

GOD RESCUED ME FROM ADDICTION AND SHAME

I grew up in the church, more or less. I was baptized in the Lutheran Church in which my family had given land to be built in rural IA. My grandparents were deeply involved with the Church and therefore my mom was at the very least a Christmas/Easter and at times more often a regular church attendee.. My grandparents always prayed before meals, attended Church every Sunday and were involved in all classes, clubs and outreach their church provided.

I was confirmed Missouri Synod Lutheran at a Lutheran Church in Iowa when I was 13 or 14 years old.

In my home, we did not really ever talk about God or Jesus, unless my mom was using it as a reason to make me feel shame. But that is also what I felt even as a young child in church...shame. I felt hopeless as I was already a sinner-and for some reason I did not hear the message of redemption from the pulpit. It may have been preached...I think I just never heard it.

My mom is a very shaming person, that is and always has been her tool of control. When she was mad about something I did or my dad did, she would walk around in silent scorn...she could keep up the silent treatment for days.

What that created in me as a very young child, is this feeling that if I made a mistake...I am bad, I am unworthy of love, I was inherently created flawed, and because of these defects in me, whatever she did was justified. What this created was a very anxious child and teenager. I always felt like I was 3 steps behind every other person...that other people just intuitively knew how to act, how to be social and how to make friends.

My first drink of alcohol that is memorable to me, is when I was about 9 years old. The first drink of alcohol showed me freedom from anxiety for the first time. All at once I felt warm and comfortable in my own skin.

Middle School is a hard time for most of us....we are awkward, we are meeting new kids from different elementary schools and we have raging hormones. In Junior High as it was called in the late 70's, I found a group of people who liked me just as I was...they were the kids that smoked cigarettes across from the school. In that group I began to experiment with marijuana and LSD as well, and I began to run away from home.

From about age 14 thru 18, I was either "on the run" or I was in group homes and the Iowa Juvenile Home. I had a criminal record for stealing cigarettes and a friend's parents credit card. I was out of control, using alcohol and drugs and running the streets.

I had my first child at age 18, barely 18. 1 year and 5 days later I gave birth to my son, and then at age 23 I had another son. All of these children were born outside of marriage and to a mother who was very much out of control. DHS became involved in my life around 1991 and by 1992 I was saved.

By age 21 I was an IV cocaine user and had pretty much tried every drug, except Heroin...somehow I told myself if I crossed that line I was "real" junkie. (I had used morphine and benzos so I am not sure what logic that thinking had)

The day I was chosen, was before my birth.

The day I was saved was August 5, 1992 when Jesus came to me in the height of my addiction, in the middle of a party, in the middle of me actively using...and he pulled me from the place I physically was and stood me at a dirt road crossroads...he showed me two paths-one in which I was going to die early and leave my kids alone with the knowledge their mom died an active drug addict. The other road he showed me, led to freedom...it was not clear what that looked like, but I knew what I was being told.

The next day I drove to Des Moines to House of Mercy...where I began my treatment journey. August 6, 1992 was my first day of freedom. I was chosen-I am convinced.

I used to sit and wonder why God chose me when so many others have died in their addiction. I got sober with AA and NA and I was very active in AA until 2008....I am still close with many AA people, but I have found I get what I need from classes, mentors and my involvement with the church. I am beginning to wonder how to pass on my recovery story...to reach that still struggling addict.

Since 1992, I have been involved in church off and on...a Lutheran Church in Des Moines for several years-a church in Baxter where I did some preaching and was part of leadership and now Newton Church of the Way and Baxter Church of the Way.

One thing I do know is this....The Holy Spirit has never stopped talking to me, directing me, and helping me to discern the next steps in my life.