

Rock Star Trades Fame for Faith, Salvation

Mention Tony Greve (pronounced “Greev”) in hard-rock circles, and people know the name. The lead and rhythm guitarist for the popular hard-rock band Pop Evil, Greve traveled with the likes of Judas Priest, Papa Roach and 3 Doors Down. His world was not only consumed with constant concerts and pushing the limits on his guitar, but also drugs, alcohol, sex and hard partying that few not in the profession are familiar with.

With tattoos of personal guitar heroes on his arms, profanity on his fingers and a hat on his head he believed was accompanied by a demonic presence, Greve was steeped in the hard-rock lifestyle and sin—and was looking for more.

So how did Greve, whom hard-rockers and fans know as “Guitar Slinger”—which is also tattooed across his stomach—become the class president of an Assemblies of God Bible college?

The Beginning

Growing up, Anthony “Tony” Greve found he had a talent for playing electric guitar. He admits struggling with depression and a consuming emptiness, but in playing guitar, he seemed to be able to find at least a brief relief, so he poured himself into it.

In 2007, when he was 23 years old, Greve was an accomplished guitar player, and his skills were catching people’s attention. An up-and-coming hard-rock band, Pop Evil, based out of Grand Rapids, Mich., invited him to play lead guitar. Greve accepted and began touring for months at a time with the band.

Despite the band’s growing success, which included four national Top 10 singles, Greve couldn’t seem to pour enough of

himself into the band or its hedonistic lifestyle in order to escape his growing depression and emptiness.

Greve didn't realize it at the time, but God had a plan for his life.

Encountering God

While the rest of the band went out to party after a concert, Greve decided just to go to the hotel room. Struggling with having "everything" but still feeling like he had nothing and was empty inside, he just started talking to God—and God responded.

"He told me, 'Son, I created you for a relationship with Me. It'll never work without Me,'" Greve says. "I told God that for 26 years of my life, I just did what I wanted to do—why would You forgive me?"

Even though Greve knew God was aware of all of his sins, he began to confess them out loud to God, breaking down and beginning to weep as he did so.

"God, I'm so sorry, please forgive me," Greve recalls saying.

And God did—followed by a powerful experience with the Holy Spirit. "[The Holy Spirit] fell and burst through my body like a surge of electricity," Greve says.

A few weeks later, unsure of what to do with his newfound faith, Greve sought help, but not at a church.

"We always parked the bus in a Wal-Mart parking lot when we were on tour, because it was open 24/7," Greve says. "There was this Family Christian Bookstore near where we parked, so I walked in there, just wearing my pajamas and a coat."

Having lived a life so apart from God, Greve admits it was surreal walking into the store.

Pretending to look at some books, Greve was approached by a clerk, Patrick Garrett, who offered his assistance.

“Do you believe in Jesus?” Greve recalls asking Garrett. After receiving a positive response, he said, “Would you pray for me?” Garrett, who still remains in contact with Greve, agreed, but called over to another customer in the store to join him, a man Greve later found out was an evangelist.

After praying in the middle of the store, which Greve says was a time filled with tears and the presence of God, the evangelist turned to Greve and said, “You’re at a crossroads in your life. Choose the cross.”

A Rough Transition

Greve was a “new creation” in Christ but had few Christian connections. When he phoned his father to tell him he was now a Christian and was going to quit the band, his father was furious.

“He called me a coward and told me I was selfish, that I was letting the guys in the band down just as we were getting ready to start making real money,” Greve says. “I started to question myself—not God, as I knew He existed—but maybe I was being a self-centered jerk. I didn’t know. I didn’t have anyone to talk to.”

Out of a sense of guilt and fear, Greve decided to stay with the band, believing he would be strong enough to resist temptation.

As a new Christian, with little biblical knowledge, no Christian counsel on the road with him, and living in Satan’s stronghold, the outcome would surprise few. Within two weeks, Greve was once again fully immersed in the lifestyle. Only this time, he was upset with God because He didn’t deliver him.

"I felt trapped," Greve admits. "I had record and management contracts; I fell back into sin worse than ever. I felt I was letting my family down, letting God down—I felt like there was no escape."

The Road of Discipleship

Greve continued to play in the band for a time, but one night the Lord spoke to him while he was on stage.

Greve remembers the moment clearly. "He said, 'Tony, you see all these fans? They're not fans—they're lost. I created them to worship Me, but they don't know Me, so they're worshipping you instead.'"

"I had a decision to make," Greve says. "It was stay there, which would have been serving the kingdom of darkness, or leave and pursue God."

In April 2011, Greve left the band—even left the state—and gave up everything in order to get right with God. Carrying and reading his Bible wherever he went, he "worked out his salvation" as he traveled seemingly aimlessly about the country.

