

How Holy Spirit's Powerful Presence Transformed a Desperate Drug Dealer

I was born and raised in the sweetest place on earth: downtown Hershey, Pennsylvania. My parents were hard-core Pennsylvania Dutch and spoke fluently in the language.

The Pennsylvania Dutch culture is—and my upbringing was—devoid of relationship and revolved around doing, as opposed to anything relational.

My parents were task driven, not relationship oriented. Mom and Dad expressed their love by providing, and so my family never showed love through touch or words.

To further my love deficit, my birth in 1958 was trauma-induced. My mom hemorrhaged at the end of her six-month term, and we were rushed to the Hershey Hospital, where I was delivered 12 weeks early.

I was then separated from mom and taken via ambulance to the Harrisburg Hospital. This is where I spent months in an incubator fighting for my life. In 1958, the survival rate for premature babies was low.

My entrance into this world was influenced by tribulation and anguish, and lacked human contact. For me, love and touch were a foreign and difficult thing. However, I grew up as a carefree boy who loved baseball, Hershey Park and, of course, chocolate, but lacked the ability to have healthy relationships.

In the 1960s—one of my fondest memories with my mom and dad, apart from playing baseball, was watching the Billy Graham crusades.

However, in 1970, when I was 12 my dad took a high-ranking job at the Pentagon and did not come home until the weekends.

That's when one of my sisters started dating a guy and my role model switched from my dad to this fellow. My sister's boyfriend was a shot-out hippie. He had long, coal-black hair that was frizzed out like an Afro and it went to the middle of his back. He wore a lot of leather and embroidered jeans and drove a Shelby 428 king of the road muscle car. He was my new role model. He took me hunting and fishing and taught me how to sell weed.

The first time I bought weed from him, it was an ounce and we split it up four ways, I sold three quarters and kept a quarter for free, and I made a little cash. I liked everything about my sister's boyfriend. At the age of 13, I turned to drugs and alcohol. Throughout my teenage years and into my young adulthood, I experimented often with drugs and alcohol and used both substances in excess amounts.

By the age of 20, I was arrested for kidnapping and criminal conspiracy in a 50-pound weed deal that went south. I was later found not guilty only because those involved decided not to testify against me. There is not enough time to discuss my criminal history, but I was deeply entrenched in the underground world of crime and in the distribution of narcotics.

At the age of 25, I came to my senses just a little and started to decrease my usage, however my heart was full of anger and rage and void of compassion.

I thought marriage would help, so I began to burn through women at a rapid rate, just looking for the fix I thought I needed. It was just one empty relationship after another. I believe my addiction switched gears and I began to fill the emptiness of my soul with sexual encounters. There was no amount of drugs or alcohol or women that could fill the hole

in my soul and yet day after I just could not get enough of either. My drug of choice was just more of anything. I used everything in excess and even my friends referred to me as the one who needed help. Most of the times I partied until I blacked out.

At the age of 29, I thought I met the woman of my dreams and was married by the age of 30. I also at that time landed a great job in the floor covering industry, as sales professional, and over the next 20 years, I excelled at that position. Somewhat like my dad, I was a good provider for my family. And I also was able to keep my wife at home as a stay-at-home mom.

It wasn't long until I realized that I had married someone just as wounded as me. The truth is two dead batteries won't start a car. Three daughters and 9 years later, I was divorced and I was experiencing deep despair. I somehow and somehow had to become a living, breathing soul.

I was then 38, and in 1996, I began to hear about Jesus in Alcoholic Anonymous. I knew I needed something or someone to change me. I had tried endless times through drugs, and alcohol and sexual encounters, to find peace and a purpose for my life, but to no avail. Only Jesus Christ knew the depth of revival and restoration I needed. I was an unbelievably flawed human being, who was riddled with ADD, multiple addictions and other learning disabilities.

I also at that time began to attend Christ Community Church in Camp Hill, Pennsylvania. I became active in the Christian community. I started to seek a relationship with Christ and began to understand that Jesus went to the cross so I could be purchased from this slave market of sin.

I heard and understood that He wanted to totally set me free. I knew just how brutal this marketplace of sin was and how important it was for me to be cut free from these chains of

darkness.

I was told I could come to Jesus just as I was and that He would forgive me and deliver me from the guilt of my past sin.

I understood that because of my faith in Christ, the Holy Spirit came to live inside me and He was empowering me to live above the insanity of my past life and the sin that so entangled me.

