



MY TESTIMONY

BY SHAUN HICKEY

(Taken from Chapter One of "Turning wine into Living Water; the Baptism of Fire" - By Shaun Hickey)

"But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

(Romans 5:8)

The early years:

I tried to think of a dynamic way to capture your attention! Perhaps the time I punched the school bully in the face; then slipped his swinging right hand as the excitable crowd of eight-year-old boys looked on. Maybe when I tore down the hill on my bike and smashed straight into the side of a passing car? I also spilt boiling water down my front when stealing a saveloy off the stove and threw stones over the neighbour's fence in an effort to smash his glasshouse.

As I reflect over my life there are many things I could bring to your attention. One fond memory I have is wandering through our humble home looking for a spot in the sun to lie down in the warmth, there I sensed an overwhelming feeling of peace and would simply fall asleep. Mum would regularly find me asleep on the floor in different parts of the house.

Now if my life had stayed that peaceful it would have been a dream, but life isn't that straight forward, is it? Besides, if my life had stayed in that zone, I probably wouldn't be writing this book.

I grew up in a typical Kiwi (New Zealand) home – Dad, Mum and three siblings (I was third in line). We didn't have much excess, but we got by with my parents always finding a way to put food on the table and clothes on our backs. One of my favourite times would be when big plastic bags of clothing would turn up containing hand-me-downs from my cousin Aaron. It would be like Christmas morning as I ripped the bag apart to reveal my new range of clothes. I would feel like a rich kid being able to try on all this new clothing - it didn't matter they had been used. Those were *simple* days when fashion labels and fame were not something to strive for.

Dad:

Dad worked hard for New Zealand Post. I remember watching him head off to work on his motorbike. Dad enjoyed working and was very dedicated to his workplace. A real highlight was being able to spend a day with him at work in the mailing room of NZ Post in New Plymouth. I enjoyed watching hundreds of envelopes flick through the sorting machine and placed in bundles for the postman to deliver. I also spent a lot of time in the supply room making rubber band balls and daisy chaining the large supply of bands together.

Dad seemed to be happy there and would be the one making all the jokes, having everyone laughing. As promotions came and Dad climbed the corporate ladder, his work life slowly started to swamp everything else, and we didn't see a lot of him. He would leave before 7:00am and we wouldn't see him again until at least 7:30pm. Many weekends Dad would bring the computer home and work

relentlessly. This did have an upside. We could not afford a computer so Dad would let us sit at the table and play games! As we grew older, Dad was heavily involved in the rugby club and managed our rugby teams. I enjoyed having that time with Dad and am thankful for the time he put into supporting us on the rugby field.

Mum:

My mother took on the family duties and made sure we were taken care of. She worked tirelessly through the day to get on top of the mess her four young children had created. The old school washing machine could be heard churning every day and the washing line became a constant art form of daily drying.

We didn't have the funds to buy flash packets of cookies, but who needed them when we would arrive home from school to Mum's freshly baked batches of pikelets or rock-cakes. We sat at the table smearing them with butter and consuming as many as possible before mum put the brakes on. I would then hide in the pantry, secretly buttering a few more before darting outside, nearly *choking* as I stuffed them down my throat.

Mum sacrificed a lot, and like many *homemakers* didn't get the appreciation she deserved. She definitely had her hands full with four children fighting for dominion. My siblings and I would have hours of fun playing, but we would frequently push Mum past her high threshold of tolerance and then have to deal with the consequences when Dad arrived home from work.

My mother was a quiet person who suffered much hardship through her life. However, I'm very proud that she always found the strength to press on with life and doesn't realise just how strong a woman she is. I have immense respect for her and am forever grateful of the sacrifices she made through life that many others may not have made.

Siblings:

My siblings (Robert, Lisa, Steven) and I shared a fairly standard relationship growing up. Our favourite game was where three of us would have a heavy stick (or branch) and one wouldn't. The person without a stick would have to run the gauntlet from one end of the back yard to the other while being whipped and beaten by those in possession of sticks. We would all have a turn at running the gauntlet and the winner would be the one who didn't cry. It was a brutal game but at the same time very enjoyable. We would also spend hours playing in the local bush and recording ourselves while pretending to be Radio DJ's.

We had our fair share of collisions with each other. We could be best friends one minute but then the next moment the seams would burst open and things become volatile. We would scream, abuse, and get physical with each other bringing the house into an uproar. We could have anything from cricket bats smacking doors in, to hurtful words being hurled at one another. Sometimes the hatred would linger for weeks on end when we wouldn't speak to each other at all.

Now I have to be honest, I was probably the worst of them all. There seemed to be a part of me that liked to wind up people. I don't know why, but at times I would deliberately set out to cause strife and wouldn't stop antagonising people until the whole house was in chaos. Sadly, I would then feel a sense of pleasure once everything had exploded.

Personal story:

Anxiety – I detest you!

Causing strife was only one of my childhood issues. For as long as I can remember I carried an uneasy feeling inside me. I never felt settled and always lacked peace. Over time this uneasy feeling grew to a point where I constantly felt anxious and lacked self-confidence with a mild cloud of fear hovering over me. I assumed this was normal as it had always been there and I knew no different. The anxiety lasted right through to my salvation. At times it would cripple me, causing me to either withdraw or lash out. I also lived with a constant feeling of being inadequate and second rate - it always seemed to be me who suffered rejection.

On several occasions during my early years at school I needed to go to the bathroom but paralysing anxiety would take over and I'd be too scared to ask the teacher if I could go, so I'd wet my pants. I then spent the rest of the day trying to hide my mess and denying what I had done. It was awful! One day I finally worked up the courage to ask the teacher if I could go to the bathroom. I pushed through the anxiety and felt brave as I walked forward. However, she rudely and defiantly refused my request and I was sent back to my seat in a world of confusion and hurt, only to end up in a mess again.

It's those kinds of moments that crush a child's confidence and without knowing how to deal with such situations I internalised my turmoil and began to put on a *mask* to get by. On the outside I put on a brave face but inside I was falling into a deep hole of anxious loneliness and despair.

Christianity:

***But Jesus said, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven."
(Matthew 19:14)***

From a very young age I felt a drawing to *something*. I can now confirm that *something* was God, but back then I didn't know anything about God, as I wasn't brought up in a Christian home. At times the drawing was very strong. I believe my early memories of wandering through the house looking for a sunlit spot on the floor, was me seeking to lie down in the presence of God as this is where I felt most peaceful and at rest. It was like a voice would call me into the light – and I sensed this drawing all through my early years.

