

A True Story

Hope After Dope



From a Drug Addict

To a Doctor



By Robert M. Gilmore, Sr.

**A True Story: Hope After Dope
From A Drug Addict To A Doctor**

By

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A primary focus is aimed at building community and faith-based organizational support, using best practices and evidence based research. Secondly, our goal is to partner with existing organizations, agencies and professionals involved in addressing substance abuse, mental illness and the diverse results of related problems that impact individuals, families and the community. For information contact:

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Foreword

To the readers,

**this book is paramount in educating,
learning and understanding family members
and or friends with obstacles and challenges
related to drug abuse and mental illness.**

**As you read, I encourage you to read with
an open mind and an open heart.**

**Lastly, to my darling husband, I am so proud of
you and all that you have done to try to
continuously help others.**

From your greatest fan, your wife, The Professor,

Mrs. Jacqueline K. Davis-Gilmore

**2010 Hope After Project
Real Urban Ministry, Inc
1 Million Books to Inspire Individuals, Families,
Veterans, Leaders, Organizations, Countries**



**Rev. Dr. Robert McKinley Gilmore, Sr.
Professor, Mrs. Jacqueline K. Davis-Gilmore**

Hope After Project dedicated to Our Mothers

**Jo Ann Davis
Olan Yvonne Gilmore**

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CHAPTER 1

Innocent

The increase of drug and alcohol abuse in America has been an epidemic proportion for over twenty five years, reaching into small towns, rural, suburban and urban communities. Today the problem is the number one issue according to the Gallup Poll confronting leaders, families and our government representatives in local, state, and national positions. But, the big question is how did it get this far and why have we been so innocent as it relates to the community taking action against each and every individual drug and alcohol abuser.

This story could be repeated a million times in America and ever other countries in the world. It doesn't make any difference if you are rich or poor, black, white, or brown, Catholic, Protestant or Muslim - - the drug epidemic affects each and every one of us -- directly or indirectly. My story is a true record of one individual, abusing drugs since the age of thirteen, but yet and still innocent. One of the main elements of my story is how it all began, not in a drug infested environment, but in a very innocent, yet addictive way. This is the way in which millions get hooked, thousands every day, hundreds by the hour and minute, all innocent. I was one in a million.

As a child I would often enjoy the company and social atmosphere of family events, gatherings with favorite uncles and aunts, cousins so distant that all else ceased to exist until a renewed relationship could begin anew on a warm summer day. The festive nature of those gatherings often left me with the deepest impressions of family, adult life and of course how to act responsibly in the midst of my peers. It was at these seemingly innocent gatherings where the first impressions were made and of course, later understood in relationship to my future problems with drugs and alcohol.

Many of those events, social gatherings centered around conversations concerning the history of family, early experiences that would be told for the umpteenth time, as if they were new and, of course, the latest in individual failures or successes. This seemed to be the central reason for most of the gatherings, whether during a funeral or a visit to the beaches of the sunny Gulf Coast. Deep impressions made me realize how important it is for a child to understand the nature of the family, whether extended or social in composition. Always important in the midst of these sometimes loud, enjoyable gatherings were food and drink, sometimes in the reverse order for many of my larger than life uncles, cousins and adults of age. Drinking, whether beer, liquor, soda water (soft drinks) and food was as important to the gatherings as was the conversation, I noticed as a young child around nine, how acceptable drinking was to the adults, even to my grandmother, whom I respected to the highest human level known for any grandchild.

It just appeared that regardless of what condition the person in question became intoxicated, it was always acceptable. In other words, there was never an instance in which my uncles or aunts would be told to stop drinking; they generally drank until they

stopped, cold as the ice that covered a cooler filled with the assortment of holiday favorites - - beer and soda. It all seemed so natural and innocent for a child of nine and certainly acceptable to my family. The first time I tasted alcohol was at one of those holiday spirited gatherings where, drinking was common. In fact, I had become accustomed to expect drinking when the family was together. This one was different because I was getting older, you know the size when as each aunt comes over for her yearly hug and kiss, she sizes you up and remarks at how big and grown you've gotten, all at the same while giving you that same kiss as a little kid. My uncles would only remark that I am no longer a little boy, but approaching teen status; this was enough for me to look in the mirror and say to myself. "I didn't notice that at all."

For an eleven year old, those types of comments and remarks from respected people seem as though God were speaking to Moses and everyone heard the message. One uncle in particular always sized up the budding adolescent members of our clan and often took it upon himself to give an approval before the other members of the family. My chance came as the sun had begun to set and dusk bathe the family members in an evening of small talk, laughter, play and dominoes. As the domino table would rattle, with the slamming of each player's hand whether for points or not, it appeared to be the final biggest event of the evening. My uncle, who was the unequalled leader in this family tradition, called out to me, from among the laughter and play of my cousins, to get beer from the box. To some it can be viewed as a passing courtesy, but to those of us who had never ventured to even touch an ice cold beer can, surrounded by a rainbow of sodas, buried beneath a mountain of ice, this event was a sign of coming adulthood.

To be called from among others, already past the innocence of running with glee to get a cold beer, was an approval by the entire family. The one voice you listened to was your mother or father to say no, that would surely mean back to another year of waiting for approval by the family elders. I remember my hand diving down deep into the cold icy water, to ensure contact with the coldest possible can, even if it felt as if my skin were numbered in mere seconds after entry into the melting cans of color. My mind raced along, over the type he requested, as if to choose the wrong can would send me crying with embarrassment for another year. "I've got it," I called out all the while running to the table of players, knowing that all eyes in the room were focused on me, now appearing slightly grown with a can of beer in my hand. Words cannot express the sensations I felt as those seconds raced from time giving me this chance to feel as millions do each day, grown up. Standing there with that can of beer before the family at the domino table was worth a hundred family gatherings before or that would ever come in the future. But wait my heart screamed with expectation as my uncle took the can placing it so close to the edge.

I wanted to scream, that it would fall, as I stood frozen waiting for his approval or disapproval like a dog wagging its tail at the master. His words seemed to dim the conversations of voices, as he said, "open the can." Eyes were focused on those still child like fingers opening a can belonging to the adult world. It was as if my passage were almost assured, I would get there with other cousins, far removed from childhood. The can opened easily. I stood in joy, which turned to terror as the foam began to run out

of the can down the side of the table. Frozen, I waited for my uncle to say I was still a little child and to wait another year for his approval, Instead he said, "Suck the white foam into your mouth," Almost as if by automation, I leaned over and lowered my lips onto the can, sucking all of the foam like a vacuum cleaner. As silence echoed across the gathering, knowing the eyes of older and younger cousins were upon me, and ears awaiting my uncles response, he said, "You did almost as good as me."

With those words, the room returned to the normal volume. I resumed my play with waiting and eager cousins, wanting to know how I felt as each second in the presence of the grown ups and especially our somewhat legendary uncle grew into what seemed like eternity. I knew that something special had happened, what in fact, I don't know. I knew that some cousins would think that some cousins would think I was now older, mature or even somewhat grown. Whatever the case, I enjoyed the questions, the gathering, the food and I definitely enjoyed the cold white foam that my mouth had tasted, if not for only a brief second or two. I guess it was the event, the environment, the attention, not so much the beer or even the taste.

Regardless, I enjoyed it and I knew in my heart I would do it again, without the family or cousins. I knew I would do it the first chance I got alone, because I wanted to be grown. I was no longer innocent or afraid to do what I had seen done seemingly hundreds of times in my family, drinking. From that night, until the first occasion at the age of thirteen; I can remember the experience from my uncle's ice cold beer. Thirteen is a special time for every child when your age becomes acceptable in age to all your peers and family, you are supposed to act grown, become more mature and less playful. In fact, my passing came with great fanfare, a party with the boys, cake and gifts from relatives; everything was perfect, except there was no beer available. I felt that in order to be in line with the adults, I needed a beer. While no one noticed I took a beer from my family's supply and it never seemed obvious that anyone would miss one can in the middle of several. After rearranging the cans to appear in the place, I hid the somewhat warmer can of beer, as compared to my uncle's can in the freezing ice water during my rite of passage. Later as I would sit quietly, along with that warm beer can, I never thought of the after effects, that is a warm can of beer in comparison to a cold can. It was all the same – just beer. I felt dizzy almost immediately after drinking the beer. Luckily everyone was gone, and the party was over. Tired parents weren't interested in my behavior nor did they think much of my closed door. It was just the new teenaged son acting somewhat grown.

After drinking every drop, I sat quietly with the bussing effect, obviously faster and now quite similar in thought to the reactions I had often witnessed in other relatives. The only difference seemed that they looked and acted as if they felt good. I felt sick, dizzy, and drunk. There was no way I would tell my father and mother, this new teen was sick on beer from the family supply. I couldn't do a thing, only sit there. I vomited and got obviously sicker; the only cure I thought was sleep. After a night of restless vomiting, I woke up with the worst headache that anyone, including a teenager should ever have. This did not appear to be the end to my dilemma, because I continued to be dizzy for the entire next day, unable to eat, unable to play with friends, and unable to

tolerate the words from my beloved mother or father. I was no longer innocent. I was now a teenager on the way to a journey in which I would possibly never come back. I didn't realize it then, but I would later find out my abuse had started at the age of thirteen. I would never be the same innocent child again. As far as I was concerned, I was on my way to being grown, I sure wasn't innocent.

There are many suggestions for parents that would assist in educating children about the potential dangers of drug and alcohol abuse. However, what is most important does not focus on the child's knowledge, but upon the parents or adults involved in the process of educating the child. First, there has to be a major evaluation of the types of drugs there are instances where usage is generally at acceptable levels among adults, but to the child any level is seen in another context of use. Drugs or alcohol, while common in society, has other factors which point towards a greater sense of mental control and not so much psychological harm. Instances where strong family role models, relatives and friends have fallen to the abuses of drug and alcohol abuse can be early examples of misuse to a child. Strong images often give way to realistic explanations at the earliest possible ages, with the greatest sense of purpose to the child. In some ways a standard for drug and alcohol use has to be established this could be the basis of a parameter of usage to the child that that obviously would lead into adult life.

The second strongest element for the child is always a social level of awareness that could somewhat explain the need for drug and alcohol use and abuse. The complexity here will be discussed at length in following chapters. However, the main point is to define and explain the nature of social gatherings to children. There should be a clear definition of social, cultural and traditional functions relevant to the child in the family, local community, state or nation. Often times a much more specific interpretation by a trusted source of information brings about a greater sense of appreciation, respect and understanding. This is critical because children formulate an opinion from external sources as a means of comfort and security. Imagine the frustration when a child has no secure source for explanation of meaningful traditions, customs or societal habits. I would have appreciated as much explanation prior to the event as possible, in order to appreciate, interpret and enjoy the environment and atmosphere. The final point for consideration is made towards the earliest possible methods in which a child can develop a positive attitude, seemingly reserved for adults that don't need drugs or alcohol. In other words, provide a foundation of support. I always relate to the imparting nature of my religious and spiritual life as a child. However this must also be interpreted with the same objectivity and purpose as before in regards to tradition, history and culture. Children have the strongest possible link during stages of development. I would encourage parents to learn about programs for the teaching of skills that would be helpful in the future as adults. Often times children participate, but they are not as informed about the real reason or rationale for the purpose of the program. My advice is to concentrate on a strong spiritual link that the child can always relate to or use as a source of foundation strength.

Objectives are critically important in any program of learning. They are even more important for children and during the early stages of development, Christian educators have long promoted principles by which parents should train children, such principles can certainly aid any parent in the process of early childhood development. Some of those principles in general highlight the following:

1. To produce a level of awareness of God and consciousness in the human experience. This gives some purpose of relationship to life.
2. To encourage a stronger understanding and appreciation of the person and life teachings of Jesus Christ. This obviously should develop a Christ-like character.
3. To develop a perspective in the individual to partake and contribute to the building of a Christian social order which embodies the ideal of the fatherhood of God and brotherhood of man. It is hoped that this would lead to a philosophy for life with a Christian interpretation of life and the universe.
4. To develop and effect in growing persons the ability to participate in the organized society of Christians – the Church. This would affect an approach to guidance to in everyday experience.
5. To develop the need for ethical control and sublimation, need for reducing the importance of parents and siblings, need for protection from isolation and the need to become part of the larger world community.

Here are some real professional suggestions from National organizations and educational groups that I recommend using at the earliest possible stage of child development.

...Key Steps in Parenting...

1. Make an effort to show your child how much you care, communicate (verbally and non-verbally), in particular when problems occur.
2. A positive mental attitude for you and your child is important. Know how far to go with discipline.
3. Values, morals and ethical behavior is taught and learned. Use subjects they can understand and later appreciate.
4. Children need discipline, rules and policies that will aid in nurturance of a healthy personality
5. Remember a child has friends. You should too – develop and extended family to support your emotional, spiritual and psychological needs.
6. Whenever a child is acting beyond limits, make a point to address the real limit or potential for future misdirected actions.

7. Plan for events, activities or extra programs that might facilitate your child's healthy social growth. Always have some purpose and guidance
8. Experiences are important to every child. Make sure each experience is appreciated for what it is-experience.
9. Parents, whether married or single, is the first source of impact on the child's future behavior. Most parents are not perfect, but all parents can be assured of their strong imprint of the child.
10. Always establish a sense of family history in a child. Make it primary for the training of future beliefs, values and behavior.

Remember Alcohol!

- Alcohol is the most widely used and abused drug in America.
- One out of three American Adults—58 million Americans—has had problems because of alcohol abuse in the family.
- Children of alcoholics have a four times greater risk of developing alcoholism than children of non alcoholics.
- Alcohol- related highway deaths are the number one killer of 15-24 year olds.
- Women are affected more by alcohol than men
- Drinking on an empty stomach can increase alcohol's effect.

Suggestions for Everybody!!!

1. Get to know your children's friends and be conscious of the influence they may have.
2. Get to know the parents of your children's peer group and keep those communication lines open.
3. Promote non-use as an acceptable choice in our alcohol/drug oriented society.
4. Strive to reverse the attitude that alcohol/drug use is normal.
5. Support your law makers who attempt to curbe alcohol/drug problems
6. Encourage, promote and support alcohol/drug awareness campaign within your community
7. Work towards developing meaningful alternative to drug use.
8. Support police, school and recreational authorities.

CHAPTER 2

The Drug Haze in School

Life as a teenager brings a hosts of opportunities for experiences, sometimes too personal and traumatic for parents to understand or appreciate. This period of development has for years been a critical point for examination and analyzation by scholars, parents, and most certainly school administrators. Serious still, is the influx of illegal and illicit drugs into the lives of already somewhat confused adolescents. The past three decades produces a mix of pleasure seeking, care-free and knowledgeable teens to the worlds of drugs and alcohol. Estimates have noted that 2-5 teens have used some type of substance prior to graduation at the age of 18. Future evidence notes that some have started actively in the world of substance abuse as young as nine years old.

The impact of drug use in schools across America has led to a change in the way administrators, teachers and parents have had to address to the change in the environment of drugs. In the 1940s the major discipline problems in public schools were talking and chewing gum. In the 1980s it was drug/alcohol abuse, suicide, pregnancy and assault just to name a few. Large numbers of students while attending school never become involved in drug or alcohol related problems; however, it is important to note the effects are often as strong indirectly as they are directly. The culture of most schools in America has been unable to protect segments of its population, whether right or wrong. Schools often times are the breeding, training, and marketing grounds for future dealers, users, victims, and prospects in society.

