

How My Plea for Happiness Brought Abundant Life

Everyone else had gone into town, leaving me home alone in the ranch house. "Now is my chance," I thought. "This time I'm going to push the limit and really get high."

My friends and partners in the drug smuggling business had been worried about me. Sure, we were all users, but I had taken it to a whole new level, and my body and mind were showing the effects. Thin and drawn, scars from needles dotted my tattooed arms. Hair down to the middle of my back, and an earring highlighted the dark circles around my glazed eyes sunken into my callous face. No one would have guessed that I had once been a robust college football player.

I was slowly killing myself and didn't know it. Or maybe I did. I'd already been snorting coke, smoking weed and drinking all day long. That was pretty much my existence. I lived to get high. But all the snorting, smoking and drinking that day hadn't given me enough, and I needed more. Now I would shoot the cocaine straight into my veins, what we called mainlining.

To ensure I would get extra high, I doubled my normal portion. When I shot it up, however, the needle missed my vein, and I didn't realize it. "Wow," I thought. "I didn't feel a thing." So, I doubled that amount and missed the vein again and didn't know it. Still feeling nothing and growing frustrated, I did something only a foolish addict would do. I doubled the portion a third time. This time I hit the vein, sending a lethal amount of pure cocaine directly into my bloodstream.

Almost instantly, my heart exploded into a rush of rapid, violent palpitations constricting my chest, causing labored breathing, trembling and profuse sweating. As my body collapsed to the floor, I cried, "I'm dying. I'm dying."

Then, something strange happened.

Something surreal.

In those split seconds hovering between life and death, it was as if time stood still. I was acutely aware. My mind was clear, clear enough to speak to my Creator, whoever it was. "God," I pleaded, "don't let me die until I find out what happiness is."

Nowhere Left to Go But Up

Now, I'll be the first to admit that a plea for happiness was a strange request when dying, but I had no church or religious background as a reference point. I wasn't asking for salvation, but happiness: Let me live to find happiness. You see, I had no happiness as a child, none. Growing up was brutal, abusive and violent. In my ongoing desperation to find meaning and happiness I had tried an assortment of things—sports, which I was pretty good at; immorality; drugs; loads of money from selling drugs; and finally using the hardest drugs in search of the ultimate high. All of it left me with an echoing void in my soul.

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"God, please don't let me die until I find what happiness is," I implored Him again. Suddenly, almost miraculously, I started breathing normally and began coming out of it. Pulling myself up off the floor I staggered outside and dropped into a chair on the front patio looking out over the mountains of Colombia, South America.

I can't believe I'm alive.

The thought kept going through my mind. "I can't believe I'm alive." Instinctively, I knew something bigger than I had spared my life. Today, I tell people, "Even though I was a

violent, drug-smuggling, drug addict, God heard that prayer.” He heard that prayer and would continue chasing me down with His relentless love.

‘I’ve Had Enough’

Though still a young man, my body and mind were wasted. I had done such heavy drugs for so long that I could hardly talk. Despite having earned a college degree, and only lacking a couple of credits for my second, I could barely put two coherent sentences together. I was 26 years old when I finally stopped running and said, “OK God, I’ve had enough. Take me. I’m exhausted.”

The church that introduced me to Jesus didn’t know what to do with me, so they put me in the kids 15-and-under Sunday school class. I would just sit there like a zombie from doing so many drugs. Most in that church didn’t believe I would make it, that I was too far gone. Yet even though I looked half dead on the outside, there was a fire smoldering deep inside me kept alive by the Holy Spirit. No doubt I was the epitome of a junkie, but now I was a saved junkie.

Fortunately, the Holy Spirit doesn’t need much to work with, just a willing vessel. He specializes in restoring the broken and redeeming the time stolen by the enemy. God took that zombie junkie right where I was, gave me true life, set me on my feet and put me on a new path. His path.

He brought my beautiful wife, Tiz, who is way above my pay grade. Together we would raise a wonderful family, pioneer several thriving churches across the globe, breaking racial and cultural barriers along the way while seeing thousands of broken souls come to Jesus. In addition, God gave us an international teaching ministry through television and books, leading to an enlightenment of the Jewish roots eventually giving us a significant influence on Israel and the Jewish nation. We became advisers to President Trump on the Middle

East and have met with top Israeli rabbis and military leaders including the minister of defense and even Prime Minister Netanyahu himself.

Recently, as I was flying to Jerusalem to meet with top leaders, I realized God has given us favor, and the Israeli leadership listens to us. It makes no sense in the natural. From a junkie to serving God's kingdom in Jerusalem is a journey that shows what God can do in the least of us. It's a journey of miracles but also of being faithful with a little and watching God multiply the loaves and fishes we give Him.

Miracles Far Beyond Understanding

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Of course, there have been many struggles and battles the Lord brought us through. I came to understand that my anger and violent nature had been handed down generationally to me and that the curse had to be broken. That truth became one of our foundational teachings.

Romans 2:11b (ASV) says, "God is no respecter of persons." That means what He does for one person, He will do for another, and He'll do it for you. A lot of the study we do is out of the Hebrew, and in Judaism it says that whenever you see or hear of a miracle in someone else's life, it's because you're next. Revelation 12:11 (MEV) tells us, "They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they loved not their lives unto the death."

My story is a testimony of hope and overcoming. It's a testimony that has been told from the White House to the most violent prisons, from Portland to the Philippines, from the down-and-out in the streets, to the world's elite.

Regardless of your current condition, this God story gives hope for you or for maybe somebody you love. That's the main reason I wrote my upcoming new book, "From Junkie to Jerusalem," to let you know that no matter where you're from, no matter what you're going through and no matter what your children are going through, God has a miracle in the works. If you are breathing, you are not too far gone. He has an amazing future for you.

It's also an inspiring testimony about Tiz after doctors gave her three months to live because of cancer. There's so much encouraging hope to share, but against all odds it's now been almost six years.

Our grandson, Lyon, was given a terminal diagnosis of leukemia. It's now gone. The cancer is gone—not in remission, gone. His nurse, who spent her career with leukemia patients, told us, "Thank you. Now I've seen one."

"Seen one what?" we asked.

"One patient with this grim diagnosis to live."

His amazing story, like his grandmother's, show the way God used both of their miracles to impact others in amazing, profound ways.

Years ago, when I walked into that church, nobody would even talk to me because I was a complete junkie and too far gone in their eyes. Despite them, Jesus still showed up in my heart, and thank God even though man looks on the outside, He looks on the inside. Through Jesus, there's no end to where this can go and where you can go. He can take you too, from wherever you are to beyond what you could imagine. He will show you what happiness is and give it to you.

Although it looks different than the happiness the world offers, it's a happiness with peace and fulfillment that goes beyond our circumstances and soars past all our understanding.

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