We never celebrated Easter as a religious event - it was all about a long weekend where the *Easter Bunny* would drop off some chocolate eggs to consume. My brother, sister and I would sit down and break our eggs into little pieces and then patiently smooth out every crease from the foil wrapping that enclosed the chocolate. Easter weekends were good times.

Along with the chocolate eggs and sugar rush, I would get a strong *drawing* to the *Jesus of Nazareth* story that played on television every Easter weekend. I was so drawn to this *Man* who they called Jesus that I would sit immersed in this program as it played over several days.

Each day as I ran out the door to play French cricket with my older brother and sister in the backyard I would yell out for Mum to let me know when *my programme* came on. Then during the middle of an intense run chase Mum would sound the alarm, "Shaun, your program has started." Against the rebuke of my older siblings I would head straight inside and take the main seat in the lounge to watch this Jesus go about His day. I have a clear picture of *Jesus* walking down a dark spiral staircase and I would feel the intensity portrayed through the story of *Jesus Christ*.

Year after year when Easter came I couldn't wait to watch *Jesus of Nazareth* play on the television screen. This was a time where I felt connected to something of my own – like a cloak of contentment would come down and release me from my daily battle with anxiety and strife.

Jesus denied:

One day at school (I was around 7 years old), a lady came into our classroom and asked if any Christians were in the class and if so, they were to follow her to another room. I didn't know what a Christian was back then, but I had just learnt about having a Christian name, so assumed that meant me. I went along and it turned out to be religious studies in school and we met for one hour per week through the school term. I had no idea what they were talking about, and due to the fact I was mixing with a new group of people, my anxiety caused me to withdraw and shutdown internally.

At the last session of the term one of the ladies taking the group said she was going to ask everyone to share something they had learnt and if we shared would be given a cross necklace. One by one the children shared what they'd learnt but as this was happening I could feel a paralysing anxiety take over. Next minute I was in a blur with all eyes focused on me as I was asked what I had *learnt* through the term.

The cross necklace had my attention and I wanted one, so fought hard to break through the anxiety overwhelming me. I was struggling to capture something when a thought popped into my mind. I nervously responded, "I have learnt to pray." The teacher replied, "Well, can you tell us a prayer?" Unfortunately, anxiety had now completely flooded my body and fear took hold, "NO!" I said. The teacher responded, "Well, you don't get a necklace then."

I was shattered! I think I was the only child to leave the classroom without a cross that day which really upset me. I didn't know what that *cross* actually stood for but I could feel its pull and desperately wanted it. However I was denied the cross and left the classroom with a wounded soul of embarrassment. I felt something break inside me that day.

This was not the only time I was denied the *cross* and life of Jesus Christ. For some reason my family started attending the local Church. (I still don't know why as it was not really our thing.) My older brother and sister were quite involved taking part in the religious activities. My brother was trained as an altar boy and would wear the fancy regalia. I would just sit with my parents and watch proceedings take place.

When the time came to take communion many people would go forward and take the sacramental elements. I would feel a very strong pull towards the altar - there was something about the bread and wine that I needed (See Matthew 26:26-28). I had no idea what it represented but the quiet voice of God was drawing me to himself. One morning during communion this *supernatural pull* was so strong that I asked my parents if I could go up the front and "*have some*". However I was denied communion and told I was too young.

"Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it."
(Proverbs 22:6)

God calls people before they were in the womb and he was calling me during my juvenile years. However, it just didn't seem to happen for me and it appeared I was simply denied God's grace.

My Grandmother attended a Catholic Church and one day she gave my older brother and sister a special book and a set of rosary beads. Instantly a burning witness lit up within me. There was something powerful about them and this drawing I had become so aware of started to pull me close.

As my older siblings were given these items I felt pure excitement as I waited to receive mine. Unfortunately I did not receive anything and was denied once again because I was apparently too young.

I was really upset and internalised the knockback and rejection I felt. It seemed anything I wanted in regard to Jesus Christ was denied me and the door was kept closed. My brother and sister didn't really value what they'd been given, in fact my brother simply stuffed them in his drawer and forgot about them.

I could hear this small book calling me from within my brother's drawer. Then one day when he wasn't around it got the better of me and I snuck into our shared bedroom and stole the book and rosary beads out of his drawer. I then sat on my bed rustling through the pages of this captivating book.

It was a Bible. I didn't know what a Bible was back then and it was written in a foreign language. But that didn't stop me from enjoying the *presence* I could feel oozing off the pages – I knew it was alive!

I had an overwhelming sense of excitement as I sat on my bed flicking through the pages and running my hands up and down the rosary beads where a *cross* with Jesus Christ hung. I would gaze so intently at this stricken man. I knew He was special, and that He was very important. I felt empowered as I sat on my bed, with an immense feeling of *WOW* resting upon me. I didn't care if my brother came in and caught me with his things because I felt free when I spent time in this way. Over time his rosary beads and Bible found a new home in my drawer without my brother even realising.

God was calling me at a young age and I continued to feel Him *drawing* me to Himself.

I walked home from school every day along a pathway that ran parallel to an old graveyard where we would often play among the graves while gathering bamboo to make bows-'n-arrows. The old cracked tombstones made great hiding places and props for adventure.

On one particular afternoon as I walked home from school, a massive tent had been erected in an open field next to the graveyard. Being inquisitive I hopped over the fence to take a look. I entered the tent and sat down on the floor with my arms and legs folded and watched the people as an old movie projector played on a screen. It felt like *home*. I sat there feeling peaceful and safe - I sensed I belonged there.

A Christian ministry had set up the tent for an outreach. No one ever spoke to me but just being in that place felt great. A couple of days later I was so grieved when walking home to find the tent had gone. I was back to walking home alone but each time I walked through the graveyard I pondered what that tent was all about and longed for it to return.

The call attacked:

***"The devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour."
(1 Peter 5:8)***

When God has a calling on your life you can be sure that Satan will try and cut it off at the knees. Satan purposed to stop me from coming to know God and he came at me like a roaring lion seeking to bring me into isolation and darkness. I suffered rejection in junior school and my anxiety caused me to become a *desperate follower* of people in my quest to fit in. Demonic attacks came against me bringing me into dark places of vulnerability where I was subject to deep inner wounding.