Crucial in this observation is the development of mass communications resources over the past four decades. The full effect of radio television broadcasting and other forms of entertainment is not known, even though significant behavioral research has been conducted. Most children have viewed numerous television programs, have heard countless radio broadcasts and have been exposed to the most popular entertainment personalities of their day prior to the age of seven. They have ingested over 15,000 hours of mass communication, and more than any amount of live instruction, over the entire period of public and private school attendance. This astronomical amount of well planned, marketed, produced and professional quality communication has an unknown affect upon the minds and sometimes behavior of young students. Important also to note is the combined elements of adolescent development and mass media influence, certainly a pivotal factor in behavior modification or change in personality development during these stages.

Many students highlight the positive, as well as negative methods in which broadcasts have portrayed the use of illegal drugs and the abuse of alcohol. Whether on television film or radio the larger than life images make lasting impressions on the minds of younger teenagers. Obvious is the instant glorification that a dangerous substance can receive, if viewed or understood in the wrong light and with a larger than life personality of an actor. Various forms of entertainment have also contributed directly to the

misinterpretation of drug and alcohol abuse to teenagers. Often the largest headlines are those generated by entertainment, sports and public figures caught in the use or abuse of drugs alcohol by the public. Therefore, it is a major observation to note the types of influencing factors, external to the home, because the adolescent will learn about the drug culture from somewhere more secure.

My years in school are often remembered in a haze of drugs, from junior high or middle school, all the way to senior high graduation. Often it appeared to me that a grade promotion meant approval to take stronger drugs or experiment with the unknown substances in my school environment. Many of the students were exposed to the same levels of drug or alcohol abuse at home or in the community that I was. It just often became a game of chance or experimentation. I can vividly remember the normal routine of school, as well as the unusual school of drugs. In middle school, experienced as an alcohol drinker, I ran into similar peers with the same or more impacting experiences with alcohol. It was nothing for young students to bring bottles of hard liquor, beer, wine or other beverages to school on any given school day of the week. This is important for several reasons, of course, the main one being, the easy access that students at such impressionable ages had to alcohol from home. Many occasions were well remembered when a student would bring a bottle with the distinctive proof of its potency (75% -or 100%), thereby setting the stage for confrontation for the most mature or brave drinkers.

One such occasion that I remembered well as a victim, literally made me search for other forms of drugs, because I got so drunk, I thought I would die. On a cool day in the fall during the beginning of the day, one of my fellow athletes announced at our regular morning spot that he had a bottle that, no one had ever seen and was the strongest proof that had ever been brought by anyone. Well, this first led to a round of conversation, with others relating how they had brought this and that however undaunted my football buddy said a new record of sorts had been established today and if you wanted to partake, be back at lunch. Of course, this led to a grapevine of discussion throughout the school teens were talking and asking what could it be that would and of course must now break any previous record held by a fellow peer in bringing alcohol to school.

At high noon the gathering place was unusually crowded with students, ready to witness a record of history of sorts among fellow teenagers. Well, shortly he appeared surrounded by close buddies, privy to all the information and quite possibly samples of the product. Perched as if to give a great speech, with look outs to warn of unwanted adults, he proclaimed the record and held up the evidence – a bottle as big as any I had ever seen of alcohol, could it be a quart, ½ gallon or even a gallon. Surely he won the record for size, and now he talked of part of this historical event. Now, after having enjoyed the approval of what seemed like hundreds of students, he announced we would all drink it up right now, or at least get a taste of this record breaking drink.

First, the cap was broken and quickly passed to be smelled by eager students, when I whiffed it; it still had an acid, strong aroma, part romantic, but obviously much more hypnotic. Students closest drank first, straight from the bottle, what a sight, a lime

of students, some having never drunk a drop of hard liquor in their lives, anxious to partake of this historic moment in junior high. In what seemed as if minutes, it was half gone and I still hadn't drunk yet. My general view turned to horror, because I would, no I could not be left out of this event. I would never live that down in the remaining year at school. Quickly, I made my way to a closer position, reached for the bottle and took what seemed to be the longest drink that anyone in the group had taken. Instantly, I received favor and approval from my fellow peers. Acting as if I could take some more, I tried to get some more, but the meeting broke up with the ringing of the bell that signaled the end of the lunch period.

That afternoon, at football practice, the full effect of that drink overtook me in the middle of exercise and running, I was sick as a dog. I experienced vomiting, nausea and a host of mental and physical pains that I could not describe. It's always a fact in football practice, someone is sick or not up to key performance. This was my day; the coach sent me to the locker room where I remember falling out until the other players came in later that evening. Man, they said you are drunk, how are you going to get home, what are you going to say to your folks, how do you feel - - were just a few of what seemed like hundreds of questions being asked at the same time. I usually would go in late sometimes after practice. That was a one of the benefits of being an athlete in Junior High, who knows some day I could be a star.

The drinking convinced me that strong alcohol was not in my best interest, although I was often sort out by others at school to join in drinking a host of sometime unknown alcoholic beverages, but never did I see that bottle again in junior high. It would be years later that I would fully realize what I had drunk and then the magnitude of my respect from my peers would be understood. The drinking continued as if a ritual for each athletic season. Now, of course, I drank only after practice and never again during lunch at school. My graduation began prior to leaving for senior high school. I was smoking marijuana and had even experimented with cough syrup (with codeine) and a few pills, mostly downers. I knew that senior high school was the big time. All records no longer existed. I had to prove myself all over again I thought. One thing I knew, it would not be with alcohol, it made you do some crazy things. In high school you had to be cool!!!

Senior high to a younger teenager is an assortment of new shapes, sights, sounds and personalities that you have never seen in your life. One thing I had that would earn me a little respect with these new peers was my reputation; that means everything in senior high school. Over the summer, prior to school, I became acquainted with my athletic peers, bigger, and even manlier. Some of the guys had more body hair than my father. Immediately, I found the drinkers on the senior high school team. They would sit after practice, after the coaches had left for the evening, in the middle of the football field and drink wine, smoke weed and listen to them or lie about exploits in life. For an incoming freshman in senior high, I had a lead on my entire entering class. I learned the walk, the talk and certainly the main players of the game, not football, but the drug haze.

Senior high was not like junior high, the girls were women, the teachers didn't act like parents and the drugs were much stronger and more available. If you didn't have it on campus, someone always had a car, and that meant you could go anywhere in the city,

and I mean anywhere at anytime during school hours. My reputation in junior high, my status as an athlete and my large physical size, added to what appeared at a record first year. I was in the in-crowd and adding new drug friends to my peer group by the week, if not the entire year. Always obvious in senior high are the coaches and what appeared to be a young football player's dream coach. Mine retired to an administrative position after 30 years as a legend, not only was the football program in disarray, but my life was too, I didn't know it, but I was hooked and too far gone to stop taking drugs.

Besides being a potential top athlete and a young man with a rising reputation, I enjoyed some elements of what it feels like to be a celebrity or a star. Doors are opened, opportunities are presented and chances are taken, one normally would not take. Who said that being high was not fun? As long as you don't come down, that's the pits. Every dealer, every outside establishment that sold illegal drugs, every person involved in some way with the use and seemingly enjoyable experiences of drugs was made known to me. It's like another world of adults, teens, professionals, criminals, and deviants—all enjoying the haze of drugs and alcohol abuse. I took full advantage of this time and of other people more innocent than myself. Confrontations were minimal, especially when the principal's son used drugs right along beside me, and when I would visit after normal hours, he was generally drunk too.

My second year in senior high was a haze of bad trips on potent drugs, so much so that my reputation changed and I fell out of favor with the new football coach and with some of my peers. I was too deep now on drugs to even stay in school. By now, I was staying with my loving grandmother, experienced with the ills of people too lost to find themselves, and she was not prepared to give me up that easily. Adjustment was hard. I lucked up right after my 17th birthday. I found a grown woman to call, who knew more and could serve me as a constant companion in search of more drugs, especially on the weekends. We stayed together until I joined the service, the summer prior to my last year in senior high. I tried the ultimate high on the streets. That was a summer that I will never forget, I shot my first heroin, that summer I became a true addict.

That summer, the days seemed to creep by slowly. I was working on and off, but mostly staying high and staying out of trouble. One day, two friends came to me. It was hot, and they knew that I always was ready to get high and I always kept a little money. One said, "Man we know something that you haven't tried yet, and I bet you are scared to check it out." I looked at him with a hint of anger. He knew who I was, and everybody knew I didn't play when it came to getting high. My reputation was too strong. No conversation followed, as we arrived at what appeared to be a vacant house. This was different than any other place we had gotten high at, but I just kept my cool and kept walking. The house was filled with junk. If I had known that this was the junkie's home, I would have been scared.

The one main drug my father warned me about was heroin. The trail of destruction it had left in our community was evident, nobody beat heroin, and I mean nobody. The building seemed uninhabited, but an old short man walked out of nowhere, mean looking and certainly not to be trusted. This was not the same type of dealer I was used to seeing. When we got cough syrup, we went to the pharmacy; when we got weed,

generally we went to someone's nice house. When we got pills, we got them from home. Here we were in one of the lowest parts of town, in an abandoned building, with a man older than my father and three times rougher about to shoot heroin. He talked in fragmented sentences, asking who we were, replying with nicknames and assured that we were about business the deal went down. Money and heroin changed hands. I had never seen the real stuff, and I didn't know what to expect next, but I had to remain cool, my reputation was again on the line. The old junkie noticed we all were novices and proceeded to school us on the proper methods of being a junkie. If I would have realized fully that this had killed thousands before, I would have run home crying like a little boy. It was too late; I was almost grown.

First, he brought out an old bundle of what appeared to be a package. It contained the works (needles, syringe, stopper, spoon and tie). Then he talked as if he had done this a thousand times. He transformed the old house into a school room of sorts, with all the proper tools for learning how to shoot heroin. When you have your spoon filled and your stuff cooked, and then use the filter it takes away impurities (as if we were in a hospital). Now the hit in your arm. This was delicate stuff, I watched and listened in amazement, I had never been so entranced by his experienced moves. When everyone had his fix, I noticed, as they felt the immediate change in the drug, this was not like the drugs before, and it was a long way from junior high school.

My turn came last. He prepared the heroin for the last time, without explanations, because he knew we would never forget those instructions. He turned and looked at my arms. My veins were standing out as if they were pumping oil from south to north. In awe at my youthfulness and strength, he said, "I can't remember when my arms looked that good." He showed us his arms, both revealed deep scars, one fresh in the pit that was open as if inviting no cure. It was ugly; this was my last chance to stop, but it was too late. I didn't even use the tie, I just clinched my fist and watched as he showed me how to hit the vein and know when the needle entered. It was so easy and I didn't feel the pain. The drug hit like a seductive woman, calling me at midnight with a thousand pleasures for my attention, my heart slowed, the atmosphere changed. It seemed the house was not a palace. I had never been this high or felt this way. I knew this was the ultimate. It was as if I now had it all and man what about my reputation. We would go back several times to the old man's place and shoot up heroin. Sometimes it took on a party atmosphere, as we brought others to experience this high, it was too late to stop. I could do it myself now, and all of us had our own works; this was the top.

I don't remember what happened to the old man. We had learned how to find our own heroin and where the dealers were in business. We never went back to his school went by like a flash. While others gained their reputation singing, dancing, playing sports, writing stories and all of the things seniors in high school do, I was getting high. My reputation was solid, I was junkie. Every time you saw me, it was where are the drugs, in school or in the streets, even out of town. Nobody could do drugs like me, and it became known that I, along with a few others, was using heroin. My reputation was all I had, and then I had my drugs. The year ended by me almost not getting out of school, I sure wasn't going back to high school, so I got me a job at a local oil refinery, making good money. The only problem was, I was a drug addict.

The impact and influence of peer pressure, along with media images and perceptions cannot be understated to family members. Concerned adults and responsible leaders willing to aid in America's drug crisis must become a force in our aid America's drug crisis must become a force in our communities. One of the most meaningful elements to a teenager in school is perceptions, whether by other peers or adults that are making judgments concerning one's attitude and actions. Critical in this thought is the perception the teen has of self. This cannot be overlooked because often times, this level of self-perception is still in the formative stages of development. Key in this thought is the fact that there are hundreds of impressionable variables, which all focus the attention of most teens away from what you have the potential to do, when you have other selves or persons which you emulate making impressions for you. Frustration, anger and confusion can lead to decisions that very well could take you away from the self and bring external factors onto the self—that being the abuse or use of drugs or alcohol.

Another more specific factor for positive teen development is the element of personal identification- one that has the highest level of need during the critical stage of adolescent development. Identification holds such a high place, because so many personalities (including family members) seem to not make such a strong impression, whether directly or indirectly. Regardless, the teen is generally overwhelmed by the people's identification, while at the same time trying to somehow find their own. Careful consideration should be given to the impressionable period of identification. This clearly relates to the first period of early development. Some sense of identity can bring back a teen even after those moments of escape. However wrong the outcome, one must always remember, some elements of a personality are formed through impressions. In fact, at this stage it would seem evident in one's ability to analyze for oneself.

A final key point has to focus on the external solely as a motivational factor in influencing behavior. Most teens find as much social meaning with themselves, as adults find with fellow peers. This can only give credit to the commonality in all human beings and their need for companionship. However, most at these ages develop a very practical oriented philosophy, which aims at learning or experiencing for one self and group identity. Peer groups cannot function separate of themselves. In other words, they need other adult groups and people in general to experience meaningful elements of life. What has meaning must be a primary factor to influence potential behavior of a young adolescent. Remember there are different levels, one being higher does not mean greater, one being lower does not imply less.

Therefore, it is critical for young people to have the same appreciation, self enjoyment, levels of competence and maturity that many adults take for granted, and yet some adults don't enjoy themselves. Primary in this thought is the idea of each external factor that persons must respond to in different situations and environments. Imagine eating a traditional one course meal for 40 plus years and then being invited to dine at a seven course dinner. Yes there would be some difficulty without experience. That is why we must be mindful of this reality in dealing with teenagers and young adolescents. Experience is always a factor in the development of the most competent executive and newest junior high student.

The teenager period of development can be one of the most traumatic for adults as well as teens. These professional suggestions can better equip a parent or assisting adult during this period.

Why Do Student “Do Drugs?”

The reasons are as many and varied as the number of youths using drugs. Students “do drugs” for lots of reasons, but usually to satisfy, compensate or resolve a basic human need.

The most frequently give reason are:

- to be accepted by peers
- to feel important and good at something
- to satisfy a need for relaxation
- to respond to the pressure from friends
- to escape from boredom
- to be less inhibited
- to counteract depression
- to experience the high feeling
- to achieve the excitement of “risks” and “kicks”
- to resolve poor family

Communication/environment/relationships

What Do Adolescents Need?

Adolescents need....

1. CLEAR LIMITS SET - What is safe and acceptable and what is not? What are the consequences?
2. DISCIPLINE - that is consistent and fair and carries over into every area of their lives.
3. POSITIVE ROLE MODELS - Do you know teachers who discuss “partying” with kids? Teachers and other “caring adults” are selling dope.
4. OPPORTUNITIES TO HONESTLY EXPRESS - their feelings or thoughts.

