

A Radical Departure

Derek Corzine was kicked out of his church because he chose an unorthodox approach to reach his Goth friends.

Nineteen-year-old Derek Corzine became a Goth for the “wrong” reason. After all, it’s normal to become a Goth if you’re drawn by the music, the dark fashions or the relationships. But Derek became a Goth because God told him to.

Wrong reason—according to some of the Christians Derek grew up with in Denver City, Texas.

Derek was raised in one of the local Baptist churches but drifted from his faith. In junior high he rededicated his life to Jesus, was filled with the Holy Spirit and began attending an Assemblies of God church.

By the time he reached high school his best friends across the nearby border in New Mexico were Goths. They dressed in black, got drunk, cut themselves with razors and said the Goth lifestyle was the only way they could “feel human.”

Derek wanted to tell them about Jesus. After praying about how to, he says God told him to become like his friends. “I became a Goth to minister to Goths,” he says. “My motive was 1 Corinthians 9:22—becoming all things to all men that I might win some to Jesus.”

So Derek grew his hair long and wore black leather, chains and spikes. He carried his Bible with him to school and shared Jesus with classmates. He wore Gothic makeup in a style that portrayed a hidden personality trait, as many Goths do.

His makeup, however, symbolized his unseen mission: "I wore my makeup like war paint, because I was in a spiritual battle," he says.

Because of his conservative Christian background and his radical outward change, "people were tripping freaked," he says. One day his pastor told him he would have to stop wearing Gothic makeup, because it was "not ethical in a Christian church."

Derek disagreed, saying that Christian mimes wear makeup for a similar purpose when they evangelize with skits. He tried to explain by quoting 1 Samuel 16:7, Galatians 2:6 and Matthew 7:1-2, but Derek's pastor ordered him to leave the church and not come back.

Derek remained a Goth for three years and stayed true to his mission, though he calls that period "the hardest time of my life." He led a Goth friend and several classmates to Jesus.

Today Derek still wears his hair long, but he dresses in baggy jeans and heavy-metal music T-shirts. He attends a nondenominational charismatic church in Lubbock, Texas, and plays with a Christian-metal band called Syringe, a name he chose for the symbolism of a needle injecting healing below the outward surface.

Says Derek: "Sinners will be sinful until they accept Christ.

Get to know them—and say what God wants you to say.” *

Jimmy Stewart is managing editor of Charisma. He traveled to Miami, Boston and Northampton, Massachusetts, to file this report.