When I was young I was invited to go away with my friend and his family for a week. This was exciting as I had never done anything like this before. The holiday started with great joy as we scouted the bush land under the house, went fishing and played mini golf at the local park. However, after a couple of days my friend started to act in a very strange way. He always wanted to retreat to the bedroom where he would want to kiss me, expose himself to me and want me to touch him.

I was too young to know what was going on. I felt so trapped being away from my parents. This was daunting and made me very uncomfortable, but I had to walk through it the best I could. Although I had many *issues* when I was young I was *still* an innocent child who had *no idea* this behaviour existed. I was confused but never sought help. Because I suffered paralysing fear and lacked self-confidence, I internalised the abuse. I was now on a downhill path of losing who I was created to be.

Satan raged against me and I was in constant survival.

One year during school holidays I went with my parents to stay with some relations. While away, I spent a few days with another family member so my parents could do other things. This person took advantage of me over the few days I was in his care. He regularly rubbed my genital area and buttocks and made me feel dirty. This happened every day and was horrible and disturbing! I felt demoralised but had to shut off to the situation and go back each day. I didn't know what to do because my anxiety robbed me and lack of self-confidence stole my voice. Again I internalised the wounding, shutting it deep down in the darkness growing within me.

It seemed like I had a sign on my back saying, "Here I am, destroy me".

I was now 12 years old, living in Porirua Wellington, New Zealand. We had moved from New Plymouth a few years earlier as Dad had gained a promotion. Coming to Wellington was exciting but coming from a small country school, I battled with the different social culture.

Once a week the primary school I attended would visit a neighbouring school where we would be taught woodwork, art, music and have cooking lessons. But on one particular day things were going to be a little different - we were going to learn CPR for the morning.

The class was called into an empty room and we waited as the *short troubled-looking teacher* ran his eyes over the class full of children. He locked his eyes on me and called me forward to be his *patient* on the ground. *This became the most humiliating, dirty, violating and controlling situation I had ever been in.*

He may have been teaching CPR to the class, but the whole time he deceitfully fondled and sexually groped me on the ground. This was more than demonstrating CPR! He was taking this opportunity to satisfy unclean sexual desires toward children. It was vulgar and upsetting. His hands deceptively fondled all the wrong places and his sickening mouth groped the side of my face like a scene from a romance movie. It was humiliating! I was being abused right in front of a class of oblivious students and was forced to be a corpse on the ground, vulnerable to the demonic compulsions of an unclean predator. Again anxiety and fear stole my voice and internal weakness made me endure it.

My relief finally came when the bell rang for morning tea. When we returned to class I assumed the teacher would choose someone else to be his *pleasure* on the ground. To ensure it would not be me, I hid at the back of the class - positioning myself where the teacher couldn't see me. However, his creepy eyes searched me out and before I knew it I was lying on my back, a prisoner to his filthy hands and groping mouth.

When school finished I couldn't get home quick enough to have a shower and scrub myself in an effort to feel clean again. I was further damaged inside that day and felt so vulnerable to the world. I felt picked on and isolated with no inner strength to stand. I internalised this dark day which fuelled my anxiety and the dark hole in my soul grew darker and darker.

Side note - It was not long after this that several rumours started circulating that this teacher had abused some other children. One day while in class, a student behind me started screaming hysterically at him to not touch her, yelling at him to leave her alone as she frantically ran out of the classroom. I don't remember seeing him again after that incident.

The college years:

The day came to start college. I went to Aotea College in Porirua, New Zealand. I was excited as my brother and sister were there but I also carried a lot of anxiety as I was well outside my comfort zone. My friends had all gone to more privileged colleges in Wellington and I was on my own again.

Over time I made some really good friends and settled in. But underneath I carried a deep fear of rejection and anxiety. I had become very good at covering up, as I had accepted this is who I was - a weak, second-rate disposable person, trying to survive life. I was in awe of other students who could display dynamic internal and physical strength, but I was weak inside and my bodily development seemed to lag behind. I longed for the day when I could just be me (whoever *me* was) and walk boldly like those around me.

"Wine is a mocker, strong drink is a brawler, and whoever is led astray by it is not wise."
(Proverbs 20:1)

When I was 14 years old, bored and looking for adventure, my friend had the idea of stealing alcohol from our parent's liquor cabinet so we could get drunk. This didn't take much persuading because as a little boy I would wake in the morning after my parent's party and go through the house drinking the left-over *dregs* from beer bottles that were left lying around - *cigarette ash and all*.

I arranged to stay at my mate's house that evening and we mixed all the alcohol we'd stolen into one large bottle. We then headed off for the night on a homemade motorbike made from an old lawn mower. I got very drunk that evening and had the time of my life cruising through the long flowing Whitby walkways. We went all over the place and even rocked up to where my sister was enjoying the evening with her friends! We crossed paths with fellow college students also partying in the dark. The night ended with a broken motorbike and me violently sick.

But being sick didn't bother me. I became a different person that evening, and for once I felt free from anxiety and could finally socialise due to feeling confident. Just like my dad, I had become the life of the party and connected with people I usually struggled to hold conversation with.

Through getting drunk I had found a mask to cover all the weaknesses and pain I felt inside, and in their place I received a feeling of freedom that I'd longed for all my life. *I had arrived!* From that night on getting drunk became a regular thing for me because when I was drunk I had the time of my life. But if I went out and didn't drink I would socially shut down and feel constant anxiety and fear.

As my consumption of alcohol and partying way of life grew, my need to stay *masked* from fear and anxiety also increased, leading to my introduction to cannabis and other drugs.

The rugby club:

I left school at the age of 16 and went to Polytechnic to study Mechanical Engineering - then worked full time as a car mechanic. This was great as it gave me the knowledge to fix my pride and joy - a 1978 Mark 1 Ford Escort! Working full time also provided me with money to fuel my party lifestyle.

I joined the local rugby club and felt like I'd finally found my place in life. In previous years I'd spent many Saturday evenings alone in the car outside waiting for my older brother (a gifted senior rugby player) and my father (senior member of the club committee) to finish enjoying social evenings with their mates. But now I was one of them - *inside with the boys* enjoying a beer after a hard game of footy.