5. PERMISSION TO FAIL AND RETURN - not necessarily to accept behavior but to accept to kid. Tolerance for mistakes.
6. OPPORTUNITIES TO LAUGH AND BE HAPPY.
7. OPPORTUNITIES TO BE SUCCESSFUL - in school, at home, in the community, with peers, etc.
8. STRUCTURED FAMILY ACTIVITIES - church, holidays, meals, movies, etc.
9. CONSISTENCY - It's lacking everywhere - with friends, school policy, parents, and rules and regulations in general.
10. ENCOURAGEMENT TO TAKE RISKS.
11. ACCURATE INFORMATION - about drugs and alcohols; also about crime, sexuality, and other areas which might promote fear and uncertainty.
12. COMMUNICATION WITH ADULTS/PARENTS
13. SUPPORT FROM IMPORTANT ADULTS - in their lives.
14. TO BE TRUSTED - by important adults.
15. GENUINE COMMITMENT - from teachers, counselors, ministers, priests, etc.
16. POSITIVE PEER INFLUENCE - a helpful friend.
17. TO BE ENCOURAGED TO BE RESPONSIBLE
18. TO BE RESPECTED
19. TO BE TOUCHED - I think that it is incredible that we need a bumper sticker to remind us to hug our kids.
20. TO BE LOVED - genuine and real.
21. A HIGHER POWER, as AA refers to it. A Being greater than ourselves to whom they can pray and ask for help and guidance.

10 WAYS TO HELP A PRE-TEEN SAY ‘NO!’

1. **Team Up with Other Parents When** - Parents join together in support groups; they can take steps that will reinforce the guidance they provide at home.
2. **Be a good role model or example** - Parent’s drinking habits and attitudes may strongly influence their children’s perceptions about alcohol.
3. **Help your Child Feel Good About Himself** - Self-regard is enhanced when parents praised efforts, as well as accomplishments, and when they correct by criticizing the action rather than the child.
4. **Help your Child Develop Strong Values** - A strong value system can give children the courage to make decisions based on facts rather than pressure from friends.
5. **Talk with your Child about Alcohol** -Parents can intervene to help change mistaken ideas their children may have obtained from peers and the media...such as “everybody drinks.”
6. **Help your pre-teen Deal with Peer Pressure** - Children who have been taught to be gentle and loving may need parental “permission” to assertively say “NO” to negative peer pressure.
7. **Make Family Policies that help your Child say “NO”** - It’s helpful when parents verbalize specific family rules against alcohol use by minors and the consequences of breaking those rules.
8. **Encourage Healthy; Creative Activities** - Hobbies, school events and other activities may prevent children from experimenting with alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs out of boredom.
9. **Learn to Really Listen to Your Child** - Children are more likely to communicate when they receive positive verbal and non-verbal cues that show their parents are listening to them.
10. **Know What to do if You Suspect a Problem** - Parents can learn to recognize the tell-tale signs of alcohol abuse and even experimentation.

PARENT ALERT

The signs and symptoms of an adolescent going through the progressive stages of chemical dependency are not always clearly visible. Parents may find the following list helpful in identifying youngsters who are becoming involved in drugs/alcohol:

Changing of friends

Isolation from family

Unable to account for time away from home

Creating tense family relations

Change in personal hygiene

Memory loss

Bloodshot or glassy eyes

Legal problems

Frequent Illness

Parents must recognize that adolescents who are chemically dependent frequently deny or minimize their use of drugs/alcohol. Parents should attempt to discuss their concerns and take a firm stand against use of these substances.

CHAPTER 3

Drug Addict or Stone Junkie

Graduation is generally a time of celebration for most students and their families. It is a time to focus on the future and goals, go to school, get a job, get married, join the military or just wait to grow up some more. My plans were not as secure or was I thinking about a long term future in life. All I wanted was to get out of school, move as far from home as possible, and of course, have some money to pay the bills. The ceremony and celebration could wait. A test for graduating seniors proved successful, and I got a job at a major oil refinery in the Houston area. My causes for celebration and of course, and excuse to continue getting high were superficial. I would get high anyhow.

The time to start working was almost immediately in June, there were other students around the city high school at the refinery, and I guess we all felt special to have such a high paying job. I remember my father telling me I made almost as much as he did working at the Post Office; however, there was one big difference, he wasn't hooked on heroin. Immediately, after taking the job I met some other young employees who got high and used even more elaborate drugs that I did. Some used acid, speed, and a mix of powerful drugs unknown to me in school. I even found out who the drinkers on the job were immediately and where they met after work each day, just like on the football field. Drugs could be found everywhere, the job was not exception. The only rule was to cover your own, and don't get anybody killed.

One evening after having brought a new car, I ran into a gas pump outside the plant and almost blew everybody up in the plant. People rushed over to see what happened and how I was doing, I remarked that there was loose gravel in the road, but the truth is I was high on speed and just missed the road. There were homes and parties that made me realize now the magnitude of drugs and alcohol on the job. It seemed everybody gave a get together for whatever the reason, just an excuse to get high together. Quickly, I adjusted, got an apartment and started a weekend, week-out series of on-going parties that lasted from sun up to sun down. Over a one year period, I went through three different roommates, all older, but unable to keep up with my level of getting high on whatever drug was available.

There were weekends when the drug available was speed and acid, which made me stay up for 24 hours at a time, and by Monday I was in no mood to work. Other times found me out all night looking for heroin, out of town on a week night, or playing stoned on pills and syrup for the evening. One thing was for sure it did not help me maintain my job and keep money in my pocket to pay the only two bills I had, rent and car note. Before long the tardies, late hours and absenteeism caught up with me and many of the young employees hooked on drugs and alcohol. One day I came to work late and found a pink slip in place of a time card, the party was over, I was fired and I was hooked on drugs.

After being out of school one year working at a top job, making good money, I was heading down a one way path. I paid the rent and car note, but even those payments were late. Nobody parties when you're broke and I didn't even have a roommate anymore. Well, it didn't take long and I mean any means that will get the next fix, pay the car note or rent. There were instances were I would bring in the lowest of criminal life just to get my money for survival. There were times when I would go looking for drugs. The strongest connection I had was a car. Without it, I would not make the next day or night. A couple of times I remember not finding any money or drugs, going to an empty apartment with no food and trying to act normal, as if I didn't have a drug habit.

One time in particular, I was in the apartment, and the next thing I knew, I was vomiting and cramped over on the floor like a ball. I was sick; I knew I had the jones. Everybody knew that when you had a drug habit, you could die and never be heard of again. I had vomiting all night and right before the next day came, early in the morning two junky friends came by to shoot up. When they saw me, they hurriedly gave me a portion to help my sickness. The street law is never the same as the standard laws, winos share wine, alcoholics share alcohol and junkies share the cotton (smallest amount of heroin left to shoot). These two were junkies and street hustlers. As long as I had the car, we could run games, play murphy or whatever it took to stay high. I became meaner and sicker, like a dog loose, hungry, tired and no place to go - - all the while I was getting deeper and deeper in the world of drugs, crimes, night life, sick people and vomiting junkies.

The last straw came when I got in trouble with the law. Everybody knew a junkie didn't last in jail, I was not different; there was only a matter of time before I would be caught. Two close instances, one involving a gun, almost made me realize I needed help, but I was sick. I needed drugs, not help. One day, the car note was also months past due and my father, the cosigner, was looking for the car note. The police were too close to keep off, in desperation, I joined the service. The war was still going on in Vietnam, but as far as I was concerned, that was peace compared to what I was going through in the streets.

So at the ripe old age of nineteen, full of drugs, I took the oath to defend my country and do what every red bloodied American has done for the past 200 years, die, if necessary, for his country. No one knew I was going into the service, not even my family until a week prior to basic training. I joined the U.S. Air Force, a stone junkie. If nothing else, I felt I could escape the drugs, the streets, the crime, the vomiting, I was sick of being sick. I should have done my homework, a few days prior to leaving for basic training, I told my father not to tell anyone where I was, I wanted to run from my problems, I just didn't realize you can't hide.

Basic training was a piece of cake for me, good food, plenty of sleep and exercise and most of all no drugs, so I thought until the first weekend pass on base. One thing I didn't realize until that first weekend was the simple fact that most military programs are filled the good old fashioned Americans. Rural, urban, suburban, white, black, and brown - - similarity, in the haircut, the uniform, the time and of course, the drugs. Most people don't realize what type of mail is sent to basic trainees. It was a joy to hear

someone say, "I can't wait for a pass tonight." All the dope heads knew someone had some drugs, and alcohol was readily available to whoever had the money.

I didn't vomit for six weeks. The only time I got sick is when I got home and my father said some detectives have called about my car. Of course I didn't know a thing. By the time I got to the end of my training, I was clean of heroin. I didn't need any pills or syrup, I felt great. In fact, I could remember just smoking weed and drinking beer or alcohol. I thought that compared to the last six years, this was like drinking a soda water, nice - cold and sweet. The only problem was that basics were over, and I was on to technical school for twelve weeks. Luckily, the same pattern continued, even a little better, because of the larger amount of drugs available on base and off base in the city. However, I slipped back to just remind myself of the heroin high, I shot up again, drank some syrup and dropped pills, not much, I felt, for a red bloodied American soldier, prepared to die for his country. I just hoped I wouldn't die of anything else, or so I thought. The next stop, after finding out from my father the police were calling and had to be far from Texas. The police were looking for car and I think I knew for what. I signed up for the furthest base from America, the Sergeant said "Gilmore, Philippines, Clark Air Force Base," I said, running to the map, "Where is that?" someone shouted, "You're going towards Vietnam." I heard someone else shout, "That's 7000 miles in the middle of no where on an Island." I smiled, not caring, just thinking that drugs were not possibly that bad way over there on an Island.

Those few weeks prior to my being shipped out to the Philippines were spent in one big party. I had money; most of my drug buddies knew I was leaving and everybody wanted to wish me well by getting high. For the first time I felt fine. I was getting high, of course, but I felt like things were o.k. I still didn't fully realize where I was going, nor did I care, as long as I didn't go to jail. The weeks and days passed in a flash, old girlfriends cried, drug buddies gave me one last free hit after another, as if I were going to be lost on a dessert island with no water. I stayed high everyday. In fact I know that even up to the final send off at the airport, looking at my beloved grandmother and cautious father, I was so high on heroin, syrup, pills, weed, and alcohol I didn't remember much except for my father warning me, what not to bring back home. I expected a salute or congratulations or even hug from him. All he said was "Don't bring a dishonorable discharge or one of those long haired slanted eyed women."

I was mad, here I was prepared to go to war and all my father could think of was a dishonorable discharge and foreign women, while I could see my grandmother crying uncontrollable at my departure. While in California, I dropped a few pills and made my way to the flight for the trip to the Philippines, I met another air man on the way to the same base. We would work at the same hospital at Clark. The difference I thought was he was from New York, I was from Texas. We were miles apart, except for the uniform. I didn't know we were actually in the same boat, two junkies in the service trying to get our lives straight, with only one problem, heroin and more drugs on the way. The flight lasted for over seventeen hours, I thought we had flown to another planet, my New York buddy seem to have a bladder problem, going to the bathroom every few hours. I just kept sleeping and dropping pills. I didn't know but he was snorting heroin in the bathroom.

Our lives would meet again in the Philippines. He would later die from a massive drug overdose from heroin. The Philippines was another world, teeming with millions of faces, hungry to do anything at any cost for a paying G.I. Upon arrival; we were all told to stay on base for two weeks before venturing out into the surrounding city, which from a distance seemed alive with activity. In my mind, I wondered what else. After the briefing, I became anxious, changed into regular clothes, assumed my street identity and caught a jeep to what seemed like nowhere but the end of the road. At the first sight of GI's that looked as if they were in the city. I got out, paid my small fare and found a dark club with a dimly lit sign advertising its name, "The Yellow Unicorn."

Inside the even darker club, with patrons, I took a seat and waited for service, not knowing what to expect hoping for the best, I was out of drugs and getting sick. A waitress came up and said "GI number one, you want something?" After ordering a watered down version of Philippine beer, I heard ask again, "You want something?" I was too far from home, the base and too close to getting sick to become scared now. Hurriedly I asked, "You got something to smoke?" Nothing that I already had a full pack of cigarettes, she asked for a few dollars, not enough I felt to score a bag at home and disappeared into the night. She only returned a few minutes later about five of the thinnest sticks of tightly rolled joints I had ever seen. I just knew I had been ripped off, but she kept saying "Budda, Budda, good smoke." Under the thin light I smelled, looked and then lit the joint, taking a full pull, lungs desperate for some type of drug, any drug, even Budda to kill a growing pain.

After two quick pulls, my lungs felt as if they would burst. Quickly I put out the joint. The potency was dynamite for such a thin joint. I asked what this was; now affecting me making me high all over again. She replied, "Budda, Thai gold, dipped in Opium". I stared, wondering what else could be obtained at such low prices. Instantly I gave her a five dollar bill and asked, as if rubbing on a magic lantern, for some syrup. Again she disappeared into the night, only to come back with a quart size bottle of codeine filled cough syrup, so thick I had to pour it into a glass filled with soda water, nevertheless it was potent. I knew from the atmosphere, the music and my drugged state that everyone in the small, dingy club was high; nobody even came over to ask for a hit, I asked for more drugs.

This time my craving, although satisfied with the syrup and smoke, wanted to find out if heroin was available. I just asked again, gave her some more money and explained in my street language, heroin. Again she disappeared, this time she stayed a little longer and came back with four or five neatly wrapped, razor size envelopes, too big I thought for American sized packets. I thought again, this was not America. As I slowly opened one of the packets to reveal what appeared to be red powder, she replied, "Red China, number 99". Anxious to try this in a syringe, she began to loosen a cigarette and thread a small amount into the tobacco, I had never smoked heroin from a cigarette, but I would try anything to taste that high all over again. As I lit the tobacco and heroin filtered cigarette, it hit me like a powerful stimulant. This was some of the best smoke I had ever tasted, at once. All the pain was gone. There was nothing left I thought but to enjoy the syrup, Budda and Heroin filled cigarettes.

Even the most experienced junkie has a limit. I didn't realize how strong the drugs were in comparison to often cut American drugs. Once more she said, "G.I. number one", and took a few dollars from the openly drug filled table and disappeared into the night, only to return with a clear bottle, on what appeared to be foreign writings. I felt good already but would try this seemingly harmless looking drug, obviously her choice, she called it "Doctor". After she took my handkerchief folded it and sprayed it full of this clear substance, she placed it to her mouth as if taking an anesthetic in a hospital. I tried it next. My head swam as this powerful high hit me. I floated from my seat and everything changed in a matter of minutes, this was too much. I clearly remembered that earlier in the day, getting on a plane in California, and seventeen hours later sitting in the Philippines, with a table full of the most powerful drugs I had ever tasted. The next time I woke up in the morning in a strange hotel room with a slant eyed woman, my father warned me about earlier.

After making it back to the base and being briefed, I began to look around at the new members and see if I could spot somebody of similar tastes. Only my New York friend, we would speak but never did we realize we both were junkies in the service. On the plane we even traded one of our dog tags, as if to make a pact to tell our families the truth, if anything ever happened to us, as if to remind us there was still a war going on in Asia. I did go back to the Yellow Unicorn on several occasions, more knowledgeable and aware of what was available, plus I couldn't just go up to someone and say let's smoke some Buddha together or smoke some heroin and drink some syrup. However, I did meet one man, a 6 foot 6 inch soldier named Big John, from California, who dated the owner of the club and who seemed to have the same problem I had, he was a junkie too.