Yet at every place Greve paused, God brought people into his life to help shape and direct his life, and the Holy Spirit was with him.

"I was a Pentecostal before I even knew what a Pentecostal was," Greve says, laughing. "I remember going to my first Assembly of God church [Gateway] in Williamsport, Md. I was like, 'This is it!'"

Greve also started going by the name Anthony, as he likened his experience of being knocked off the stage of fame similar to the biblical Saul-to-Paul experience.

Finally, Greve made his way back to Michigan. It was there he met up with pastor Adrien Thorne of New Beginnings (AG) in

Whitehall. Greve's life was about to be put on the mentorship fast track.

Mentoring Discipleship—More Than Words

"I was cleaning out my van in the driveway when I looked up and saw this skinny dude holding a Bible, with tattoos all over him," Thorne says. "I knew who he was. I had heard a lot about Anthony already."

Within moments of meeting, a bond was formed between the two men. Thorne was uniquely positioned to not only provide biblical guidance but to understand exactly where Greve had been and what he was going through now.

Prior to becoming an AG minister 13 years ago, Thorne was a professional ballet dancer who had little room for God in his life. He performed for 17 years and was ranked in the top 3 percent in the nation. He even has a brother in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. But Thorne is also a Teen Challenge graduate—an AG program for those with life-controlling addictions—who knows the value of mentors.

Thorne says he and his wife, Kristina, came to love Greve. Thorne says he would get calls from Greve three times a day, asking questions about the Bible and life.

"Some questions only took 30 seconds, others took longer, but Anthony was like a sponge," Thorne says.

But more than just pouring spiritual discipleship into Greve's life, Thorne says his church of about 200 had come to understand that to get people where God has them going, it takes more.

"God doesn't just send you people to disciple them, but also to give them the tools to fulfill His call upon their lives," Thorne says. "We got Anthony a car, helped him get work, gave him a phone and then helped him get into school [Northpoint

Bible College].”

But Greve isn't the exception for Thorne or New Beginnings. In fact, Thorne says the church has done things like this for six or seven people recently as the church has taken a step back from “canvassing” areas toward more individualized discipleship and mentoring of people, with an emphasis on relationship.

“We used to do mass outreaches into the neighborhoods, but not one of those people are still here or in church, to my knowledge,” Thorne says. “But when we started pairing people in need of discipleship with families or individuals who would have a connection with them, and also provided tools for these people to move forward, we have seen a dramatic difference in the number of people staying in church and beginning to fulfill God's purpose for their lives.”

Late in 2012, Thorne would write the letter of endorsement for Greve to be accepted at Northpoint. Greve began his freshman year at Northpoint this past fall.

“God walked Anthony into our driveway,” Thorne says simply. “Whatever things he achieves in his life, what an honor that we are part of the foundation for that!”

Moving Forward

Since beginning classes at Northpoint, Greve has continued to absorb wisdom and biblical learning. He also spends many weekends on stage, only now sharing his testimony with anyone who will listen, praying, and seeing God perform the miraculous.

The transformation from Tony the hard-rocker to Anthony the follower of Christ is nothing short of miraculous in itself. In fact, the transformation is so complete that recently Greve's classmates at Northpoint elected him president of next year's sophomore class.

“Anthony’s spiritual growth and fervency for the things of God has been astounding since his arrival on the Northpoint Bible College campus,” says David Arnett, president of Northpoint Bible College (AG) in Haverhill, Mass. “He has quickly become a loved friend and brother to so many of the students, faculty and staff. Anthony came with a zealous love for Jesus and does not take lightly what the Holy Spirit is doing in his life.”

Arnett says that Greve is frequently invited to share his testimony, including at key school administration functions—such as board of trustee meetings and president’s dinners—and Arnett is pleased to see Greve’s passion for Christ continue to be “cultivated into excellence in Pentecostal ministry” at Northpoint.

“We see a man who has taken the testimony of his faith and the Word of God and has committed to reaching the world with the gospel,” Arnett says.

“I’m just so proud of him and his heart to obey God and serve the Lord,” Thorne says, who still speaks with Greve three or four times a week.

For Greve, the passion to reach the lost drives him like never before as he continues to study to be a pastor and fulfill the call of full-time ministry.

“I’ve come to realize that you don’t have to be involved in anything bad to be subject to Satan’s possession—all you have to do is not be saved,” he says. “If someone is not saved—even those who are ‘good’ people and do ‘good’ things—they belong to the kingdom of darkness and are hell-bound. It’s through Christ that all things are made new, and through Christ only.”

And to that end, Greve seeks to share the life-changing gospel of Christ every chance he gets—because if God can transform his life, whose life can’t He transform?