Rugby became a *huge* part of my life and identity and I formed strong social relationships with my team mates. We spent a lot of time together with rugby training on Tuesday and Thursday evenings followed by a game on Saturday afternoon. I would then spend most of Saturday evening partying hard with the boys. Getting drunk and high on drugs became the standard Saturday ritual. This was made easy because every time we won my mate was given a *joint* (cannabis cigarette) and we'd go out to my car and get high before returning to the club bar for the evening. Cannabis was very easy to get - easier than lollies.

“Do not look on the wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it swirls around smoothly;³² at the last it bites like a serpent, and stings like a viper.”
(Proverbs 23:31-32)

I was oblivious to the downhill spiral sucking me deeper into darkness. The amount of alcohol I was drinking rapidly increased. Saturday night then blended into Sunday where I'd continue to get drunk and high on drugs all through the day.

When rugby season finished, Friday night drinking would kick off the weekend and I'd party hard until late Sunday evening. These weekends were completely fuelled by alcohol and drugs. *One day simply led into another*. Thursday was payday, so after rugby training it was either straight to the club bar for drinks, or off to the local bottle shop for a couple of dozen beers. Wednesday night was spent in the city at *“all you can drink for \$10.00 student nights”*! Basically any free time was spent either at a bar, or working my way through a 24 pack of beer. If I had holidays I could spend a solid few weeks constantly drunk and high on drugs.

Alcohol and drugs consumed my life and I needed them to live. The *false mask* I had put on when I was fourteen years old had taken over my life and now I was drowning. Through trying to cover my fear and anxieties and with a deep longing to find *my place* in the world, I'd become an *alcoholic* who was addicted to drugs.

I only felt happy when I was wasted and would be drunk more times a week than I was sober. My hands would shake badly when I became sober. At times it was so bad I couldn't make a coffee in the morning as I'd spill coffee grains and sugar everywhere.

On top of the drinking I was smoking cannabis *every day* and started taking heavier drugs such as LSD, Magic Mushrooms and other *random pills* I was handed. Sometimes I'd be so high on LSD and drugs that I thought I'd never come down from the high and could spend a couple of days 'tripping'. This could be the scariest thing one couldn't escape.

Volatile environment:

I had gone from being a young child called by God, to a young man out of control, lost to the devil's schemes.

My friends branded me with the nick-name *Wiki*, as I'd developed a real short temper and it didn't take much for me to become violent. Looking back I realise this was all clustered around my fear of rejection and internal wounding. I was so insecure that if someone gave an *odd* look in my direction or made a comment I didn't like, I'd lose my temper. It felt better for me to attack them, than have feelings of rejection pound me down again. It was also an act to try and make an identity for myself and to cover the true weakness I felt on a daily basis.

I was living in a volatile, destructive environment. I'd lost my virginity at a young age. I had many altercations with the police and spent multiple nights locked up in police cells for being drunk and disorderly, disturbing the peace, fighting, trespassing and drink driving. I lost friends through tragic events and suicide and one of my closest friends was imprisoned - I'd go and visit him most weekends.

None of this destructive behaviour bore any good fruit and for many years the tragedies experienced didn't make any impact for change. Sadly most tragedies were just another excuse to get drunk and high on drugs. This was the only life I knew and the life I embraced.

My reality:

***“There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.”
(Proverbs 14:12)***

The life of sin I was living strangled me. The bite of the viper had released its poison into my veins and I was dying a slow death. What had started out as a *fun night* drinking with my friend at college had given birth to a life of bondage.

Through sin, darkness had flooded my mind and I started suffering depression. I may have been the life of the party around my mates but when I was alone would sit in darkness crying in my pain. Many, many times I'd be curled up on the floor in my bedroom or bathroom *with the lights off*, crying in shame and torment. It would take all my energy to get up off the floor and go about my day. My life was constantly filled with anxiety and fear until I started drinking or smoked a joint to bury the pain. I could not go to the shops alone, nor make any forward steps through fear.

I couldn't sleep at night. I'd go days on end with virtually no sleep and would have voices screaming in my head during the long night that caused me great torment. I'd lie awake in a revolving vacuum of despair - was I going crazy? Many times life felt so dark that I thought the only way I'd ever find freedom was to die, but to be honest, I was just too afraid to give that a shot.

Did God ever give up on me?

If God was calling me from a young age and I turned away from Him and ended up like this, why would He ever want to speak to me again? Wouldn't He just turn away and leave me to the dark sin-fuelled life I was living?

Apparently not! In times of great distress I'd have recurring thoughts of some Christian people I known at college many years prior. There were two girls in particular who had a heart for God and walked a wholesome and straight path that even I could associate with *light*. In my depressed state of despair and darkness these two girls would often pass through my mind. I'd be shown how they were always

happy and carried a freedom I always longed for. I'd then start thinking that I needed a Christian girlfriend as they didn't seem to live the dark life I was living.

SIDE NOTE: I believe we all have the ability to pray and I can now see these impressions I would have was God communicating with me. I don't know why God would bother with me when I was so sinful and lost, but in my distress there was a desperate inner cry for change. And if change was possible, it could only be God who could start digging around the hardened rock of my heart to bring life to His lost child.

Years of drinking, drugs and sin passed by and then one evening at a party a young lady named Yvonne entered my life. She captured my attention and we shared in brief conversation before I was distracted by the illicit behaviour taking place. Yvonne stuck in my mind and I heard that she was keen to catch up with me. Over time we started seeing each other regularly.

In the weekends Yvonne would only want to meet after 1pm on Sunday. I didn't think anything of this but in due course someone told me she was a Christian and went to Church. Yvonne had been brought up in The Salvation Army and had a deep belief in God, but through real hardship and loss she'd found it difficult to live the lifestyle. However, Yvonne continued to attend Church with her family and played the drums in the Church Music Team and Brass Band.

I was so arrogant back then and when I spoke to Yvonne on the phone I asked if she was a Christian. Yvonne didn't flinch and said, "Yes." I then reacted in an abrupt manner, "Don't you ever try to put that stuff on me!"

I was such a fool and put up walls of resistance. But great fear came over me and for some reason the whole *Church thing* struck too close to home. Being so internally weak I didn't want my friends or family to know I was seeing a Christian girl.

It was only through the grace of God that we continued to see each other. Yvonne and I got on so well, but we could also lock horns. We could be very close, then tear each other apart through hurtful actions and behaviour. We were *far* from perfect and were two people in desperate need of repair, but the grace and purposes of God kept bringing us back together.