I understood and others were saying that I could be liberated from the guilt and doom of sin and that Jesus wanted to introduce me to a life of liberty and a newness of life. So I made a choice to ask Jesus into the middle of the mess I had made with my life. I tell you the truth that Jesus uses broken things.

After I received Christ and was born again, my parents saw such a drastic transformation in my life that my mom often said, "You know, Jack, there has got to be a God to have changed you."

My parents, who were just shy of 80 years old, gave their lives to Christ and received the Holy Spirit.

But then just a few months after I ask Jesus into my life and somewhat like Saul, on the road to Damascus, in Acts 9, I had an unexpected meeting with Jesus the "lover of my soul," and so it is my desire to share with you the details of my personal encounter with the risen, glorified Christ.

My encounter with the Maker and Maintainer of the universe went like this.

My daughters and I were tent camping in Halifax, Pennsylvania, at a place called Camp Hebron. It was in the middle of July in 1996 and our campsite (#30) was situated along Powell's Creek, right in the middle of some very dense pine trees.

I was enjoying the presence of the Holy Spirit on that hot

summer day, when I noticed to my left side and slightly above Powell's Creek a brilliantly bright white, elongated light.

At first, I thought to myself, *What is the sun doing underneath the trees and then I thought what is the sun doing over in that direction?*

As an avid outdoorsman, I instinctively know my direction, and this encounter was just prior to lunch, so the noonday sun was high in the sky.

I suddenly squared off to the risen Christ and was immediately overtaken by a super bright, white, elongated, oval-shaped light. (Acts 26:13 *"I saw in a way a Light from Heaven, above the brightness of the Sun, shining around about me."*)

I was instantly unaware of my surroundings. I stood still and froze in place. I wanted to get closer, but I dropped to the forest floor onto my knees.

The intensity of love and peace I felt oozed into the very nature of my soul. All of a sudden hoops or rings of light broke off of the risen glorified Christ!

These circles of light hit me. A total of three rings overtook me. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit encapsulated me. One after another, these rings consumed me. It was like liquid love. The intensity of Christ's love filled my being. (*Song of Solomon 2:4 "And his banner over me was love."*)

The more rings of light that hit me, the greater intensity of love I felt.

I thought as if I was going to die. And so I raised my arms and hands and screamed: "Stop! You are killing me." (*Song of Solomon 8:6 "Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm: for love is strong as death."*)

The tone of my voice shook with the certainty of death. While on my knees, and arms raised high, I watch the glorified

Christ ascend up and vanish through the trees. (*John 3:13 "And no man has ascended up to Heaven but, He who came down from Heaven."*)

Immediately, my young daughters came up from Powell's Creek; they were catching Crawfish for bait, because we were preparing to go fishing. Lyndsai (age 7) said, "Dad, what happened? I heard you yell." Then Abby (age 2) said, "Daddy, did you swallow a light bulb?" Then Karlee (age 4) and Lyndsai both said, "Daddy, you're glowing. What happened to you?" (*Exodus 34:35 "And the Children of Israel saw the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses face was radiant."*)

I was speechless, you see. Having a personal meeting with the King of the universe, the risen, glorified Lord Jesus Christ', well, let's just say I was undone.

Having been a professional sinner, and now being overshadowed by and abiding in the presence and love of the risen Christ confirmed my human frailty. My only words were, "Stop! you're killing me."

Standing in the presence of the great "I AM" and having a glimpse of Yahweh's glory, it's no wonder that I was glowing. I hadn't realized that I had absorbed some of the glory and was reflecting it from my countenance. Oh, but my young daughters did. "Daddy, did you swallow a light bulb?" declared Abby.

Encountering the Maker and Sustainer of the universe, the risen Christ, through a beatific experience at a place called Camp Hebron. Well, let's just say the intensity of Yahweh's love is priceless.

Please understand, for someone like me to be standing here today, only a radical transformation could have taken place. No amount of will power could have changed my life to who I am today. Only the transforming grace of my risen Savior through the power of the Holy Spirit could have done this.

This encounter confirms the reality of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ and why I think we will need resurrected bodies. Song of Solomon declares in Chapter 8:6 that "His love is as strong as death."

After my personal encounter with the risen, glorified Christ, I had been gripped by the power of the Holy Spirit, and little did I know that over the next 15 years, Yahweh was preparing me to be used for my good and His glory.

To learn more about Jack and *The Book of Life Ministry*, go to his website at tbol.life or email tbol.life@gmail.com.