We started out sharing the fellowship of smoking, sniffing, shooting and just plain getting high together – we both had everything in common, so much so we moved off base into a huge duplex apartment and hired a junkie Philippine couple to keep it clear for us and of course run to find our supplies of drugs. Big John had one of the largest appetites for drugs I had ever seen or maybe it was because he had been there a little longer and using more drugs. In less than a month, I was strung out for good. Both of us traded stories, drugs and experiences, both of us hung close together and especially at night down dark drug alleys into the heat of a dark Philippine night.

FAMILIAR FAMILY RESPONSE

Stage of Denial

Initial acceptance of being drunk or high as normal

Imposing restrictions and curfews.

Appeal to "logic".

Bargains (e.g. "drink but don't use drugs").

"Rescue Missions" (Family bails the adolescent out of trouble and assumes the role of enabler).

Increasing family focus on the dependent.

Sees chemical use as a problem but not “the” problem and seeks advice of professional who may reinforce the denial system.

Family loses perspective on their own harmful interaction.

Worries about family reputation and feels guilty that they may in some way have caused the problem.

Occasional “geographic cure” – new schools, alternative programs.

Blame “those kids”, he/she hangs out with.

Stage of Anger

Alcohol/Drugs now the central focus of the family attention.

Increasing tension and unhappiness at home.

Progressive restructuring of roles in the family.

Anger and frustration that the child cannot be controlled.

Other children exhibit emotional problems.

Family is distrustful and resentful.

Worries about family reputation—tendency toward social isolation.

Marital problems.

Stage of Depression

Passive withdrawal and isolation of parents.

Feelings of guilt, self pity and despair as a parent.

May construct rigid patterns to escape family conflicts.

The family is a prisoner in their own home.

Crisis

Treatment offered and Support withdrawn.

May force the adolescent out of the home.

Concern remains but family unable to tolerate relationship

CHAPTER 4

Death or Dishonorable Discharge

In 1972 the Vietnam War was coming to a close, but fighting continued in Cambodia and Thailand. In fact there never seemed to be a let down in the casualties of war. I worked in the evacuation area for the first two or three months while stationed in the Philippines. It was the smell of death every 24 hours, with the arrival of a C-141 medical evacuation plane filled with the critically injured troops some hopelessly hanging on for the last ride home. There were men who had blown off limbs, skin burned beyond repair, holes where bullets separated bone from flesh. I still have the memory of young men dying in a room all alone, far from home.

Death never bothered me at home; the danger of drugs never brought an impression of death into my mind. I was twenty years old. I thought I would live forever, but military service brought me back to reality. Ferdinand Marcos had declared martial law in the Philippines, declaring absolute power over the people and the government. This led to an increase in Black marketeering on the Island and to a tightening of the flow of drugs onto the streets. Many of the fellow junkies, including Big John and I, instantly began to form a tighter circle to maintain our habits, and, of course, prevent ourselves from getting sick while on duty, which surely meant getting busted. I had already gotten busted concerning a car that was sold to me by a technical sergeant off the base. The Office of Special Investigations (OSI) called me in and promised me a possible 20 years in a Marcos jail along with a dishonorable discharge for my deviant and criminal actions.

Added to this stress was the fact that I would see and hear what seemed to be hundreds of stories fresh from the field of lost friend, units and even lost faith in a lost war. The only satisfaction I got going to work was being high on heroin and trying to aid injured soldiers. The dried up drug trade brought so many junkies out into the streets. It was unbelievable who all were hooked on heroin, syrup, Budda or whatever drug was available. After seeing so many die and patch so many wounded, I quickly became numbed by the entire Philippine experience. The one death that brought it all home was not with a bullet or a bomb, but my New York friend. His death pushed me over the edge, and I realized I wouldn't make it back alive, not by bullet or bomb, but drug overdose.

I was a medic, Big John worked in supply. Both of us were good soldiers, we were just hooked on drugs and couldn't get off. One night while looking for some heroin, down a dark alley filled with poor Philippines and even darker entrances to dark streets, Big John and I were walking, always watching each other's back. Many GI's on drugs had been hit or stabbed, robbed and left for dead on those drug infested alleys. We heard voices, crying for help in the distance. Cautiously, we could see a figure on all fours, crawling in the filthy, sewer less street. It was an American Airman. As I ran over to the civilian dressed soldier, I noticed immediately it was my clean cut New York friend. Although we had only talked about personal matters only briefly, I still considered him my friend. Big John and I carried him to a familiar house, and I started working on him, not realizing what was wrong, but trying to save his life.

“Big John”, I said, “Get the ambulance and tell them it’s a GI”. I knew I would have to give a report to the military police and I could get busted, but I didn’t care. My job was to save lives if possible, especially a GI friend. As the ambulance and MP’S arrived, they rushed him to the hospital where we all worked, and I gave my report to the police. I know the emergency team worked on him and tried to save him, I hoped he would live, because he had told me once he was trying to quit drugs. His wife was due with another child and was coming over. He once talked how she was a beautiful New York lady, and he already had one small child. The doctor walked in the room and looked me directly in the face and said, “He’s gone”, I stared and said, “From what?” his reply, “Drug Overdose”.

Later, I would find out his East Coast friends had left him to die. I was told that this was the custom in New York and New Jersey for an overdosed brother. The fact is the doctor said, “If you could have been brought in ant earlier, we could have saved him from the overdose”. His friends would admit to Big John and me later in tears how scared they were of being busted. I never spoke to them again, but I often wondered about having a friend like that to aid me in time of need. The military took care of the details with his family and stopped his wife from coming to the Philippine Island. Years later I received a phone call from his wife in New York, wanting to know the truth. She had found the dog tag we traded on our flight to serve our country, two junkies, yet, two friends in uniform.

Immediately, thereafter there was a massive crackdown on the base, starting in the hospital, over 25% of the personnel on base were identified as having drug ad alcohol problems. His death sparked a massive military investigation into the world of illegal drug use on base. I will always believe my New York friend saved me first, because I was identified as being a heroin addict through urinalysis testing, along with hundreds of base personnel, including his East Coast friends. I don’t believe the base truly understood the depth of the drug problem at Clark AFB and its tentacles into other parts of the military. I was given some early treatment on base and slapped on the wrist for the first identification as a drug abuser. Later, I would be sent on a new assignment in the hospital and treated for light use. They didn’t really know how far gone I was on heroin.

Depression is one of the major destructive mental elements of chronic drug addicts and I was no stranger to its hidden power. With the added threat of doing twenty years in a Marcos controlled government prison, identified as a heroin, codeine and opium addict – certainly my bright picture of military service turned bleak with despair and depression. It seemed that all I could recall in my waking moments were the words of my father, “Don’t bring home a dishonorable discharge”. This added to my sense of loss and purpose in the military, in my family and most of all for me. Once back on the streets, I started using heroin and other drugs with a passion; only one thing was on my mind, death by means of suicide – a drug overdose.

Suicide I felt was the easiest way out and still the most enjoyable to me. I had lost the sense of fear of death and welcomed the chance to shoot up one last time at the apartment. Our house couple was very sincere and caring, although they were also

junkies with a huge responsibility of taking care of their poor families living in the rural jungles. Often Big John and I would give them extra money and drugs. I believe they had a special compassion for us, which we did not realize. My first attempt to commit suicide was neatly arranged and logically planned. A large amount of pure heroin, while no one was at home, to interfere or bring me back from the overdose. I remember shooting up and passing out. Sometime later our house couple was walking me around saying they had found me on the floor with the syringe still in my arm and blood running out. Figuring I merely had made a mistake, they revived me with milk and plenty walking. Big John arrived and helped in this foiled overdose attempt. I took no effort to explain my attempt; I merely became sicker and more depressed in my state of addiction.

The hospital gave me great support, and I tried to hide my continued dependence on heroin. I continued to shoot up daily, not once, but now three times a day. Instead of lunch, I would shoot heroin in the hospital bathroom, I was a sick man. My depression overcame me, and in absolute desperation I called my mother and told her everything. She cried, called my father and he just listened in silence. She encouraged me to hang in there, and like any mother, cut off from one of her children, she reached for help. In a faint conversation, I remember her saying she would talk to the Chaplain, Base Commander, anybody, -- for me to just hang in there have faith, and most of all she would tell my two grandmothers. I wondered, now even more depressed that she would tell my two grandmothers. I wondered, now even more depress that she would tell the world, and I would be busted again and go to prison for keeps in the Philippines, a dishonorably discharged airman. What I hadn't considered was my two grandmothers, solid soldiers and believers in prayer so secure in their faith they would do nothing but pray in times of trouble.

My second and final attempt was not going to fail, nor was there going to be any benevolent concern for my welfare. I wanted to die and, the sooner, the better. Death has a strange curiosity for persons wanting to feel its mysterious grip and icy hold on minds and hearts. I was ready for the final fix. With the strongest possible mix of heroin, I went out on an all night party and came back with no warning to sit right across from Big John and get as high as possible. Later in the evening, Big John left to go to the Yellow Unicorn. I stayed to finish my high, one last time. With no remorse, I filled the syringe, placed the needle on what used to be huge pretty veins, now knotted and battered by puncture wounds. I recall they started to look like the old man, who taught us how to shoot up on that hot summer day in Houston. Hundreds of memories raced in my mind, some good, and some bad – regardless they were my memories, and I would take them with me in death.

My mind slipped into a dark coma. A passage appeared, darker than a thousand midnights; fearlessly I plunged into an abyss of memories, faces and thoughts. Time stood still, I seemed to enjoy this passage of reality or illusion into eternity, nevertheless, there I was about to complete my journey of life. Certainly I felt this was more meaningful than the life I had known up to that point of my existence. I will never forget the shock of seeing a light so dim in the distant darkness, that it began to erase the plunge and suddenly I found myself in the base hospital. Somebody had called the emergency medical attendant, Big John or our Filipino attendants. I woke up in the detoxification

ward for drug addicts. My arms and feet were tied to the bed. I was about to have the shock of my life, for a drug addict, it is called cold turkey. Most medical attendants have called it pure hell!!!

Being high for over seven years had been mostly an enjoyable experience, one that I know I would never fully forget, but the one experience a drug addict would never like to have is the physiological torture of detoxification. Some patients in the past had died without the proper treatment. Cold turkey means no help in the sense of drugs to make your body readjust to normal existence. I was in bad shape, 6ft 3inches and weighing 150 pounds soaking wet. For three or four days I remained in detox, confined to a room and with nothing but an attendant making sure I wasn't dead, every once in a while. I made it, but only because I was used to a variety of drugs and had suffered before. I was still depressed and in the same mental shape. In fact, at the first possible chance, I was thinking how I could succeed at suicide once and for all.

Drug addiction affects people in a wide variety of ways whether physical, psychological or physiological. Regardless of the type of drug, it affects the body in several specific ways. Of course, the drug is aimed at changing some type of behavior that leads to a particular action. Addicts are always in need of the continued boost at any cost to family, friends, or foes. Central to this is the on going denial of reality. I know this can take a life time for some individuals, for others one traumatic experience and you are on your way back to reality.

Reality is a central focus of my point simply because of the destructive power of illegal or abused drugs in the human system. It is always dangerous to assume a person under the influence of an external force has one control and if possible which direction when the force is drugs, it becomes a weapon to the system and for all practical purpose to others in the environment. One key point is how drugs make a person create a more acceptable illusion as reality, even in the most responsible position or place. Never judge the total environment of a drug addict, only the one which seemingly has created the problem. In other words focus attention or energy on the most identifiable problem (family, job, interpersonal relationships, etc).

The strongest influences in helping rid the mind of its illusions are sometimes the most authoritative factors of control. It seems harsh, but the drug world and its realities are much harsher on the mind and body. Many people affected by its grip, do so because they have come to believe the illusion as reality, thereby making it as effective as reality itself. I say that simply because so many are brought to a standstill unable to effect any change in the substance abuser. The military showed me that a three way approach is needed, that being the mind – body – and soul or spirit.

In the detox, I pondered my condition after a week of being clean and only when faced with the possibility of getting a dishonorable discharge did I really start to become realistic in making decisions about my future. One day in the confinement of the drug ward, another junkie had smuggled a balloon bag of heroin into the unit. So many people tested positive for heroin that the whole place was put on special security. A Colonel gave you a choice, drug treatment in a new special program or dishonorable discharge from the military. I broke down in tears after hearing the choice, not because of the

decision, but because of what my father had told me at the airport leaving for the Philippines. I would try anything but a bad discharge; meantime in my depressed mind I was wondering how I might succeed at committing suicide the next time.

In the privacy of my room, I thought about my brief seven month tour in the service and how much I had ruined everything in my life, so much for reputations I thought. As I sat there a strange event occurred, one that I would repeat hundreds of times, over and over to anyone who would listen and believe. Head dropped, I could hear the voice of an old Sunday School teacher; I could see the image of my old Band instructor, the Professor. So many drugs had entered my system; I just quietly listened as she repeated what I had heard as a child in countless Sunday School lessons. This old woman, hair rolled and pinned in the back, who often wore long print flowered dresses, always stately in her job as my child Sunday School teacher, with those thick heeled black shoes. She would holler no scream at the end of each Sunday School lesson. I don't recall if it was to wake us up or shake us, but I remember hearing her voice, "If you ever got in trouble, and don't have any place to turn, you can always call on Jesus". Louder she would repeat, "If you ever get in trouble, you can always call on Jesus".

I wasn't sure what the message meant then, but I do know my mind focused on the Sunday School teacher and then to the Professor. Often he would tell me – a young drummer in the Henry Allen Boyd Band, I was special, the songs were special, and I had to keep time for the members during normal parade breaks, even though I was the only drummer in the band. Here I was depressed, facing 20 years in prison on an island, possibly a dishonorable discharge and the words of a Sunday School teacher kept coming back, "If you ever get in trouble, you can always call on Jesus". I had never really been religious. My mother would often tell me the story of how I joined church at the age of nine, the old preacher walked over and said to me, "the spirit is on that child". Sitting there on that bed, 7,000 miles from home in trouble, I figured in my mind, "Well, Jesus, if you can help me now, here I am". The thought passed and left me, but I felt a strange sense of peace. For the first time since being in detox I slept, into what seemed to be a dream, it didn't matter. I had already called the last person I felt could help, "Jesus".

The Philippines was in turmoil, and the Marcos government tightened the grip on all movement outside the base. In my mind, I knew I would never get home. I would never see Texas, my family and especially those two old grandmothers. My mother had said, "I will tell your grandmothers", while I was on the phone earlier, I wondered what could my two old grandmothers do for me, especially when I knew they probably didn't even know where the Philippine Islands was on a map. Nevertheless, I know my mother told them. Never did I realize that they had access to a source more powerful than any drug I had ever tried, stronger than any bullet or bomb in the military. Those grandmothers knew about this Jesus, the Sunday School teacher had told me about as a child, the one the Professor told me whose band I played my little drum in, the same "Jesus".