***"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works
and glorify your Father in heaven."
(Matthew 5:16)***

I was impacted by the love present in Yvonne's family. Their home had a calm atmosphere. Her dad always seemed happy and her mother overflowed with joy. This was very different to the volatile environment where I lived. Yvonne's family welcomed me into their home where I would find respite from the tornado blowing inside me.

I became used to Yvonne attending Church - it was her thing and I left her to it. But one day she invited me to go with her to a celebration meeting. She insisted it wasn't anything crazy, it was *just Church*. I surprised myself by saying "Yes"! (*I was chasing the girl so I had to do what I had to do - right?*)

Sunday morning came - I had an extreme hang-over from the night before but still went to Church with Yvonne. I was so nervous and kept my head down as we quickly walked along the street and scampered through the front door so no one would see me. I didn't make eye contact with anyone but sat watching people greet one another with happiness and laughter. I had to put on a happy smile

when people introduced themselves to me but underneath my anxiety and hangover was thinking, "Go away - don't talk to me, so I don't have to talk to you!"

Kick off!

The clock hit 10:00am and the rear doors burst open with people both young and old running up the two aisles toward the front stage. I was taken back to say the least!

The galloping herd then gathered on stage and immediately started singing praises while dancing from side to side - some with their hands in the air. I had a cheeky laugh as many of them *clearly* weren't fit enough to run down the aisle and then burst into song. Loud gasps could be heard and the tones wavered as the breathing struggled to keep up with the beat and output required.

The aisles then filled with women waving these ribbon-lined tambourines all over the place. They were shaking this and shaking that and rattling their old bones all around the Church. I thought, "*What did I take last night?*" It seemed to me there was more outrageous behaviour going on in that Church service than how we'd behaved the night before! I didn't know what it was all about, but was very happy to receive the benefit of going to Yvonne's parent's home after Church to indulge in her mother's lamb roast, that was a real *God send* for me that day.

After that initial burst of excitement I started attending Church with Yvonne regularly *but most* of the time would sit in my seat not knowing what it was all about and just waiting to leave. For someone who was sensitive to the Holy Spirit and calling of God as a young boy, I was *now* hardened in heart and oblivious to what it was all about.

The battle had begun:

After *many ups and downs* and by the grace of God, our relationship grew and Yvonne accepted my proposal to get married. As we prepared for the *big day*, Yvonne said we had to go to Christian Marriage Counselling before our wedding. I strongly objected! Why should I have to listen to some Christian tell me how to be married when I didn't even know him? I was very grumpy but Yvonne dug in her heels and made me go.

I reluctantly drove with Yvonne to The Salvation Army Booth College of Mission in Upper Hutt to meet Major David Noakes and his wife Vyvyenne. They talked about marriage and what it meant over several evenings when we met together. I sat silently during the sessions as I struggled to communicate when I wasn't drunk. This was such a burden as I constantly needed to wrestle against anxiety flooding me - so tiring fighting this torment.

At the end of the last session Major David grabbed hold of my hand in a firm grip. He looked me straight in the eye and said, "We've been praying for Yvonne every Thursday morning for many years - we're now going to put you on our list and will be praying for you." He then went on to say the craziest thing, "I'm sorry to tell you this but from now on things will only get worse for you."

I stood there stunned! The *Shaun response* started to rise up with internal thoughts of, "*How dare you say that to me!*" But there was an authority coming out of Major David's eyes that *kept me in my place*.

Guess what? After that statement life did get worse! Majors David and Vyvyenne were now praying for me and the battle raged for my soul. An awareness of God started to intensify. I could sense God's presence but also started to feel the heavy weight of guilt and sin of my past that I lived in. If I did manage to get some sleep, I'd wake with feelings of regret and shame. Internal warfare rampaged within.

I'd go to Church and although I didn't understand the preaching, there was a strong convicting presence that would capture my attention. Some mornings I would be so locked on Captain Paul Herring pacing up and down the pulpit, that I forgot anyone else was around me.

Intense warfare:

More and more parties started springing up and I felt obliged to attend. By this stage I desperately wanted to be free of alcohol and would say to myself, "I'll just have a couple drinks" but by the end of the night I would be heavily intoxicated, not knowing where I was or what I was doing. Even sitting at home alone watching sport, alcohol would get the better of me and I'd drink to calm my anxiety. To justify myself I'd say to people that there's nothing wrong with having a couple of drinks, but then would hear a very clear voice saying, "That's not what you're doing though, is it Shaun?"

I tried to fight, and slow down my drinking, but alcohol owned me - *I was an alcoholic*. I knew I was controlled by this horrible addiction but didn't know how to live without it. For 12 years my *entire life* had been alcohol and drug focused. I knew no other way and it sickened me to the core. *I wanted to be free but didn't know how!*

Cornered by God:

***"I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase."
(1 Corinthians 3:6)***

God became active in my life. One night at a party I was drinking heavily with my mates when an intimidating looking man came alongside me. He was a tough Maori guy who looked like he shouldn't be messed with. It turned out he was an ex-member of one of New Zealand's most notorious gangs, but he'd left the gang after being involved in an extremely violent home invasion. This man started telling me about Jesus, his past life and how he now lived for God - his life had changed for the good.

God knew what he was doing. At that time I may have put on a clean face when I attended Church, but at a party when I was full of booze, if anyone tried to share God with me, I'd have played the staunch card and tell them where they could shove it. However, this guy was very intimidating and I had no option but to listen - *God had me cornered*. The man pulled out a heavily worn black leather jacket, just like a gang jacket, and was so proud to show me his *patch* sewn on the back with the *cross of Jesus Christ*. I was very impacted by how his life could flip from one end of the spectrum to another - leaving gang life was not something for the faint hearted. I encouraged him in his new direction, but thought to myself, *"Good for you brother, but it's not for me."*

There were many times God cornered me to get His message across and there were a couple of times that God sent angels to protect me from harm (I didn't know they were angels at the time). God was ploughing my hardened heart that was causing me distress and I made every excuse why I couldn't be a Christian:

- Would I suffer rejection again?
- The Salvation Army has a no alcohol policy and I couldn't stop drinking - so it was out of the question
- I was too anxious to live without alcohol and drugs
- I had made too many bad mistakes.

