of 62. He later wrote, “Never give in, never give in, never, never, never, never – in nothing, great or small, large or petty – never give in except to convictions of honour and good sense. Never, Never, Never, Never give up.”

Albert Einstein did not speak until he was four-years-old and did not read until he was seven. His parents thought he was “sub-normal,” and one of his teachers described him as “mentally slow, unsociable, and adrift forever in foolish dreams.” He was expelled from school and was refused admittance to the Zurich Polytechnic School. He later developed the general theory of relativity and is considered one of the most influential physicists of the 20th century

As a young man, Abraham Lincoln went to war a captain and returned a private. Afterwards, he was a failure as a businessman. As a lawyer in Springfield, he

was too impractical and temperamental to be a success. He turned to politics and was defeated in his first try for the legislature, again defeated in his first attempt to be nominated for congress, defeated in his application to be commissioner of the General Land Office, defeated in the senatorial election of 1854, defeated in his efforts for the vice-presidency in 1856, and defeated in the senatorial election of 1858. He is generally considered to be one of America’s greatest presidents.

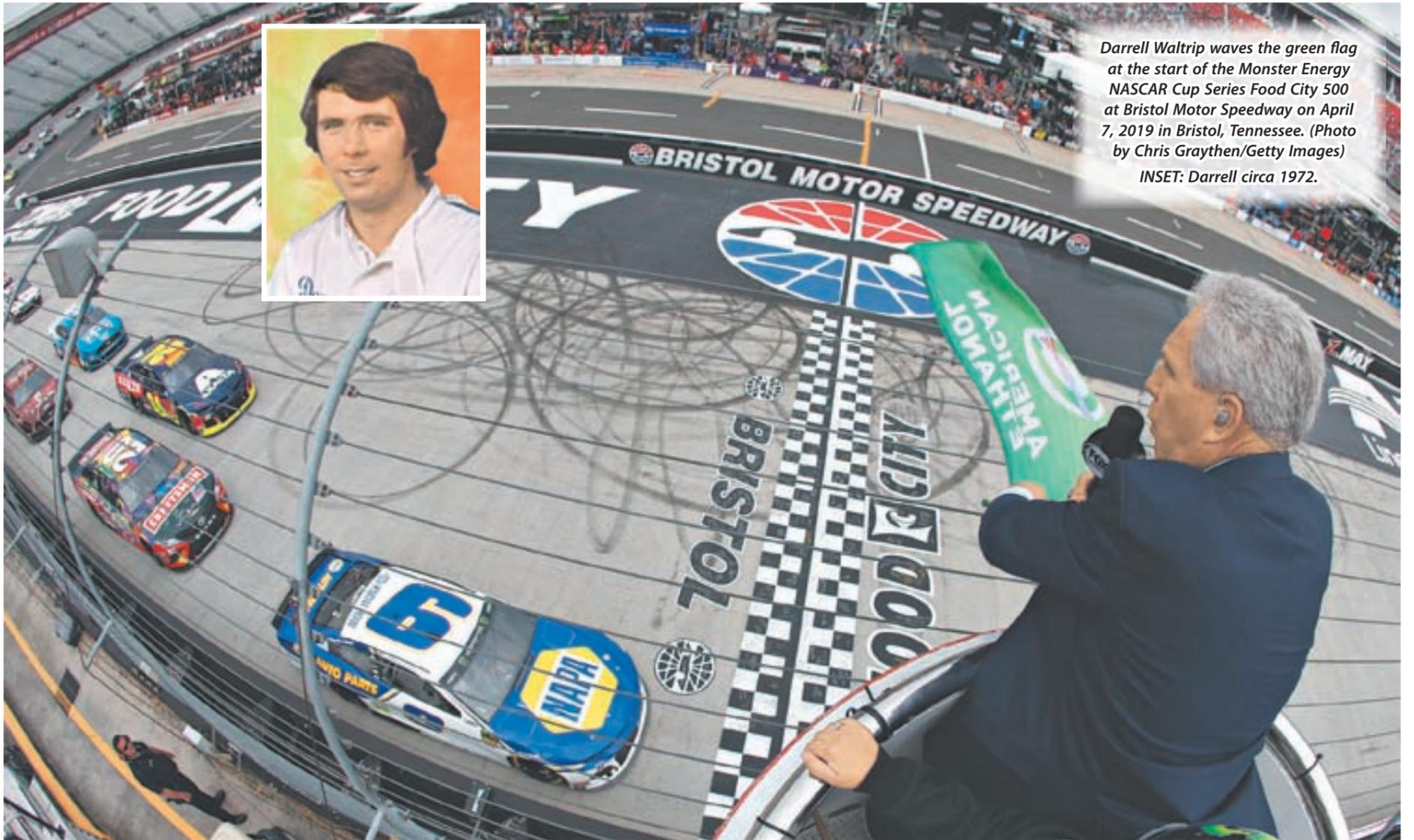
WHAT WAS THE SECRET OF THEIR SUCCESS?

They didn’t quit. There are many highly gifted people that made shipwreck of their lives because they encountered some obstacle and simply quit.

In the book of Exodus in the Bible, 10 of the 12 spies that were sent into the Promised Land saw the walled cities, they saw the size of the enemy and they started quaking in their boots.

They focused on the problem instead of the Provider. They magnified the obstacles and minimized the promises and provision of God. Sure there were challenges and dangers to face. But God was on their side. There was nothing too hard for the Lord.

The people who are most likely to be successful in life are not necessarily the best educated or the most talented. They are those that know how to persevere, that don’t give up and don’t give in to discouragement. Remember, “Winners never quit and quitters never win.”