Belief is one of the strongest missing elements in everyone's life, whether in yourself, in others and most certainly in God. However, belief when combined with stronger forces of reality can become a powerful tool in changing a person's personality and even influencing his or her behavior. Quite possibly it was not the belief of me that

made a significant difference, but that of my grandmothers, the Sunday School teacher, the Professor, even my mother. In other words the belief of others can strengthen yours at least to a level where it can join in and become effective. This belief then turned to faith, the one key that I believe holds persons at bay from becoming their true selves, a faith so distant that most of us never face it in a life time of living.

I slept, peacefully as if in a dream I knew I was safe with Jesus. I wasn't worried about death or dishonorable discharge. I have never worried again about those things. As far as I was concerned, life was like a dream. I was sleeping deep, almost as if I were sedated by the hospital attendants. I knew better, but all I could do was sleep. One nurse, a tall dark skinned woman had come up to me earlier in a strange way and said, "You don't belong here and I know you can be somebody; I've seen it". My life had already been strange enough. I thought maybe she was on something. I was nothing but a drug addict, a junkie and that didn't add up to a whole lot to me.

That night as if in a dream the medics came to get me, still remembering the peacefulness of the event, I thought maybe this was a dream. Hurriedly, they got me up and put me in the back of a truck filled with wounded and other pajama clad patients, in closing moments someone shouted to me "Don't worry about your clothes". I had been told by the OSI, I would never leave the island, and, as far as I was concerned, they were the power. I didn't consider anything else, only the worst. Many times I helped unload patients from the huge C-141 medical evacuation planes, but I had never been deep in the belly of this flying hospital, transported to what seemed to be a seat deep in the middle of the plane. I took my seat, still thinking this was a dream, and I would be woke soon in the detoxification ward. I can remember people calling for the nurses, patients unable to do anything but scream and a host of hospital smells that confirmed, I had to be in a dream. For seventeen or twenty hours I slept or rode through this dream. The silence in my mind was deafening. Never had I thought so long and hard about waking up being at home in Texas.

The plane touched down somewhere, I certainly didn't know. All I thought about was waking up, wondering what would happen to me next, strange still I was not depressed any more, a sense of hope prevailed in my mind and I could see the tail gate opened to off load patients. A military nurse called out, "All ambulatory patients first". I thought first where, it didn't make me any difference this had to be a dream that was almost over. Immediately after leaving the tail of the plane with other less severely injured walking patients, my eyes cleared long enough to open wide at the large sign saying, "Welcome to San Antonio, Texas and Randolph Air Force Base". Continuing to stare, now in awe as we moved to the awaiting transport bus, my mind raced to the hospital room in the Philippines, to the words of the Sunday School teacher, "If you ever get in trouble, you can always call on Jesus".

In what seemed to be a reflex to the thought that I had called and Jesus had answered, my eyes focused on the part of the sign that said Texas. This was no dream, I was home on Texas soil, and this was not an island. Falling down to my knees, I kissed the ground, and said, "It's A Blessing". Those moments on my knees saying "It's A Blessing", were burned into my heart, my soul, my mind. Hundreds, if not thousands of times, I would and still do say, "It's A Blessing". Many people have asked why? More

have asked how it has so much effect when people hear me say it and some have told me that it has changed the way they thought about certain events or things in their lives. Regardless, I just said, "It's A Blessing". One thing I knew, this was no dream, I was alive and in Texas – surely I would be able to see my family, those two grandmothers, the old Band Professor and who knows maybe the Sunday School teacher. I would imagine that I would shout, "If you ever get in trouble, you can always call on Jesus". I knew, It's A Blessing".

Denial is the refusal to acknowledge the truth of a statement or allegation, a rejection of belief that one has a drug problem. Enabling refers to the supplying with the means, knowledge or chance to be or do something. To make possible, the abuser a way to begin anew, a fresh, clean. Problems of a psychological, spiritual and physical nature are more evident during this critical stage of drug and alcohol dependency. These suggestions are important for the family and friends to understand.

INTERVENTION

The most consistent psychological trait of chemically dependent people is their denial of the problem. Defense mechanisms come into full play as these individuals deny, blame their problems on other people or situations, lie about the frequency and quantity of use of alcohol or drugs and staunchly maintain that they can quit anytime. Often they will stop using alcohol/drugs for brief periods of time because it begins to concern them. They test themselves to see if they are able to stop for any period of time, and they fool themselves into believing that the situation is under control.

Another strategy may be to substitute some other dependence producing drugs to prove they are not addicted to their drug of choice. Addiction is a physical and psychological phenomenon that crosses the boundaries between one drug and another. Therefore, many chemically dependent individuals develop cross addictions to many drugs.

Those individuals who can directly observe the decline of the addicted individual often do not understand. They may even chastise the addict for continuing to use addictive substance and believe that their harsh treatment will cause the addicted person to "change his/her mind". When a person becomes addicted it is no longer an issue of choice. One expert describes it as a biological imperative. The biological systems of this persons' body have taken charge and the individual becomes driven by the body's chemistry rather than the executive powers of the rational brain.

GENERATION AT RISK

National Research states, that over 30,000 Americans die annually by suicide. More than 10 times that number attempt suicide. 80% who take their own lives leaves "clues", 66% are white males. 6,000 youth under the age of 25 took their own lives in 1985, 997 in 1950. More than 500% increase. More females than males attempt suicide,

three times as many, but more males are successful. Guns are the primary method. Affluent, high achieving college bound or college students are higher risks than poor and under-privileged. The suicide rate increases in the fall and spring, December has the lowest rate. Monday has the highest – Blue Monday.

Danger Signs of Suicide

- 1) Suicide threats or statements indicating a desire to die or talk of worthlessness.
- 2) Previous suicide attempt.
- 3) Depression.
- 4) Marked changes in behavior.
- 5) Unusual calmness after an emotional upheaval of deep depression.
- 6) Making arrangements as though for a final departure (giving away personal possessions).

What to Do?

- 1) Believe it, when someone talks of suicide, they should be taken seriously.
- 2) Listen carefully, talk freely, open lines of communication, ask questions, talk calmly, don't be judgmental, listen carefully and sympathize. Do not give false assurances that everything will be O.K.
- 3) Get help; call a suicide prevention center, crisis intervention center, mental health clinic, physician, clergy or a family member.
- 4) Be there, be supportive and show the person you care. Do not leave the person during a crisis. Follow-up by staying in touch and encouraging the person to continue treatment.

Causes are attributed to stress breakdown of family, high divorce rate, geographic mobility of corporation employees, violence and dramatization of death on television on television and film, loneliness, and illness or loss of a loved one in the elderly. Contributing factors for the increased rate for youths are alcohol, drug abuse, unemployment and depression.

CHAPTER 5

Start All Over Again – Rehabilitation

Once processed into the Air Force Special Treatment Program, I was briefed as to the objective of this effort on the part of the military to give servicemen, another chance through rehabilitation. The programs was somewhat new and housed at Lackland Air Force Base in old converted barracks, most of the surrounding people were new recruits in basic training, was I glad to just be there. Immediately, I called home, briefed my mother and father that I was in Texas and that I had another chance to start all over again. Encouragement was a key factor from my family. I needed it ad they wished me well. My grandmothers talked to me as if they had never worried about my safety.

The program was intense. I had never been through such a mental and emotional soul searching at the Special Treatment Center, for what turned out to be full of ex-junkies and old addicts from all over the country and from mostly overseas. We were assigned a strict schedule to follow of counseling, intense evaluations, subjective and objective planning sessions, random urinalysis and of course peer evaluations. More so than anyone, I wanted to start all over again. Many days in the sessions I gave all I had, sometimes weeping from deep down inside, but I knew I would never go back to where I had just come from – being an addict. One of the most effective counselors was a young lieutenant, skilled in dealing with drug abusers and most definitely what turned out to be veteran users of drugs.

Often times while going through the first few weeks, evaluations were made in small group sessions. I learned that this procedure was called reality therapy. Everyone dreaded that week long session. Rumors had it that no one left without tears in their eyes. Some people had become physically violent in those mirror sessions into the self. I will never forget my week in the group, already I had obeyed the rules by the letter, I wanted to be approved to go back to active duty and finish my tour of duty. Three weeks in the program my name was on the session for reality therapy, I was prepared. I attempted to admit I simply enjoyed doing drugs, but it wasn't easy. The first couple of days, I watched grown men brought to tears telling of personal, intimate stories, quite possibly never before revealed, not even to themselves.

My time came with no tears. I simply admitted I enjoyed using drugs and that I was a junkie, which was it, but no tears. The counselor later told me, that he didn't believe me, and I would have to spend an extra week in the session, I was shocked. The next week I turned aggressive so much so, that I tore the hearts of several fellow junkies, with tears flowing I was able to finally tell my real story, one that took me all the way back to my childhood. The counselor was satisfied. I was truthful enough to leave for the last session and then on to my next assignment. I definitely wanted to stay in Texas, as close to home as possible. I ended up in Wichita Falls, Texas – about 600 miles from Houston, that was close enough.

The terms of the agreement were simple, all I had to do was report to my social action officer every two weeks, take random urinalysis tests for hard drugs and attend rap sessions every two with other identified airman and even officers. The only people that knew of my problem were the immediate supervisor, Chief Noncommissioned Officer and the Hospital Commander. The only person I would ever speak to about my problem was my immediate supervisor. The Master Sergeant was one year from retirement. He had served almost thirty years and was wise in more ways than I would ever imagine. Our first encounter was a mix in culture, time and conversation. It proved to be my best start on the job; I didn't want to mess up.

He greeted me warmly, took me into his office and sat down, all the while lighting up one of several chain smoked cigarettes. I could see the deep lines in his face, almost like that of the old man who got me started on heroin. "Airman", he said, "I believe every man deserves a chance, seconds or even thirds". He went on to talk of how he had served in the many hospitals around the world. In his words, he had seen the worst, and of course, better days. With one year left, he stated, "I want to do my best and retire". Finally he said, "Be on time, keep your shoes shined and give me a good days work for an honest day's pay, that's all I ask". I felt there would be more or less pressure about my past, my habit, even my mistakes, but he didn't ask a thing. All he did was show me the clinic procedures, and then left me to work.

The first few weeks of adjustment went fast, after which I learned all the necessary ins and out of the job, my social action officer, my schedule and of course a place to stay off base. After a few months, I had the job down pact, had even found a girlfriend, one military and one civilian. The only thing I did was drink a little beer and smoke weed and that was to socialize and pass the time. I had another chance, and I was not about to make a fool of myself the second time. The old Master Sergeant got ready to retire, but before he did, he called me in and had one last talk with me, one I would never forget.

"Airman, I have watched you for the past several months, and I am making a recommendation that you get your stripe back". That meant, of course, a little extra money and some pride, of course. He went on to say that at first he didn't know what to expect when he first met me, and now he knew I was a good soldier. After more small talk, he revealed that I was not the only one with a drug problem, but he, in fact, had a drinking problem for the past several years. Then he told me that anybody can overcome a problem. The key is having to learn to live with it on a daily basis, and, in fact, he believed I had learned how to survive.

I had never openly cried over a man before, but at his retirement celebration I did, I really did miss his wisdom, warmth and wit. I knew I would miss that old Sergeant. The next one came, and, certainly, he was not the same but younger and obviously wanting to take charge immediately. The only problem was I had to teach him. After a few weeks he called me in to discuss the private information in my folder and, of course, he was more curious about my current condition. I assured him that was a long time ago. My remaining time on the base went smoothly. I never turned in a positive urinalysis, I

made all my appointments with the Social Action Officer, and, of course, I kept my shoes shined and was always on time at my duty station.

On February 10, 1974, the unit commander, supervisor, physician and social actions officer met to evaluate me for the completion of the Air Force Drug Program. They determined I had successfully completed all requirements of the program, recommended full return to duty status and commended me for the responsible attitude toward completion of the program. The committee further recommended that all restrictions be removed from my personnel file at base headquarters. This, of course, would lead the way for me to receive an Honorable Discharge.

Military life presented a great opportunity for me to prove myself responsible. Also, I realized I would be coming up for discharge in 1976 and started thinking about what to do with the rest of my life. I realized with some fear that I was headed back for Houston and the same environment that I had left as a junkie. I was scared and didn't really know what to do. One thing I started doing was taking a few classes at the local community college, nothing too deep or complex, just some speed reading and history. It worked out pretty much, although I had made no future plans toward an education.

The Vietnam conflict was all but over and the Air Force started an early out program for anybody wanting to go to school, also there was no obligation to complete the remaining two years in reserve duty. I immediately took the chance to get an early out and my Honorable Discharge. On July 25, 1975 I was Honorably Discharged from the United States Air Force. After three years, nine months, and seven days, I was free to leave with full benefits. Seven months and twenty seven days were spent in Philippine Islands at Clark Air Force Base. I could now call myself a Vietnam era veteran.

One of the main things I learned while in the military was the fact that every person has a job and was held responsible to accomplish that task. It had taught me more about team work, the ability to accomplish objective goals and solve problems in the process. I certainly had grown into an adult, I would often relate to the fact that I matured the first week at Clark AFB, but I didn't understand what an adult's responsibility was until I was about to leave the military. Relatives in Dallas were telling me that I was needed in Houston. My mother was sick and other problems had grown in my family.

Fear made me consider going to Kansas City and a city I did not know much about. However, a late aunt in Dallas sat me down and said something I have never forgotten. She said, "Your mother needs you, your family needs you and you need to go home for them", I will always remember her reality and compassion. It was up to me, I could run but I couldn't hide. After waiting week longer thinking about my life, I decided it was time to go home, besides I was no longer a junkie, and I really did want to prove something to myself. In fact, I felt that if I could give almost four years of my life to the military, surely I could give four years towards an education in college.

The military taught me discipline, how to follow orders, think about the consequences in your decisions and resulting actions. I was a good soldier, I had full benefits. In fact, I had more than I really had thought about, prior to leaving the service. Educations, medical, counseling and testing were a few of the many privileges that were given to honorably discharged veterans. It was a start in the right direction. All I had to do was keep my shoes shined, give a honest day's work for an honest day's pay and remember, "It's A Blessing".

In Houston, I immediately started searching for something to do, a school, some skills to develop or how to stay out of the drug scene. My grandmothers were always religious or should I say spiritual. They came up during the early 1940's to Houston, when it was a small, but growing town. One was from East Texas, a dense cotton and agricultural area filled with tall pines and red clay. Many times my mother would tell me about the early struggles and picking cotton. My father's mother was from the Gulf Coast are. As a young child growing up in then urban Galveston, he would tell of living in a hustling city environment. My roots were deep in Texas, I knew that if I were to succeed, it would be in the great State of Texas.

The vivid memories of Houston were renewed once I was established back home; however, many things had changed, one in particular that I was rehabilitated and could consider myself an ex-drug addict. My two grandmothers continued to give me that spiritual guidance and concern that grandmothers should. In this case, it was for a deserving grandson. My father's mother, the one who had cried so at the airport, took me by the hand one Sunday morning, to the little old church around the corner, the same one where the Sunday School teacher had shouted to me as a child.

The preacher was different from the one that I remembered as a child, but, nevertheless, the church was the same. This was the first time I had been back in many years. My grandmother sat silently through the service, every once in awhile holding up her hands and thanking God out loud. At the end of the service, she would turn over to me and whisper in my ear, "The preacher is a good man, stay here and listen to the preacher". This would be the last time she would walk into the church, but she wanted to make sure I was there and, of course, listening to the preacher. The next time I would see her in that church, I would be preaching and giving the eulogy at her funeral. The church would become my new treatment program and center for rehabilitation, although I didn't realize just how significant the experience.