Relentless affliction:

God kept calling me but I refused to surrender. For this reason God had to bring me to my knees and everything in my life started to crumble. I had no joy, I was depressed and hopeless and felt I'd missed

out on everything good I could have experienced in life. Every desire I ever had was crushed and any hope of a good and bright future evaded me.

I'd been obsessed with playing rugby but during one game I made a tackle and there was a great big SNAP in my knee. I ruptured my ACL and was not to play rugby again. A big part of my life was taken away and I was left with a huge hole in my identity. Yvonne and I tried to get into business but it didn't work out for us. We didn't have a lot of money coming in but I still had to cater for the parties and large amounts of alcohol I was consuming. These expenses all went on the credit card and we ended up broke.

Everything we tried would be met by a notable dead end. Frustration and anger simmered away within me, as I could see others going forward and being blessed in life, but I would take one step forward and three steps back.

Yvonne and I were in a desperate place and needed something to go well for us, so decided to have a baby. Yvonne became pregnant fairly quickly and we finally had something to rejoice about. Unfortunately after 10 weeks we miscarried, causing an incredible amount of pain for us both.

I became extremely hard and angry in my heart because something good had finally happened to me, but I believed God had taken away my child because I wasn't good enough to be a dad, and also because I wasn't raised in the *royalty* of a Christian home.

A dark cloud of depression hovered over me and I became even more withdrawn, taking my bad attitude out on people I loved the most. I would go to work and not speak to anyone for weeks at a time as I stewed in my own issues with no sense of escape. I had no peace and was always on edge.

I started hating Christians; I couldn't handle their happy, smiling faces.

Yvonne and I battled to get over our miscarriage yet weren't dealing with it very well. However, Yvonne started to turn her heart to God and decided to take part in a course called '*40 Days of Purpose*'. After the first night she came home really upset. Someone had said something which under our current circumstances was still very raw. I was furious, "*Typical Christians!*" I then told Yvonne I'd go the following week to support her; but my intention was to take my bad attitude and aim to bring everyone down.

I went to the following session ready to unleash my fury. As I walked through the front door, a feeling of calm came over me like a wave and my fury instantly left. God had set me up!

I was welcomed into the group and need to say I really enjoyed the evening. I didn't say too much but through listening to others in our small group I started to gain a small glimpse of light - that there could be hope for me. Once again I was hearing that God could take all our failures and mistakes and turn them around for good.

God kept the pressure on and I started to feel a strong pull toward Him, but this caused a whole new struggle. "Why me, why do I have to step out from all my family and friends and become a Christian?" This was way too hard to process.

At work I would talk to my mother-in-law explaining, "If I were to become a Christian it would be like hanging a roll of meat around my neck and standing out in the middle of a pack of lions."

Liz would simply respond, "God has perfect timing and has big plans for your life."

Turning point:

“Whenever God means to make a man great, He always first breaks him in pieces”
(Charles Spurgeon)

Yvonne and I desperately needed a break after our miscarriage, so we planned a trip to visit my sister in Sydney, Australia. It was strange because I knew the exact date we had to go and the date of our return. The day before we left for Australia I was walking through the cold Rubber Band Factory when I heard a very clear voice speak to me. It was so clear it was audible, and there was no doubt it was the voice of God... *“When you return, things will be different.”*

My initial response was, “Well You'd better wait till I get back because I'm not spending all this money to go to Australia and not be able to party.” My life revolved around drugs and alcohol and I couldn't fathom a life without it. *My thoughts on what God had said were far removed from what was about to take place and life was definitely not going to be the same again.*

After a few enjoyable days in Australia the phone rang - it was my older brother. As the conversation proceeded I could hear my sister becoming more and more upset. I was trying to get her to whisper what was wrong as I could see the turmoil on her face. Things weren't good! I thought someone had died so got up and snatched the phone off her to hear what was wrong.

My older brother told me that after 30 years, my parents' marriage was in turmoil. My dad was in the psychiatric ward of Wellington Hospital wanting to take his own life. The reasons behind this meltdown completely blew me apart.

Family life as I knew it had exploded. After all I had gone through in life, I knew my parents were always around but this was now broken. I was stunned and went into default – grabbed my opened bottle of bourbon and got stuck in. But the more I drank the more uncomfortable I became. It was like my internal processing had short circuited.

I then went into a deep feeling of emptiness and started to have a *vision* of my entire life played out before me. *It was an eerie feeling and I knew I had arrived at a pivotal point in my life.*

God was showing me my life - His words were silent yet so loud. I could see all the destruction I had caused myself:

- The alcohol, the drugs and the sin that strangled me like a python
- The life I had lived and portrayed
- The dead ends I always arrived at
- The reality of the darkness in which I was lost
- The violence
- The jokes and innuendoes I had shared with family and friends.

The *intentional* drive to be the biggest party animal around were all revealed to me as **ONE BIG JOKE. MY LIFE WAS A JOKE!**

Decision time:

“Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things.”
(Jeremiah 33:3)

I was completely broken. My inner vase had been knocked off the mantelpiece and smashed into a thousand pieces with no chance of repair. I tried to drown my sorrows in bourbon but for some reason the alcohol was having no effect on me. Time was standing still as I sat there in hopelessness and I could sense God was waiting for me to make a decision.

Eventually I put down my drink and went into the bathroom of my sister's flat, where I stood alone amongst the dirty towels and a toilet that wouldn't flush. How ironic that was - it all represented the state of my soul - nothing but filthy garments that needed to be flushed.

I had no right to, but I desperately cried out to God, "Help me! I need your help! My family needs your help!" I didn't know what else to do. I had no other option but to cry out to the very God I'd been running from my whole life. I stood in silence while trying to compose myself, then headed back to the lounge - but I didn't pick my drink back up!

That night I didn't get any sleep. As darkness engulfed the house I was lying on my bed with tears running down my cheeks. All my bravado was gone and in deep anguish I cried out to God for help.

"Whoever calls upon the name of the LORD shall be saved."
(Romans 10:13)

I returned to New Zealand a few days later and was *compelled* to visit Captain Paul Herring at the Tawa Salvation Army, the Church I'd been attending with Yvonne. As I drove there, a very *intense* internal battle was going on in my mind and I wrestled as to why I should go see Captain Paul. A constant, forceful voice challenged me the whole way, "You don't need to go see him! You don't need to go see him!" This agitated voice *demand*ed I *not* go in to see Captain Paul. My mind was in overdrive, insisting I just *harden up* and *bury my brokenness* like everything else I'd suffered in life. But this simply wasn't possible to do anymore because I'd been ripped apart at the seams and my capacity to store anymore pain had already spilled out over the floor.

