DOUG MACMILLAN: After Years in Prison, God Changes a Heart

My name is Doug MacMillan, and as I work flagging cars through road projects, I spend at least three hours a day talking to God. I talk to Him about my desires, my needs and how He has given me what I don’t deserve. I thank Him that He’s restored me and thank Him for the cool scenery He created all around me. I’m not sure that the things I talk to God about are the right things, but I figure as long as I’m having a conversation with Him, He’s happy. I think He’s OK with whatever my weird head comes up with to talk about.

Learning to Forgive

I wasn’t always one to constantly talk to God, but because of the help I received at the Rescue Mission of Salt Lake, I feel like God is now my friend. The Rescue Mission helped me realize that God could forgive me, even for all the wrong things I have done. And once the Rescue Mission’s counselors helped me understand the forgiveness God offered by believing in Jesus, it freed me to forgive people who had wronged me. Maybe most of all, I needed to forgive my parents. Even though both of them are dead – my dad died when I was 10 and I found out my mother had died when I was in my twenties – I still hated them for what they did to me when I was a child. I won’t go into the details, but I was treated in a way that no child should be, ever.

The Rescue Mission helped me understand that one of the reasons I used drugs was to cover up the pain of my childhood. It’s weird to think about forgiving dead people, but by forgiving my parents, it freed my soul of a good chunk of the pain, so much so that I now believe I can get through life without using drugs.

A New Ma and Pa

Maybe the greatest thing the Rescue Mission did for me was giving me “new parents.” The Mission introduced me to two of its volunteers, Jim and Claire Devore. They have basically adopted me as a son. They take me to church on Sunday and let me come over to their house to watch television and eat dinner. When I can’t get a ride to work,
I recently heard a sermon about rejoicing. The sermon didn’t focus on being thankful for all the good things we have in life, but instead focused on God’s desire that His people rejoice even when times are bad. As I considered being thankful amidst suffering, I gained a greater appreciation for why Thanksgiving is such an important holiday here at the Rescue Mission. It gives our homeless friends the chance to sit down, catch their breath, enjoy a bountiful meal and express their deep thankfulness to God and the people He uses to bless them. In fact, it’s probably the day that our homeless friends look forward to the most. So as we prepare for our annual Thanksgiving Banquet, please consider praying for and supporting this outreach, coming up on Wednesday, November 26. Like any other cold November day, the homeless will experience suffering through chill, hunger and pain. But, as God would have it, people who trust Him can rejoice that He will work these sufferings out for good. A hot meal, warm shelter, fresh clothes and a haircut are simply great additions.

Feel free to use the enclosed envelope to support our Thanksgiving outreach. You can also call our finance office at 801-746-1006 to make a donation over the phone or visit www.RescueSaltLake.org. Suffering will always be a part of life on earth. Our desire for our homeless friends—and, really, for all people—is that they would see God’s hands working in that suffering, rejoice in Him and strive to reach their God-given potential. Thanksgiving provides a great opportunity to do just that. God bless you.

Chris D. Crosswhite  
Executive Director

The Help I Needed

While the Rescue Mission was skeptical, my desperation was so total that they took another chance on me. When I joined the New Life Program, I realized I didn’t need to change my life: God needed to change it. And, praise Him, He did change me. The Mission gave me the structure of daily Bible study, chapel services, one-on-one counseling and the peaceful environment that I needed. I learned not just to believe in God, but to put my trust in Him and have a real relationship with Jesus. As I prepare to graduate from the Rescue Mission’s New Life Program and move into the Terri Timmerman Freedom House, I have a changed life. This month will mark two years of sobriety for me. I will also get my driver’s license back for the first time in 20 years. I even have communication with my daughter and am working to build a relationship with my grandson, who is a toddler.

I made the decision to work and got a good job as a construction flagger. Previously, I had waffled back and forth about whether I should apply for government disability payments because of my arm and hand. But here at the Rescue Mission, God gave me the direction that He wanted me to work, not sit around and collect checks. It feels good to work and support myself. I do feel nerve pain after a day’s work, but God helps me get through it.

I am thankful to God, the Rescue Mission and all of the Mission’s volunteers and supporters. The help I received is a true blessing. It’s great to not wake up with a needle in my arm or be a slave to meth and heroin anymore. If you remember, please pray for me that God would hold me close and continue to work in my heart to change me. I know I still have a long way to go.

I decided I needed to change my life. I did my best to quit drugs and actually succeeded for six months. Though I was still living on the streets, I was sober. But after the sixth month I could literally hear the meth and heroin calling my name. I was hanging on to sobriety by God’s grace and the skin of my teeth. It was at that point, February 2013, that I crawled into the Rescue Mission and begged them to let me join the New Life Recovery Program. I had stayed at the Mission before, but had been asked to leave for multiple incidents of fighting and insubordination.

DOUG:

I was using methamphetamine everyday. I would inject it into my hand and arm. I also suffer from significant daily nerve pain in my arm and leg. I suffered severe nerve damage to the left side of my body and to this day have very limited use of my left hand and arm. I also suffer from significant daily nerve pain in the left side of my body.

When I was released from prison following the high-speed chase, I eventually ended up in prison. When I got out, I sold drugs, used drugs and robbed people. I spent many years in prison for selling drugs and other crimes. While I grew up in California, I moved to Oregon to avoid California’s Three Strikes law, which puts you in prison for life if you are convicted of a felony three separate times. But in Oregon, I just kept piling on the legal problems.

Crashing at 100 mph

I was using to deal with probation and parole officers, and in Oregon in the ’90s they all drove Jeep Cherokee. Once, when I was high on meth, I looked in my rearview mirror and saw a couple of Cherokees behind me. In my meth-induced paranoia I thought there was a group of cops following me. I pushed the pedal down and soon was traveling over 100 mph through Medford, Oregon. By the time I blew through Medford, I had several real police officers chasing me. Out of control, I rolled my car and woke up nine days later in a hospital bed. I suffered severe nerve damage to the left side of my body and to this day have very limited use of my left hand and arm. I also suffer from significant daily nerve pain in the left side of my body.

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