Rehabilitation and Treatment

One of the most critical areas for consideration in dealing with the abuser is the concept of rehabilitation and treatment. There are too few beds available for intensive treatment and certainly not enough long term programs that cater to the needs of a recovering drug or alcohol patient. Twelve step programs are the most visible of all long term methods of prevention; however, it is not and cannot be viewed as the most successful for each individual. There should be a variety of methods available, which could be offered to an individual that would be most suitable.

The Special Treatment Program offered the type of dynamics needed during the first stage of recovery. One of the main elements to follow should specifically point to responsible behavior. Responsibility to a drug abuser is often viewed as a means to adjust situations for personal satisfaction. Key is the thought that many people are not responsible because of their actions on drugs, which is absolutely correct. The drugs have an affect on the person's behavior, so much so that it changes the entire personality of the individual.

These are suggestions for the family, organization or individual as it relates to rehabilitation on an ongoing basis.

1. Aim for a program that will give you long term assistance without extra cost.
2. Look for a high level of responsibility in the program towards the drug abuser and for the family.
3. Make it relevant to the person's old friends and new friends, how they can help – if they want to!!!
4. Be very aware of personal disregard for policies and programs that will aim in taking away individual responsibility.
5. Let your support group know how and what role they must play in the recovery process.
6. Obtain the support of legal, job. Spiritual or community leaders in the recovery process.
7. Plan for attendance at an organized small group, family or related sessions for support and ongoing advice.
8. Look for methods to implement short and long term objectives that will assist or give direction to the abuser.
9. Become a dynamic force in redirecting the skills and tools for future use by the abuser.
10. Realistically develop a spiritual base for recovery, whether in programs or study.
This is one of the most powerful methods of prevention in the future.

Time cannot be measured as a means of successful evaluation and end; it can be used as an ongoing tool to continue methods of rehabilitation. There are and will continue to be many potential problems in the future, in fact a constant reminder is the main idea – once a drug abuser, always a drug abuser. There are several major reminders for the individual and supporting family.

1. Each day must be lived one day at a time.
2. Challenge oneself to the highest potential, whenever possible.
3. Become aware of opportunities to be a model of positive change.
4. Develop a strong “Personal Communication Network” understand principles of “Affective Communication”.
5. Learn how to appreciate the simple basics of life.
6. Give yourself an opportunity to relax and enjoy yourself and family.
7. Find satisfaction in yourself and with God, through Jesus Christ.

Rehabilitation continues for an entire lifetime, you and family members must make a commitment of support and success. Pray for the building of more positive methods that will enhance your life and the lives of others.

CHAPTER 6

Back to School

Six years had passed since I last attended any regular classes or made any serious attempt to make good grades. It had been even longer for me to concentrate on particular subjects. I became interested in broadcasting while in the service giving speeches to civilians. One day a small nice old lady complemented me on my pleasant voice and how she would enjoy hearing me on the radio. My first occasion after returning home was to enroll in a vocational school for about three months. It trained me in the basics of broadcasting, and I felt more confident about going back to school full time.

The only University I could ever remember wanting to attend was Texas Southern University located a few blocks from my parent's home in the heart of the community. I remembered my cousins attending, my father talking about his years there at the beginning and of course TSU students in general. My grandmother ran a rooming house for as long as I could remember, and it seemed that every other renter attended Texas Southern University. I knew that was going to be my school too. After going to the Veterans counselor, enrolling in the Communication School, making sure I knew where every class room was located, I prepared to attend TSU. This was not junior or senior high, this was college and I had to prove myself.

The first semester was a struggle. I was not used to studying, reading, writing and just plain learning in a classroom. My veterans' counselor gave me as much advice as possible. One thing I knew, no one knew I was an ex-junkie, and I sure wasn't going to tell anybody. The first semester almost became my last at TSU. I performed so poorly that I had to drop some classes and the Veterans Administration almost stopped my monthly payments for the next semester. There were a total of 45 months worth of payments and here I was failing in the first four months. I was determined.

My adjustment became my major priority at school. I found every available program, counselor, resource and aid to help me accomplish my goal. I used a military approach to solve any problem, answer any question and, of course, to pass all classes. Never again would I even come close to failure in school. Texas Southern had some of the most helpful teachers I had ever met. One elderly English teacher in particular realized I was having a difficult time with my work. One day she would ask if I needed extra help and, of course, I went immediately to the board in front of everyone to begin my "extra" assignment; nevertheless, that kind of help benefited me greatly.

I realized school was something like the military. You need discipline. There were plenty of orders to follow, and most of all, you had to be in a position to make some decisions. During my first year in school, I decided to become involved in some extracurricular activities and organizations that would help me benefit or continue developing my skills. I joined the Speech Team, Veterans Club, University Program Council, Baptist Student Union, Peer Counselors and a few others not as organized but representative of other special concerns. Of course I was developing future skills, but I

also knew I was staying busy by being active. I had no time to even consider a relapse on drugs.

One of the immediate rewards of being a veteran and being somewhat older and more mature than my teenaged college peers, was the level of experience. I knew that there were many times when the only reason for my input or leadership was merely my maturity and experience as a veteran. This gave me a greater sense of enjoyment and personal satisfaction. After my first year in school, I was a slightly popular college student, not for using drugs, but for more meaningful and serious minded goals that pushed me to excel more and develop a serious goal of achievement. Texas Southern University had a small 10 watt radio station, K-TSU that was student ran and controlled. I wanted to be involved, so I joined the group. Man, was I shocked at the amount of drug use in the media.

Keep in mind; I was still an ex-junkie. Most of my peers were drinking alcohol or smoking weed or whatever made them happy. I was too far removed to even consider drugs, but I saw many potentially successful young leaders fall victim to a reputation and a high. The radio station was no different. In fact, my involvement with that small college radio station gave me the greatest number of flashbacks that I would encounter. At the same time it made me realize drugs was a growing problem in America. At K-TSU, I did it all – wrote public service announcements, read the news, hosted radio programs, reported on outside news and of course, I was a late night disc jockey. At the time I played Blues and Jazz, from 10pm to 2am each weekday night, most of the music was down home message music and just what I needed to calm me down after a full day of school. The station only reached into the local community, but the audience was fiercely loyal to the music and the personalities, I was no exception. People would call and tell me how they were moved by my message, my music and yes – my voice. The participation on the TSU Speech and Debate Teams was paying off in trophies and improved vocal ability. I continued to practice during the wee hours at K-TSU.

The strange thing about communication is that some people have the ability to read between the messages and understand the purpose more so than normal, especially when it comes down to an ex-junkie, turned student. I had many experiences with my audience, one that really brought out the old self was late one night in the middle of some deep jazz music, and I was playing some Grover Washington, Miles Davis and others, but a call came in from a listener. He said, “I Am really enjoying your show, I was wondering if you wouldn’t mind coming over to smoke a joint after your set”. I hesitated, but I wanted to know how I was affecting people for some strange reason, whether good or bad. Later the encounter would make me leave the air as a jazz and blues disc jockey. I would continue to enjoy the music, but I would never play another jazz or blues record over the air to the public.

As I walked into his dimly lit apartment, in the wee hours of the morning, I noticed the sparse furnishings and even more empty rooms beyond the front entrance. Greeting me warmly, even more glad to meet a “radio personality” in person, I was overwhelmed by the attitude of acceptance and awe given to me, a small time college 10watt

radio jock. As we sat down to smoke a few cigarettes of weed, I questioned him intensely about the impact of me, my voice, my music and my personality. He revealed things that people perceive, some I would have never dreamed about or even suspected in the general public. After thanking him for the hospitality and having met what appeared to be a loyal fan, I departed into a brightly moon lit morning, thinking about the power of a small radio station and its impact on listeners. Most of all I was thinking about how much I played a part in the influence of the audience. In 1978 the station went off the air, to what would amount to be a whole year, it would come back at 18,000 watts, strong enough to be heard all over the City of Houston. I wondered what kind of announcer I would be.

I became a popular, aggressive student at Texas Southern University a reputation that grew for positive, impacting things on the campus and community. At the same time I would continue going to the small church, listening to the preachers, teaching and preaching. Grandmother was right; I had to listen to the preacher. It turned out to be my best method of therapy and counseling every week. I loved going to church, to school, and home. I felt involved, meaningful and, of course, I had a great reputation among my peers and adults. Sometimes I would wonder how people would think about me if they knew I was an ex-junkie. They didn't have to worry. I won't tell anybody, not even the preacher.

After a few years of church and school, I began to open my mind to the future. Meantime, I became more involved in my community. I saw what continued to happen on a daily basis. I didn't like it, and I wanted to help stop the growing problem of drug abuse among young people. I had learned that you had to seek the Lord and, of course, he could be found. I often felt that God and I were on good terms, if nothing else through my friend-Jesus. I would often analyze messages to see what my purpose was as a 'saved' person. I knew what had happened in the Philippines was a "Blessing".

One week during a revival, I had gotten disturbed at the conditions of the community and people not wanting to attend church services. Lord knows they needed the word of inspiration. Well, this young preacher led a week of meaningful messages. I guess being on the Debate Team had made me a little critical of any speech, however, one night the message came home and I would never be the same. I attended church regularly, my grandmother was happy. There were very few men in attendance and I enjoyed working with the kids whenever possible. I especially enjoyed telling them, "If you ever get in trouble, you can always call Jesus". But I didn't know that sometimes, "Jesus would call you back!"

The last night of the revival was on a Friday; service started late, as usual and most of the members had arrived later than in the past few days. The atmosphere seemed strange to me that Friday night. I had to drive the Church van and pick up a few more members at an even later hour, but the service was still not in strong gear. There had been prayers, older members would stand and testify about the conditions God had brought them through, and the preacher would talk and then maybe someone else would stand and testify. This went on longer than usual, maybe for an hour or so; nevertheless,

I always enjoyed being at church. Later the small choir would start singing, prior to the evangelist for the night, and I definitely loved to hear gospel songs.

Between the singing and the preaching, I had developed a mind set. This was my therapy, my counseling, my rehabilitation period. I didn't like being disturbed, everybody knew me. I loved to sit and listen. They started singing, slow and in harmony, the swaying movement added some sense of unity that I enjoyed from far back in the last seat of the church. By the time they sang their last song of praise, some of them had gotten full of the spirit and were shouting. I had never acted that way, but I had seen many people from a child up, seemingly taken over by some unknown element or force beyond their control. Tonight, I would find out what shouting was really all about. I noticed my seat was beginning to feel strangely warm. I sort of moved to the edge; I was sitting uncomfortably.

The evangelist was young, somewhat new in the business of preaching, but I had heard him earlier talk of how he used to use drugs and how God delivered him from demons. I could relate to him, and I thought I would really be helped this week by the messages. The last night proved me more correct. He started singing. I forgot the song, but it kept the same spirit high as what the choir left on the audience. Everybody was responding as the hour got late, "Yeah, come on preacher", "Alright, you're going to have to preach now", and "Preach, Preacher" came from the audience. The call and response grew as he slowly started his message. One I will never forget entitled, "Roll Call", from Rev.20? I sat at attention on the edge of the seat as if I were listening to an officer giving instructions to new recruits. The points were much clearer than the prior four nights. It almost appeared as if this message was just for me. Building toward the end, the preacher was now in harmony with the members, the choir and with me. Louder and louder, you could hear the audience shouting, "That's it, preacher", "Talk about Him", "I want my name on the Roll", "You're preaching now". Their was what appeared to be warmth; that had started in my seat or should I say the top of my head, nevertheless, it got warmer and warmer, until the seat got hot. In what appeared to me first as the seat, now was clearly on the inside, I remember standing up and holding my right arm up, but I don't remember what actually happened next.

One thing I clearly remember is that I was burning up on the inside, a fire was burning. I had seen the results of people whose skin had been burned off in the military hospitals. I even worked attending some of the worst cases on record, but on the inside. Running, no rolling, jumping, no rolling, I was trying to put out this fire on the inside it was all over me. I don't remember much about the other actions of members. I just wanted to get that fire off me. I was pretty healthy and weighing at least 200 pounds. It must have been something for people to look up and see me running as if crazy, trying to put out an invisible fire. I didn't care what the people thought. I know what I felt and that fire was hotter and hotter. My God I felt as I would die. Some men ran to grab me. The thought flashed in my mind, "Are they crazy, let me alone". It didn't matter, they couldn't hold me. By now, the church seemed to be on fir. I could hear people crying or wailing. Some were shouting, "Pray Church" and others appeared to be in total disbelief.

This was too much. In what seemed to be hours, I was rolling and running and shouting and falling, no one understood, I knew I would die.

My mind turned to Jesus, my friend. I knew I could call him; I had before when I was 7,000 miles from home. I wondered would he do the same thing right here, as he did over seas. I called and called and then it happened. I could hear the message, no the voice-regardless, I could hear. We talked for what appeared to be minutes, but later I realized for only a few seconds. I was now down on my knees in front of the pulpit, in front of the church, tears were streaming down my eyes, and my fists were held so tight I thought the sweat was blood in my palms. "Help me", I screamed to Jesus; "I already have", he replied; "Why am I burning", I asked, "Satan would like to burn you up", "then please help me, I don't want to burn".

People think that the mind plays tricks whenever it wants to and that most individuals that have trick minds need some type of psychological or emotional help. I needed the Lord to help put out that fire. I screamed, "I will do anything, just put out the fire". I heard the reply, "Anything?" I said, "Anything!" The fire started to disappear; it was leaving. I could feel myself returning to normal. I began to notice around me, the first thing I noticed were my clothes. They were dirty from rolling on the floor; my coat was torn as if I tried to pull it off. My entire body was wet with sweat, and I had saliva all over my face. What a sight I must have made to the audience. I ran to the back shouting "Thank you Jesus, I will do anything". Later, the preacher would tell me and many others, he had never seen a man foam at the mouth like a mad dog. I told another brother it was like wrestling with the Devil. I believe a whole lot of folks thought I was crazy. I knew I was saved.

For the next two weeks I thought every day about that Friday night in Church. Nobody spoke to me about it, but I knew they were wondering too. I kept asking the question to myself, no to Jesus, "What do you want me to do? Please tell me, because I sure don't want that fire on me anymore". I just wanted to be for real. I would do anything. Spiritual experiences are generally considered strange because there are no huge signs or microphones broadcasting the message. Usually it is just you and the Lord.

One day while driving the church van back to the church, I saw a man, unshaven, with tattered clothes. He looked scary, but familiar. It was an old high school mate, trying to hitch a ride somewhere. I stopped and he got into the van. We traded glances, no stares at each other. In high school he was clean shaven and I looked worn—it seems we had traded roles in six years. Now he was worn and I was clean shaven. Excitedly, he started talking. He asked questions about my whereabouts, commenting on how good I looked, at least in comparison to my drugged high school days. He noted that I had a legendary reputation for getting high. Undaunted, I drove the church bus and listened. When he gave me a chance to reply, he also asked the question as to my driving the church van. I could only assume smiling. He thought I might be involved in something unreputable. I replied quickly as we were coming to my turn and his destination, I told him of the military, the heavy drugs and then about my friend-Jesus. I pulled over in front of the bowling alley, once known for its quality atmosphere and drugs.