I was flipping back and forth like a tennis ball being smacked over the net, so I made a deal to myself, "I will only go in if there's a free car park right outside the front door." Now I didn't know that Tuesday was the busiest morning of the Church week-day calendar with two Mainly Music sessions. But when I came to the Church there was one car park available right outside the front door. My turmoil increased. I tried to sabotage my deal by passing the Church and continuing on to the round-about, then returning back along the street to the Church again. I was hoping that by the time I returned someone would have taken that *free space* giving me the green light to abort my mission.

As I re-approached, the car park right outside the front door was still available. I now had to follow through on my own deal and reluctantly parked. I went into the Church office to see Captain Paul Herring.

I sat down with Captain Paul. I was very nervous as it had been *many* years since I had let myself be so vulnerable. I stuttered through and slowly told Captain Paul everything that had happened with my family over the previous few days; but I didn't share anything about my own addictions or broken life. As soon as I'd finished unloading, Captain Paul replied with a remark I was not expecting and calmly said, "*Do you want to ask Jesus into your life?*"

I instantly said, "Yes!" There was no hesitation! It seemed like the Holy Spirit carried me straight over the line and into the arms of God.

I followed Captain Paul in prayer asking Jesus Christ to forgive me of all my sin and to be Lord of my life.

Immediately following our prayer Paul said the most peculiar thing to me, *“Everything you have ever done in your life has now been forgiven.”* This was a very clear statement Captain Paul made and was spoken in such a positive tone that immediately I knew he believed it 100%. Firstly, I was shocked at Paul's assertion. Secondly, I couldn't understand why he would make such a confident declaration.

I don't know how I felt when I left Captain Paul's office that day, but I *was* very surprised at Yvonne's amazement when I told her what I'd just done. I was ignorant as to what *salvation* actually meant and didn't understand the significance of what had happened. Neither did I have any understanding of the *power and healing* that's in the *blood of Jesus Christ*.

I was about to experience first-hand what the life changing power of Jesus Christ can do.

Later that day I went to visit my Dad in the Psychiatric Ward of Wellington Hospital. This was very difficult, but as I walked down the long, eerie, lonely corridor towards the ward, it was like I was riding a skateboard - I was being carried.

I entered through 'sign-in' and made my way to the exercise yard to find my Dad. *Then the strangest thing happened!* As I walked through the door into the yard I needed to walk past a number of patients sitting on a bench. Suddenly one man rose to his feet like a soldier and started yelling, *“The Holy One is here! The Holy One is here!”*

It was as if a *light* instantly went on within me. He was declaring what had taken place in my life that morning. The Holy One, *Jesus Christ*, was here and now with me - living inside me! The demonic spirit holding that patient captive could recognise the presence of Jesus Christ in me and he couldn't be contained, declaring the arrival of the King. This was a powerful occurrence that God allowed to take place.

I found Dad and told him *“I love you!”* It was like I was a different person, as this is not how I'd usually have reacted. I told Dad I was now a Christian and that God could help him. I didn't know a lot about God back then but I believed He could help.

I spent some time with Dad in his room and tried my best to turn matters around, but he was like a closed book not wanting to discuss things. Over the next week we had family meetings with doctors to discuss the problems Dad and our family were experiencing and the process going forward.

SIDE NOTE: When life hits rock bottom the way it did for all of us, there is no other option but to dig deep and help those in need, regardless of circumstances. We had many personal issues to work through, but I can honestly say everyone in my family who was around at the time was nothing but supportive and encouraging towards my Dad. Sadly, life and family dynamics have never been the same again.

Deliverance:

“He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love,¹⁴ in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.”

(Colossians 1:13-14)

Knowing how volatile I could be, Mum feared my return to New Zealand and didn't know how I would react. But when I went to visit she sensed straight away something was different about me. Mum was very relieved and proud when I told her I'd become a Christian - that I now had Jesus with me. My relationship with Mum has been tremendously close ever since and I have so much love and respect for her. Mum was an innocent victim and her world was flipped upside down. But what she has accomplished since has been nothing short of miraculous – praise Jesus!

SIDE NOTE: God knew what I needed and before I cried out to Him He had answered. It is now clear that God removed me from New Zealand at that specific time to separate me from what took place, otherwise I'm sure I would have taken the wrong path. I am truly thankful for the way God guided me, and stood with me at that time. He has never left me since.

The day after asking Jesus into my life I went into my workplace and told my mother-in-law what I'd done. Liz was so happy, crying tears of joy that only she could produce. We had spent so many hours discussing God and how hard it would be for me to become a Christian. Liz had encouraged me every step of the way without *growing weary*.

I then went into the main factory office and told my father-in-law. The joy that showed on his face was something I will never forget. After his initial words of encouragement he said I should consider making a public declaration of my faith in Jesus Christ.

The following Sunday I was sitting about three rows from the front of the Church. Captain Paul had finished preaching and the music team was playing the final song. I didn't know the protocol regarding responding to altar calls, all I knew is *I now had Jesus Christ* and wanted to make that stand my father-in-law had spoken about.

I sat there while the last song "*All things are possible*" blasted out across the congregation. I sensed the song was coming to an end and I thought, "I have to go now." I pushed passed the lady standing next to me and with singular focus headed for the front. It's so funny to reflect back on this - you should have seen the look on the music team's faces! They didn't know what to do.

I went down on my knees at the mercy seat and then reality kicked in, "Oh dear - what do I do now?" I'd seen people go forward for prayer before, but what was I doing? The whole congregation was put into a spin as this *wasn't the plan* to conclude the meeting. Thankfully my brother-in-law came straight to my side and started praying for me.

Let me share what happened as I was kneeling at the mercy seat that morning. As the congregation sang, I was taken into a deep place with God. He started to give me a *vision* where I could clearly see a great big bulldozer ploughing through multitudes of people. People were jumping onto the bulldozer, while others were falling off and some were refusing to jump on board. Then a strong voice spoke these words to me, "*There is going to be a move of My Spirit, and then the end will come. It is up to the people to get on board or they will be left behind.*"

It was all new to me but I knew exactly what God was saying. From then on He started to speak to me about revival in dreams and visions - even though I had no idea what *revival* actually was.