Darrell Waltrip waves the green flag at the start of the Monster Energy NASCAR Cup Series Food City 500 at Bristol Motor Speedway on April 7, 2019 in Bristol, Tennessee. (Photo by Chris Graythen/Getty Images)
INSET: Darrell circa 1972.

From hated to humble

Three-time NASCAR Cup Series champion Darrell Waltrip was known for his arrogant, brash personality as much as his success behind the wheel. But when he survived a wreck at the 1983 Daytona 500, he described it as a wake-up call that knocked him conscious.

Darrell shared his story when he was the keynote speaker at the USA 2015 National Prayer Breakfast.

He said racing was his passion but he had gone about it in all the wrong ways in the early years.

"I was just as aggressive off the racetrack as I was on," he says. "I didn't have a lot of friends - I didn't think I needed friends. I looked over in the car and I was the only one in there so I didn't need any friends to be with me."

He said people described him as, "brash, ruthless, pushy, cocky, conceited, aloof, boastful, arrogant and

just downright annoying."

"Those were people that liked me, so you can imagine what people that didn't like me had to say about me!" he jokes.

NASCAR fans booed him when he was introduced at races and wore 'Anybody but Waltrip' t-shirts to the track.

He said NASCAR Hall of Famer Richard Petty told him, "I don't know how you keep a sponsor, you're so unpopular with the fans."

It wasn't just the fans. Darrell said he was always arguing with NASCAR.

"I didn't like the rules, mainly because they never worked in my favor, so I was always trying to change the rules," he recalls.

Darrell admits that his personal life wasn't much better.

"I was so arrogant," he says. "My personal life was a mess. I drank too much, I liked to go to the bars and hang out with the boys... I did everything to satisfy me. Whatever felt good to me, I did it. I didn't give it a second thought."

Darrell said his wife Stevie was a Christian and she would always pray for him to get involved in a Bible study or a church.

Darrell said to her, "Look Honey, I race on Sundays. I don't have time to go to church. I'm busy all through the week getting ready for the next race - I just don't have time for this church stuff."

"Well I'll just keep on praying," she replied.

Then Darrell got a chance to drive for his childhood hero, Junior Johnson.

"I thought maybe someday I'd get to meet him, I never thought that someday I'd get to drive for him," he says. "It was the best years of my career."

He said in the first two years they won 24 races, 18 pole positions and two championships. But then he got involved in a horrible wreck at the 1983 Daytona 500 when his car spun at nearly 200mph (320km/h) as he tried to avoid hitting

a car in front of him.

Darrell's brakes locked and the car slid and hit an embankment so hard that it was thrown back onto the track in front of the other cars. It then hit a retaining wall, where he was again pushed onto the track. Darrell was badly concussed and hospitalized.

He said he didn't even remember attending races during the few weeks following the crash.

"When I finally came to or woke up I realized that the wreck had knocked me conscious," Darrell says. "It scared the hell out of me and I mean that literally. I realized I could have been killed that day. What if I'd have lost my life right there that day at Daytona? Would I have gone to heaven or would I have gone to hell?"

After that he started going to church with his wife.

"I got down off my high horse, I got down on my knees and (the pastor) and Stevie and I prayed that the Lord would come into my life and forgive me of my sins and be my Lord and Savior," Darrell remembers. "That was the greatest day of my life. That changed everything. I'll never forget going home that night and I told Stevie, 'I feel like the weight of the world's been lifted off my shoulders. I feel like I've been born again, I feel like a new man.'

IT [LITERALLY] SCARED THE HELL OUT OF ME



"When the Lord comes into your life you're going to be different," he explains. "He changed me and it was for the better."

Fellow drivers and fans noticed

the change. NASCAR fans even voted him 'Most Popular Driver' two years in a row in 1989 and 1990.

Darrell said he still had problems and still got into wrecks but now he wasn't facing them alone.

"You don't have to walk alone," he says. "You don't have to carry all those burdens like it's you against the world. You have to do like I did, you've got to get off your high horse and get on your knees and ask for forgiveness. He's waiting for you."

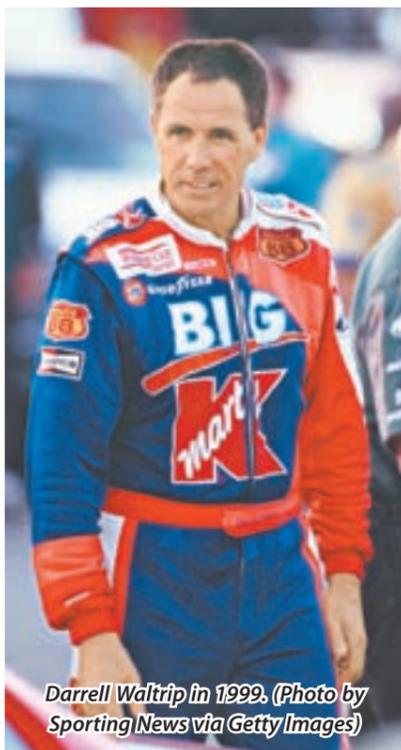
Over his career, Darrell won 84 NASCAR cup races. He and Bobby Allison are tied for fourth place in NASCAR history.

Darrell was inducted into the Motorsports Hall of America in 2003 and the NASCAR Hall of Fame Class of 2012.

He retired from NASCAR in 2000 and worked as a race commentator from then until 2019. •



Darrell Waltrip poses with his wife Stevie during the NASCAR Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony in North Carolina in 2019. (Photo by Brian Lawdermilk/Getty Images)



Darrell Waltrip in 1999. (Photo by Sporting News via Getty Images)

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