He jumped out and ran to my window to thank me and give me an answer I would never forget; it was definitely for real. Cars were going around my left side. He stood there and said, "Man, when you saw me standing there I was hitch hiking to the bayou, I was so depressed, that I was going to jump and kill myself". In stunned silence, I just continued to listen. A few cars blew, but I didn't move the church van. Onward he continued, "Man, after seeing you and knowing you in high school, I knew you were in bad shape, but after you told me about your friend, I said to myself I know I can call him too! Man thanks and if you don't ever preach to anybody else, you have preached to me", smiling he walked away. Strangely I pondered before he could get out of hearing range I shouted, "Don't forget – It's A Blessing just to be alive". Onward I drove to the church.

A few days later I went to the Pastor, that same preacher my grandmother had given me instructions to listen to and stay at the church. Sitting down in his small book cramped office, I told him the story of my hitch hiking friend and how I had told the Lord I would do anything on the Friday night of the revival. I told him I had to preach. Unmoved, he said, "I have just been waiting; I already knew you would preach". Later he would give me a date. As I left the church, I felt pleasantly satisfied. My family and current friends were surprised. Some shocked, others cried with joy – my mother told me the story of the old preacher when I was a child. Mother said, "The preacher said you were going to preach, and I've always called you my little professor". I thought maybe there is a plan I don't know about; nevertheless, I got ready to preach my first sermon.

College days were enjoyable to say the least. I continued to excel academically and become more involved in extracurricular activities on campus. I became one of the most popular young men on campus. In 1979 my peers voted me "Mr. TSU", an honor for an old veteran, ex-drug addict. In 1980, I finished my requirements for the Bachelor of Arts in Telecommunications, this was enough to make me just go out and party, but I just stayed in school. I was offered a position on the Student Services staff, after an unfortunate accident where a loyal staff member was killed during the Christmas holidays. Some say it was alcohol related, I said, "What a waste". My new status as a staff member and now graduate made me focus on my future and where I would be going next in life. I wanted to go to Atlanta. I had been dating, not seriously, but at the age of 27, I felt maybe I should be thinking about marriage and children. The best prospects had were mostly nice Christian women, I thought what would anyone think about me being an ex-drug addict; I certainly wouldn't tell.

In 1980, after almost going to Atlanta for graduate school, I got married to a fine young lady from Mississippi. I prayed for the right choice, and the Lord hadn't led me wrong yet. In order to get my finances straight I got a second job. I took a few graduate courses at Texas Southern University, just to keep busy, which turned out that I finished my masters in Speech Communication in 1981. My first child was due, and my wife continued to attend school during the same period. I continued to work at the University,

and now I was involved at the newly reopened K-TSU, a powerful FM radio station serving the Gulf Coast area.

K-TSU was a model for Texas Southern University and the community during the beginning. They called me to play jazz and blues. I told them I was a preacher now and couldn't do it anymore. Someone shouted, "Let the preacher play church music and Sunday", the rest would be history. With no crew, and no church music, I started to look for people, anybody to get the Sunday program ready. First, I found some good persons to help, and then I looked for some potential air personalities. One in particular, I will never forget, she almost became my wife. After telling her that I felt she had the spirit and potential for making a great gospel announcer, and with much encouragement, she came on board. Of course, she has proved to become one of the greatest gospel female announcers in America, since those early days at K-TSU. Many young artists and announcers have come and gone, often I remember the early beginning in 1980 and say, "It's A Blessing".

Texas Southern University had been good to me and my family. My second son was born in 1982, and I was still taking a few classes to stay busy. My early interest in communication was turning to psychology and what I thought would be an excellent training for a future pastor of a church. Still in my heart, I wanted to go to Atlanta and to the seminary. Veterans from the Vietnam era enjoyed great benefits from the State legislature as it related to education, and I would take full advantage of those benefits and remain thankful to the great State of Texas. However, that same year an opportunity came which would change my direction and eventually my academic life. It would be the most stressful decision I had made since going into the military special treatment drug program. I had an opportunity to attend the University of Houston-Central Campus in pursuit of the Doctorate of Education; I wondered if I could do that, better still I remembered, "All things are possible in Christ Jesus".

In amazement to my family, friends, and co-workers at Texas Southern, I resigned a good job with two small babies at home. My wife, still unaware that I was an ex-drug addict, became disturbed and would go through her own personal crisis. My mind had been made up. I wanted to go to the University of Houston, quite possibly to prove myself to myself. Although the school is across from the Texas Southern University campus, it was another world in my academic circles. TSU represented family and friends. I had proven myself quite successful and was rewarded. I didn't realize it, but I would almost have a nervous breakdown on the way to the Doctorate. After being accepted with some conditional requirements, I entered into the pursuit of the doctorate. I kept in mind, "It's A Blessing".

Goal

At the same time, there are other alternatives for measurement that are simple and basic to the first stage of obtaining objective goals. These suggestions can become a daily means of completing goals:

1. Make responsible assignments and time table for completion of goals.
2. Develop a basic system of accountability that will improve level of responsibility.
3. Agree on methods of discipline whenever prior arrangements have been broken or violated.
4. Insist on having weekly evaluations, followed by monthly evaluations for means of measurable success.
5. System of rewards for levels of achievement or successful completion of goals.

Of course other means can be used to best prepare the individual for greater responsibilities in the future. I think it is of up most importance to develop a system that can be observed without attention or any disturbance to regular activities.

The development of ongoing goals should be a primary factor for the recovering drug abuser. Short and long range goals are primary to the first stage in a complete and successful recovery; planned change is a necessary addition to an individual's progress. Objective goals are a motivational element when applied to a method of rehabilitation. First in this process is a measurable means of vocational, intellectual and physical skills, realizing some drugs affect the human system at various levels.

I strongly encourage a professional or semi-professional to conduct a series of tests, exams or personal interviews with the individual and sometimes family. Critical in this regards is the feedback needed by an abuser to make or set obtainable goals within the limits of their personal ability. The strengths and weaknesses can be identified also as a means to bring a level of personal or self-achievement back to the individual.

The wide range ranges of programs offered in schools provide a diverse number of opportunities for the recovering abuser. It also provides a positive atmosphere in which a student can interact with student on the same or interested levels of achievement. It must be remembered that the environment is critical for continued success and the achievement of goals. Short and long term goals challenge the abuser to take a series of subjective views in regards to success.

For me the challenge was to accomplish a paper, tests or presentation, once the small goals were reached, larger ones were added. The key is to enjoy or appreciate the success or failure from individual goals; however they can also be shared with the larger members in the family or support group. The enjoyment is often times a key motivational factor to others, to encourage the individual to accomplish more personal goals.

CHAPTER 7

Doctor or Breakdown

I entered The University of Houston in the fall of 1982. Compared to Texas Southern University it was almost five times larger in size and population. I was enrolled full time at the university in the Department of Educational Leadership and Cultural Studies. My major interest centered around the study of Multicultural Education and my minor was in the History and Philosophy of Education. My advisor was a sharp middle-aged professional dedicated to the field of Multicultural Education. He shared my dream of obtaining the Doctorate, but he didn't know I was an ex-junkie.

The only problem I seemed to have was small in comparison to problems I had in the past, I continued to take a practicum class at Texas Southern University which required a few hours weekly in a hospital setting. Over the next year and into the spring of 1984, I would be enrolled at both universities. Both institutions were different; however, I didn't fully realize the pressure that was building in my mind. The training and academic work at Texas Southern University had prepared me for any class work at the University of Houston. Often I would tell of the advantage I felt I had over what seemed to be much older doctoral students. I was thirty years old when I started the program.

K-TSU had started to become a force in the City of Houston broadcasting community and I was given more responsible opportunities to direct its Sunday Gospel Program. Meantime, I started to notice that I was having slight flashbacks of my military life and past experiences on drugs. It had been several years since I had been on active duty. Admittedly, I used some marijuana and drank a few beers occasionally, not enough to warrant serious concern. However, I began to evaluate my condition mentally and decided that I needed some type of advice from the proper medical authority. I respected the views of the military doctors. The Veterans Administration Hospital is an excellent facility for old veterans to check on old military wounds, receive medical care and keep current with problems quite possibly affecting large numbers of veterans. I didn't realize it but there was a diagnosis making the rounds of VA Hospitals and clinics around the country. It was called Post Delayed Stress Syndrome. It appeared several years after the first group of Vietnam era veterans had begun arriving back stateside. Its condition could affect the victim in several paralleling ways. Most importantly, its effects could give you as much of an impact psychologically to warrant medical treatment, I was no exception. It hit me like a wall about to be torn down.

Between church, the radio station, my hospital practicum, the University of Houston, paying bills, a wife and two baby boys – not to mention the monthly struggle as a graduate student – the last thing I needed was some Post Delayed Stress Syndrome. It sounded like a kiss of death. Although I wouldn't admit it, I had the signs and sure did have the symptoms – headaches, sleepless nights, nightmares, stress and most of all a sense of failure. With great reservation, I joined the line of veterans in the huge waiting room of the VA Hospital, trying to get an appointment sometime in the future. The list

read like a research class in medicine – neurology, psychology, internal medicine and even a special headache specialist. Each time it seemed the doctors would ask a similar question, did you ever use drugs in the service, and, of course, my reply was always, “yes”. This went on during my first two years while attending the University of Houston. I felt a need to quit, which I started to do on several occasions.

If it had not been for the church, the preacher, my faith and most certainly my friend, Jesus, I am sure I would have quit. Along with those obvious problems, one department chairperson, that I have reason to believe felt, I should not have been at the University of Houston, cut the only steady funds I received, a mere \$600 per month after my first year. This led me to one of the most agonizing confrontations in my academic career. I had decided to quit, get a job and support my family. Of course, my distressed wife would certainly agree to that decision. I could have enjoyed much success with my Texas Southern University credentials alone, but this possible decision to quit brought back feelings of despair and depression, obvious symptoms of Post Delayed Stress Syndrome. Worst still the Veteran Administration doctors were giving me medicine for my headaches and stress, horrifying still is the fact that some of it was explained to be experimental medication. I almost suffered a relapse on legal medication, and to my wife’s shock, one night she stated I got up and walked into the walls, only to stop minutes later and calmly get back into the bed. The next morning she requested an explanation and some serious answers; I explained the V.A. medicine and politely flushed it down the toilet. My increased mental instability caused me great alarm. I went to the preacher, he encouraged me to stay in school, have faith and the church would help where possible. My father offered funds in tight monthly financial situations and my grandmother gave whenever asked to support. My wife obtained financial support from relatives in Mississippi and continued to obtain part-time help where available.

One evening at home, I sat down and thought I couldn’t make it anymore. Tears flowed down my eyes; the darkness shone through the tight blinds. I thought I couldn’t make it, and I had lost my mind, the pressure, the stress, I was ready to give up this quest for the doctorate, it was too much. Right when I was prepared to wake my wife and have her to drive me to the VA Hospital, my friend stepped in and said, “Wait a minute, have you forgotten what I can do”, no “have you forgotten, what I have already done for you”. My mind raced back to high school, the military, the early years at Texas Southern, the popular success I enjoyed at K-TSU in the city, my wife and two fine health boys. Then I stopped thinking, the tears kept coming and deep from within my soul it came out, “It’s A Blessing. Just turn it over to Jesus and everything will be all right”. I noticed a small light penetrating through the darkness of that morning. With tears streaming down my face, it reminded me of the light I saw when I had attempted suicide long ago in the Philippines, it was the same light. My grandmothers had often told that Jesus was a mind regulator, a heart fixer, my walking cane, my bridge over troubled waters – but now I could say, Jesus is my light in the midst of darkness. The tears kept coming, but the despair and depression had turned to joy and hope.

I never went back to check on my Post Delayed Stress Syndrome. I never thought about quitting the Doctoral Program again at the University of Houston. In fact, I

decided to finish my Masters in Psychology from Texas Southern University in 1984. My final work on the doctoral dissertation was in progress, I was teaching part-time at Texas Southern University, there were plenty of weekend engagements from K-TSU, my wife was fine and so were the children, "It was a blessing". In 1985, with my immediate family in the audience, my name was called to walk across the stage and receive my Doctor of Education Degree from the University of Houston – University Park. Out of over 500 graduates receiving Bachelors, masters and Doctorate Degrees, I was the only one, I felt, that was an ex-drug addict. When I turned and was hooded by my advisor, now considered my friend, I smiled and with my right hand pointed one finger into the air, straight for the ceiling, what I really wanted to shout was, "It's A Blessing".

The journey had been long and hard at times, but I made it from a drug addict to a doctor, fifteen years from the year I finished High School to my fourth graduation from College. Later, I would finish a fifth degree from the Houston Graduate School of Theology in 1989. I would never need to go to Atlanta for my Masters of Divinity, because the program eventually became available in the Houston area. In fact I would also begin teaching in the area of urban ministry while a student, simply because of my prior training and experience.

One of the key factors in my journey was the opportunities that became available and how I took advantage of each and everyone. I developed a new concept from my experience working with different groups, individuals and organizations. I believe in the concept of models to help you deal with problems or issues. Development of short and long term goals became a means of achievement that I could measure and accomplish. Accomplishment is important to the substance abuser, because one has been a part of failure or the results from failure; this is not to say that the abuser is not familiar with success. Goals can be a means of successful accomplishment, no matter how small or seemingly unimportant.

Sincerely, I believe the external support must be available for the potential abuser, regardless of what degree the individual is involved in substance abuse. Critical is a means of on-going support, in case situations or problems arise that could lead to a possible relapse. I surely can attest to the fact of relapse. You must always remember once an abuser, always an abuser, later I would say, "A sinner, saved by grace". Although I must warn you some individuals are not as forgiving in comparison to God. Case in point, my wife didn't know I was a former drug addict for five years after we were married, and then I was teaching at a secure position with another Texas University.

Any individual has the potential for success, the definition has to be clearly defined and understood by that person and not somebody else. In my case I set the highest possible goals, only after accomplishing the prior set goal, I believed that all things were possible, with the help of God. I can admit now many times I thought I would fail, but I was already familiar with failure, I wanted to enjoy success. In 1985, I

accepted a position in the Communications Department at Prairie View A & M University and was quickly promoted to Assistant Professor. My classes were full, I was respected, and, most of all, I was not on any drug, I thought I was on top of the world.

The drug problem in America was growing. I could tell from experience it had gotten totally out of control. Cocaine, weed, pills, heroin, speed or whatever could be found was everywhere – on jobs, in the community, at home and certainly in schools. Nancy Reagan had long made the issue of drug abuse her crusade in America, she tried to make it known to everyone the destructive power of its grip. I already knew, I also knew that more people were involved, than would care to really make it known to the public. In 1986, I was beginning a fabulous year, then again I heard the call, Mrs. Reagan made while in Houston accepting an award from the Kiwanis Club, she said, “If you can do anything you must, our children are dying from drug abuse, please help in America’s Crusade”.

One day while reading the newspaper, I heard the voice again saying, you said you would do anything. Most of the listeners on K-TSU and in Houston had no idea I had been a drug addict. They just thought I was a gospel announcer and educator involved in the community. I discussed the prospects of what would happen with my family and some other trusted professional, they were generally supportive. It was my final decision to tell the general public. I didn’t know how people would think about me, even my students at Prairie View. It didn’t make any difference; I would join America’s Crusade against Drugs. It would be a one man crusade in Houston, I thought, “It’s A Blessing”.