"*All things are possible*" was playing in my head all that day, like angels singing to me. I couldn't sleep that evening because "*All things are possible, all things are possible*" kept blaring through my mind. It was the middle of the night and being so filled with joy I said, "Ok God, I get the message but can I now get some sleep?" The song immediately stopped and I went straight to sleep in a way I'd never done before.

All things are possible:

***Jesus looked at them and said to them, "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."
(Matthew 19:26)***

All things are possible has been the theme I've lived by ever since and I can testify that through the *power of Jesus Christ* this statement is absolutely true – *Nothing is impossible for Jesus!*

To be completely locked in darkness and sin is a crippling way to live. The serpent-lined walls of hopelessness inject a constant flow of venom into your soul, where addictions and depressive thoughts torment every waking moment. Failings of the past hold you in captivity and curses over your life produce nothing but a lifeless existence - robbing you of true victory. The light in your soul that once burnt brightly with hope can no longer be seen through the baggage and inner wounding suffered through the years. With all this weighing you down, you are left with nothing but a dark hole of hopelessness, void of any happiness and joy - ***This was my life!***

However ... *"There is power, power, wonder-working power, in the blood, of the lamb - Jesus Christ"*
And through the *wonder-working power of Jesus Christ*, there is deliverance – a new life waiting for anyone who calls on His name:

***"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new."
(2 Corinthians 5:17)***

It took *two weeks* before I realised I hadn't been drinking. This was the longest I'd ever been sober! The moment I asked Jesus Christ into my life I was *instantly delivered* from the alcohol and drug addictions that held me in captivity for twelve years. When I realised this I poured all my alcohol down the sink as I knew I no longer needed it.

New hope and *pure joy* filled my heart like never before and the dark clouds of depression were blown far away as the presence of the Holy Spirit filled my life. I have *never* suffered depression again!

Jesus Christ transformed me in such a powerful way that I became unrecognisable. I would shock people *and myself* when responding to situations my family had to deal with. Only a few days earlier I was on a volatile rampage of destruction but now I was speaking words of life and encouragement.

The aggressive anger and rage that fuelled me was instantly removed. Since that moment I've not acted violently. The evil voices that would scream in my head during the night were totally destroyed and have never come back. Curse words that had poured from my mouth became the praises of God - effortless words of rejoicing and thanksgiving.

My mother saw such a dynamic change in me that she *gave her heart to Jesus Christ*. Yvonne *re-committed her life to Christ* and since then we've lived *powerfully* with Him.

God has blessed us with three beautiful and amazing children. I thank Him *so much* that I'm able to be the father I am today because of the *mercy and grace* I found through the *cross* of Jesus Christ – I am no longer denied!

Going forward:

As you are about to read, life hasn't been without its battles. I'd been under the influence of alcohol and drugs for 12 years solid. Every social gathering I attended was done under some form of substance abuse - being drunk and high. But now I needed to learn how to live and communicate without substance abuse. Twelve years is a long period of time and I'd never discovered my identity. I now had to discover who I actually was and who I was called to be.

COME TO JESUS

Jesus Christ is the Son of God and I can honestly testify that through surrendering my life to Him I was instantly set free from the darkness of my sin. Through giving my life to God my eyes were opened and I was awakened to the *truth* of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The Bible says, *"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."* (Romans 3:23) Our sin separates us from God leaving us trapped in spiritual darkness and eternal punishment. I tried to deny this truth and shut my heart, but the longer I went on the darker my life became and the weight of sin, guilt and shame robbed me of freedom and peace.

We need to receive God's forgiveness for our sins so we can be delivered from darkness and brought into the light of Jesus Christ. For this reason God sent His Son *Jesus* into the world to take our punishment and purchase our redemption through His very own life.

JOHN 3:16-17 says, *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.¹⁷ For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved."*

Jesus lived a sinless life, yet was crucified on the cross where His blood was given for our redemption. The prophet Isaiah foretold the punishment Jesus would suffer:

ISAIAH 53:4-6 ~ *"Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God and afflicted. ⁵ But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed. ⁶ All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all."*

Jesus suffered not only for you to receive forgiveness of sin but He also took all sickness and disease upon His own broken body so you could receive healing. But it didn't just stop there! Three days later Jesus rose from the dead and destroyed the sting of death forever for those who believe, giving them eternal life with God.

Your decision:

The decision is yours. Will you accept the truth that Jesus died for your sins; ask for His forgiveness and surrender your life to Him?

ROMANS 10:9 says, *"If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved."*

If you wish to receive this incredible free gift of salvation and be forgiven of all your sin, all you need to do is be prepared to turn away from sin. Then simply put your faith in Jesus Christ and give your life to Him. You can do this by following this prayer:

“Lord Jesus, I need Your forgiveness in my life. I thank You that You died on the cross to take away my sin. I now confess with my mouth that You are the Son of God and I believe in my heart that God raised You from the dead.

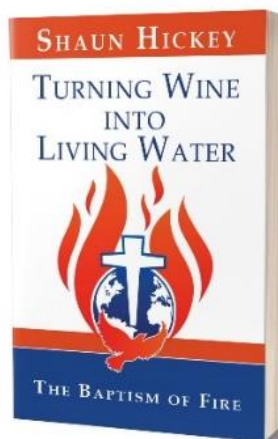
Please forgive me of all my sin, and I ask You Jesus to come into my life and be my Lord forever. I know I have a lot to learn, but I now ask that you please give me a new heart, and I ask You to fill me with Your precious Holy Spirit to guide my life forever and ever. Amen.”

Through praying that prayer in sincerity I can now say the following to you, ***‘Everything you have ever done in your life has now been forgiven’.***

PSALM 103:10-12 ~ *“He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor punished us according to our iniquities. ¹¹ For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward those who fear Him; ¹² As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.”*

2 CORINTHIANS 5:17 ~ *“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.”*

Seek out someone who follows God and tell them you have given your life to Jesus Christ. They will help you in the days ahead. Be assured God *will* guide you in your new life and lead you forward in victory. God bless you.



Shaun Hickey is the author of “Turning Wine into Living Water; The Baptism of Fire.” A book God is using to transform and empower many lives.

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