

# “Blessed Assurance”

By: Tom Carr

Growing up in a church, I had always heard the testimonies of people who had lived a lifetime without knowing the saving grace of Jesus and what He did on Calvary. The stories of how He had turned their lives around and set them free had an impact on me as a teenager growing up but I had never really experienced anything like that before in my life. I had always been around the church and been somewhat protected from the outside world by my loving Christian parents and had never known what life was like on the other side.

At the age of seventeen, I made a personal decision to dedicate my life to full time Christian ministry. I knew that this was what I truly wanted to do with my life, but in the back of my mind, I felt as if I had not experienced enough of life in order to reach out to those in need of help. I didn't have that special story to share and I wanted to be able to share some of the same experiences that others had gone through. It was then that I asked God to give me a story to tell. And He did just that.

By the time I was 23 years old; I was married, owned my own home and had opened up a part time photography studio and also worked in construction as well. I became very active in the community and was very comfortable with the life I was living until one day I was hit with some news that devastated me. I found out that my wife was seeing another man and when I confronted her about it, she admitted it and said she was leaving me to be with him.

As a lot of people do when they are faced with something like this, I asked God, "why me"? "Is this what you want for me"? Maybe this was God's way of allowing me to experience just what I had asked for. No matter where I turned for help, it seemed as if there were no answers for me there and eventually, I began to stray away from what I knew was right and into the unknown.

Alone, scared and not knowing where to turn to for help, I sought refuge in all of the wrong places. I was seeking instant gratification in places and things that I knew weren't God's idea of happiness but at this point in my life, I felt that even God had turned His back on me. I felt that if this was God's way of showing me what life was all about, I didn't want any part of it. After all, in my mind, God's plan shouldn't have to include all of this pain I was experiencing. But then again, this is exactly what I had asked for to begin with. I just didn't see it at that time.

Divorce left me a very depressed and hardhearted person. I turned to the instant gratification of drugs and alcohol to make it through each day. I used the drugs and alcohol to force the guilt and shame out of my mind. This was the only way I could seem to manage my life and do things "my way" since nothing else seemed to work. This path would eventually lead me to a place where I had never been before,... jail.

At this point, the alcohol wasn't doing it for me any more. I sought refuge in prescription painkillers and cocaine. I was selling the cocaine to support my addiction to the painkillers and often combining the two together. Eventually, the painkillers became too hard to obtain so I

started searching for a better relief. I learned about "crack" and began to indulge in a totally new high that seemed to be the answer for me. I was selling a portion of it to have enough for myself to do for free and before I knew it, I was a very popular person. People were coming from all walks of life to get what I was selling and the money was rolling in every day. I would go for as many as six days in a row with very little sleep because of the demand on me to provide this drug and to be honest with you; I loved every minute of it. I was so caught up in the luxury of the money and the popularity of it all that I lost sight of everything that was ever of any importance to me, including God. I had given up on God and I thought that He had given up on me as well.

On January 9th of 2003, in a small Eastern Kentucky County, far from my family and home, I was arrested for trafficking in cocaine as well as six other drug related felonies and was put in jail. My family was upset with me for getting caught up in this kind of lifestyle but at the same time, they were relieved that I was off of the street and away from the drugs. I spent 29 days in that small jail waiting patiently for someone to come up with a way to bail me out and finally, one of my sisters and a friend of mine together came up with enough property to bond me out until a trial date could be set.

Faced with the real truth that I would most certainly have to spend more time in jail as a result of my behavior, and possibly prison time, I struggled with the realization of having to be away from my family, especially my young daughter who didn't fully understand this process and all of the consequences I might have to face. With each passing day, I became more and more depressed and unable to cope with reality and I continued to seek satisfaction in all the wrong places. I had virtually no income and my desire for the drugs over powered my mind so strongly that I was willing to do anything it took to get them, no matter what the cost. I took anything and everything I could get my hands on of any value and pawned it for cash to support my habit. When those resources ran out, I began to write and forge checks to support my habit. Even though I knew it would eventually come to an end, I couldn't see beyond my next fix enough to realize that this would only complicate matters even more in the end.

On September 23, 2003 while trying to cash yet another check I had written, I was again arrested and put in jail. This time, there was no getting out. By this time, in the back of my mind, I was somewhat relieved that it was finally over and I knew then that there was no turning back. I was eventually sentenced to serve six years in the state penitentiary for my crimes. I had to begin to make a new start on my life and what a better time to do it. I knew that the healing process was going to take some time and I had a long road ahead of me but I was determined to use this time to get my life back and start over again.

The first step for me was to seek forgiveness from God and my family who I had deceived for so long. It turned out that this would be the easy part. Though my family was in a state of shock and disbelief, they were willing to put the past behind and help me recover my life as long as I was willing to help myself. Thankfully, my God is a loving and forgiving God and I know that He was able to forgive me as soon as I asked Him to. The hardest part of my recovery was being able to forgive myself for all of the pain and grief I had caused others and the path of destruction I had left along the way. No matter how hard I tried to convince myself

that there was nothing I could do but pray and leave it in God's hands, it was still an obstacle that would take some time for me to overcome.

As time went by, it became easier to accept the fact that I had been forgiven and the time for me to begin to heal the wounds was now. The nightmares and waking up in a cold sweat were beginning to become further apart and I was finally able to sleep at night without dreaming of being in a drug induced state of mind. With each passing day, I began to feel more at peace with myself and eventually I felt that if God could forgive me, then I must forgive myself and carry on with my life.

I was granted an early release from prison on October 21, 2004, my daughters 13th birthday and I couldn't think of a better birthday gift than that of her father finally coming home a changed man. September 23, 2003 was the day that God began to turn my life around and I am happy to say that I am indeed a changed man and my life has never been so full of joy and happiness thanks to the saving grace of my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. On October 21st, 2004, my daughter celebrated her 13th birthday and what she calls "The happiest day of her life".

Written October 21, 2005

### **Updated September 23, 2009**

I am happy to report that I am still free from addiction and continue to help others in their recovery. On January 3<sup>rd</sup> of 2009, I was married to the most wonderful woman in the world. God had a much better destiny for my life, and if I had it all to do over again, knowing where I would end up today, I would.

I am now working full time as an independent inspector for FHA, and I am a self-employed graphic designer in Lexington, KY. My wife and I are attending a plant church here in our community called The Bridge and are excited about the direction God is leading us through.

If you would like more information on addictions, I have many resources listed on my personal website at [www.tfcarr.com](http://www.tfcarr.com).

To Be Continued...

This is not the end of my story.

The final chapter is being written by God