Plan

The difference between success and failure is oftentimes very short, it would appear that often for the drug abuser, there are no successes only failures. This could be the case in whatever job, project or objective that you plan for yourself or the recovering abuser. Often times I made a point to realize the small success first, this helped in bringing a sense of purpose in my recovery. This cannot be stressed enough because often times there are particular objectives you can assist in the long term process.

1. Plan a means for the individual to have a clear idea of what skills they have or need to accomplish real goals.
2. Show examples or practical solutions as a means to accomplish those goals.
3. Involve professionals familiar with the process to assist in your success.
4. Familiarize yourself with materials showing tried principles of success.
5. Avoid as many areas for potential failure as possible, prepare well.
6. Make a small series of steps towards short range goals, which always amount to long range goals.
7. Realize your potential early, don’t hesitate to volunteer or practice, as much as possible, and improve your success.

One of the last realities in America is the fact that individuals have been lost to the savages of drug abuse. However, I truly believe that natural ability has not been lost. Those potential skills must be reclaimed, nurtured and trained for the best possible results. Family members, church congregations, community organizations and concerned business leaders must:

1. Encourage skills development and offer opportunities for success.
2. Develop extra incentives for short range and small goals to be accomplished.
3. Realize the nature and potential for success in your home, community, job or business.
4. Make others realize the total success in everyone's participation.
5. Plan events, activities or programs for success.

Obvious is the fact that there are hundreds of potential suggestions for success; the point is to have a positive element for success.

CHAPTER 8

America's Crusade

The experience I had in communications was critical and well utilized in my one man crusade. First, I made a survey of all the drug programs available and how accessible they were to the general public. I knew that a large percentage of information was not being shared or was it available to the audience that would need it, young people, schools and a host of community groups. I joined the crusade by doing one of several important things, first by bringing attention to myself as a former drug addict. I would appear on several broadcasts as a spokesman to promote a series of upcoming programs about drug abuse and how to combat or prevent the problem from entering your home, community, school, or job.

I made several appearances before the City of Houston Mayor and Council, the Harris County Commissioners Court and of course local ministerial groups in the Houston area. Most of the organizations, groups and leaders had not given public support or leadership to the drug crisis in Houston. I knew some people thought I was a quack or on drugs, it didn't matter. I thought this is really a one man crusade. What followed were several television appearances and appointments to become involved in discussing this problem, and then some major entertainment and sports figures died from drug overdose, that seemed to get the publics attention.

A great deal of frustration followed after a series of major presentations were attended by less than 100 people. It made me think maybe there was not a drug problem in Houston, maybe I was wrong. Too late, I decided to increase my work in at least bringing people's awareness up to a level of education and responsibility about this danger. Important here is the fact that my admission lead to a great deal of criticism from people who hadn't known me during my earlier years as a drug addict. America's crusade in 1986 could be considered a whisper in comparison to the actions that people were taking in the community. Not until President Ronal Reagan spoke out and the deaths of several prominent individuals occurred, did it appear to gather steam. Again, I continued to make appearances before the City Council, Commissioners Court and local organizations and leaders. One or two occasions while traveling out of the city to another state, I spoke to the president of the largest religious organization in the free world; he thanked me kindly, but no results. I began to get anxious, where was the crusade, where were the soldiers, where were the troops, where was the ammunition?

Sometimes I would sit down and wonder, was this a job? And then my wonder would turn into fear when I read of the increased incidents of crime seemingly unknown. The world of crime feeds the drug trade and habits of millions that partake of its lure and grip. There are hundreds if not thousands involved in the smallest details from looking out on a bicycle, to the laundering of millions of dollars worth of illegal drug funds, some is considered dirty and of course some consider it clean. I really did care about those participants and players. In fact, during one occasion I was told, very politely to be very careful as to what I said about selling drugs. It happened after I made a presentation on a

local radio station. After the broadcast, one of the managers walked with me outside and said, "I think what you're doing is great, I don't have any children on drugs, but you need to understand this starts higher than on the streets, so you be careful and stick to education and to the church". Well I don't have to tell you I was scared, because I knew from experience that the drug world is mean and deadly, I was scared, but I thought about my friends question, "anything?".

Police Chief Lee P. Brown always appeared to be a man who knew the underlying problems of real crime and what factors seemed to add to its dangers. When I first heard him speak, I knew he was a thinker, an intellectual, a scholar – often I wondered what was he doing as a police chief, dealing with crime in its lowest form and, of course, in the position as Houston's Police leader. Later in his tenure as chief, our path would cross, and I would understand clearly his need to be in charge. It was if by divine guidance, just like me. I didn't realize it, but I took the philosophical concept of analysis and evaluation, and tried to begin developing models, similar to models I had heard and read about from the chief. This proved to be my strongest asset, of which I am grateful to a man in a position that was able to think and work, without fear of comment or criticism, a true professional. The chief would leave Houston later, obviously more respected and recognized in a more needful American city, New York. I am sure the new Police Commissioner will remember some of my work, as well as I will always remember his.

The increase in crime related to drugs was astronomical. There seemed to be daily instances of innocent victims appearing in the Houston news and in other parts of the country there was all out war, I wondered was anybody really in the crusade with me. Elderly people beaten, robbed and murdered, young teens shot out of rage over three dollars, burglary for the smallest item pawnable, bodies found in car trunks parked at the airport. I knew what was happening, so did the chief. Drug gangs had established links to international dealers, and between the billions of dollars generated from the illegal trade. Money made people do strange things. I could see the need for more community based action, more involvement from the people who were complaining about the problem, that had made their communities into a prison. After many frustrating presentations, a few sparks of interest showed through. Maybe, I thought, someone is willing to join in the crusade. After all, I knew this was not a one man crusade, but "America's Crusade".

Many times I wondered if my work was meaningful, although I considered myself more in a protective sense and not the children, community or even my family. One day my first cousin died of a drug overdose. Those early days playing as children together had created the strongest bond among all of us relatives. Although we would go our separate ways and into various experiences, we were blood. His death left an angry reminder, you don't really get boiling mad until it hits closest to home. His death sparked the anger of a thousand soldiers in me. I became a "One Man Crusader", and I didn't need any help. I had my friend to help in whatever way he could. My cousin's funeral brought the entire family back to East Texas, because he was the first in our age category to die so young and yet so wasted.

The family funeral was organized quickly after his death. My aunt was almost destroyed. My mother's mother had died earlier in the year, and with his death on from what we knew was external sources; well it just blew us into an emotional tail spin. Somberly the family groups gathered in their various Texas cities, Houston, Dallas, and Fort Worth. In my mind, I could see all of the cars heading for Palestine, our East Texas roots and home for the remains of all our family members. I had traveled to the home church before, which sat on ground donated by our family. It almost appears to be our church, the one place where we knew we really belonged as a family. The church was small, with wooden seats and clear windows – revealing miles of tall pines and red clay. This was our home, our country.

The sight of all our relatives from the city gathering in the country was memorable, shiny cars, fancy hats, dresses and coats, hairdos so numerous it made me realize the diversity of my older cousins. My old uncle walked over to me and said, "You are the spiritual leader now, you have got to get our family straight". With his hand on my shoulder and now kind eyes, worn from the battle with time, he said again, "You are the one they will listen to; you have proved to the family, you're the one that has to lead them by the spirit". You see that service was special. It was the first service I would preach to my entire family on the subject, "A Storm is Coming". Pondering from the time and event, I walked off, along further from the church, tears slowly moving down my eyes. I wondered out loud to myself about the family. My old deceased uncle and aunt, ones that sent me back to Houston instead of Kansas City were gone. I wondered about the two grandmothers who kept me by their side in prayer training. I wondered about the Old Band Professor telling me to keep playing my drum. Suddenly as if unable to keep death at bay, everyone moved into the church for the gathering. My God, I wondered, "Is this what America's Crusade is all about?" I thought, families gathering to mourn and bury their dead – not from war, but from drugs. I was mad, but that day I preached, "A Storm is Coming". This was not to just my family, it was to America, that East Texas church, our family church, sang out, with a battle cry, "Get Ready, We are in a War".

In Houston, I took off with a passion, if there would be a crusade, either you were for or against. To be a traitor in my renewed messages was a sin before man, no the community, no God, no, the spirit – it didn't matter if you were not involved, you were a traitor and you know what should happen to all traitors. I aired a weekly 15 minute broadcast, called "That's Inspirational"; generally I talked about current issues, topics that most people could intelligently appreciate. Most listeners enjoyed my pleasantly deep voice, often times. I was told of the rich maturity and wisdom heard in those short broadcasts, Most of them were live, because I always wanted to speak from the heart, I felt the people would understand and appreciate those programs better than recorded versions.

My involvement increased in appearances. I went everywhere. I was asked to go some places, and I was not asked to go some places. Nevertheless, I went on a crusade, America's Crusade. I forgot about promotions. I just went to tell the message and tell people to join in America's Crusade against Drugs. My broadcasts became emotionally

fired with the passions of death, another friend dies in Houston. No one would say, but I knew it was drugs and still I gave the eulogy. Later, one of the high school friends who started the trails of heroin use in Houston would die from a drug overdose. I could only sit and cry. On one occasion, I was called to the families' home to keep the media away. They wanted a story. The family wanted to mourn in peace.

For two years I kept up a relentless pace, almost by myself. There were other groups, but they were so quiet, so involved in their organizations, some are still quiet and involved in their organizations. As my voice grew as a leader in the drug war, my phone would ring with questions from parents, leaders and even children – “What should I do?”, “Where do I go?”, “How can I get help from this problem?” The problem was getting too big for me. I was worn out fast. I turned to the only true friend I knew for help, Jesus. I asked for the kind of aid that would make an impact in Houston, in Texas, in America – this was an American Crusade. I remember some of my last broadcasts of “That’s Inspirational”, pleading for the prayers of prayer warriors to join in this satanic attack, because we could not win alone. Later, I would retire from the station, burned out from broadcasting, burned out in the crusade, burned out of personal inspiration, burned out from attending too many funerals of overdosed friends. I remember that I had tried to overdose too, I realized now “It’s A Blessing”.

Strange things happen when you turn problems over to Jesus that is after you have done all you can do. I had remembered to keep playing my drum. I kept the beat like my old professor had said; I was in the Lord’s band. Groups started appearing all over the city, communities were organizing to combat this problem. There were hundreds of schools suddenly involved. Individuals started stepping forward to join in America’s Crusade, I thought, “It’s A Blessing”. My role in this war against drugs was not lost; I was spiritually blessed to be in attendance. The events made me realize I was on a divine mission, just like I heard the voice asking me would I do anything.

First, I had been invited to appear on a broadcast by one of the local television stations as a participant. During the show a question was asked about drug dealing in the communities, of which I laughed and made mention of a certain drug establishment across from a church that had been in business for ten years. Although groups had tried to get it closed, there seemed to be no major concern because it kept opening for business as usual. In fact, I said jokingly, “They’ll be open tomorrow”. Well, there must have been other stations watching because the next day, all of them reported on this house of drug sales. That began a series of actions by the city police, federal authorities, and other agencies against that house and what seemed to follow as an active war to close them down all over the city. I thought to myself, “It’s A Blessing”.

The second and what I believe was a spiritual promotion occurred east of the Mississippi River. I was involved in developing a model for churches to use in counseling with substance abusers and people that needed resource advice to deal with the problem. Reluctant to say, there were pastors that told me, “We don’t have a drug

problem at my church', I really wondered what kind of church they had with no drug problem. My work proceeded slowly, but constant; this was a model. I realized from Chief Brown you have to be a consummate professional in your job. At least I thought, he sure appears to be one; I was right.

My denomination comprised of older men and women were not aware concerning drug abuse problems. One mentioned the only thing he knew was moonshine and white lightning, I replied jokingly, "What is that?" Nevertheless, they supported me fully. I guess I had proved myself to the elders of our faith. They appointed me the drug abuse educator which led to my being involved in the Houston Strategic Drug Initiative Program, which would later impact over 2,000 churches in the Houston area and serve as a model for other cities through the professional skills of Chief Brown and his support staff with the Houston Police Department. I was quietly adding my theory and model to as many groups, organizations and people as possible. This was very gratifying to me professionally.

One day I received some mail from the legendary Rev. Bill Sawyer, Pastor of the Christian Tabernacle Evangelistic Church in Cleveland, Ohio. Sawyer has one of the most powerful spiritually lead churches in the country. Sawyer is a dynamic singer and gospel recording artist, a 24 hour ministry for the church. Most of all he has a vision of spiritual heights unknown. In their national newsletter, he shared with the nation a call to rally for a Gospel Drug Crusade, and how he needed prayer, support and finances, whichever you could give. The time was too short, I thought, to attend, but I will definitely tell him I am praying for the meeting's success. I just didn't know how much wrong I was. The rally had been planned expertly. It was held in a huge park. There would be trained counselor on duty 24 hours, seven days that week – they were ready. Sawyer called and said, "Gilmore, I need you, to end up the last night and the spirit had led me to call. Can you come", who was I to deny the spiritual call? I remembered I said, "I would go anywhere".

The flight to Cleveland was pleasant. The accommodations were marvelous, but I remained anxious or spiritually nervous. Sawyer and I talked, ate and shared our vision of clean drug addicts, saved, helping others, preventing the spread of its deadly grip into our society, Satan's trick. We were close friends in hours, after seeing the environment for the rally and hearing the results thus far, I knew he was guided by the spirit of God, not man. The Gospel Drug Crusade was held in a huge outdoor, red and white striped tent, folding chairs were lined up neatly. There was a series of portable trailers in back for the Counselors and other business related matters. Earlier in the day service, there were people mingling, but the atmosphere was not one of success. It reminded me of my earlier failed attempts years ago in Houston. I wondered what would the last night be like.

That last Sunday night, as we drove to the circus like tent, I thought what am I doing in Cleveland, Lord. I should be in Houston, doing whatever I can, a light rain fell. I wondered if anybody would even show up. Upon turning the corners the first thing I noticed was the traffic jam. Familiar with the Houston traffic jams, I wondered where

everybody was going in such a hurry. Soon we parked at the reserved spot and were directed to the Pastor, waiting in his portable office. I was introduced to many of the major support staff and personnel. I looked out over the audience. It was half-filled, and there were many people running in trying to get a seat. My God I thought this place is going to be filled to capacity. What a meeting I thought. In the giant park there were other people by the hundreds, a typical Sunday afternoon with dealers, users and the world of drugs all around the tent. I thought this is the most ideal place for a Gospel Drug Crusade. Now this is the heart of America's Crusade.

The service started with spirited prayers and singing, several groups sang. Two left memories that I would never forget in my soul. One was a small group of ex-addicts, singing about the grace of God, a living testimony to God's deliverance and now their purpose of praise, they brought tears to my eyes. I could definitely relate. The second group was a Gospel Crusade Choir, formed from members all over the city. They would sing right before the final speaker each night, in this case – me. I was feeling spiritually anxious again. I wondered what would I say, I really had no idea, and I wasn't worried, I had a friend. These young people and adults sang as if heaven had opened up a recording studio to document their praise unto God. One song that was so powerful was an original composition entitled, "We Don't Need No Dope". My you should have been there or at least go buy the record, directed and written by Rev. Foy.

Now it was time, Pastor Sawyer took care of last minute details and concerns, because he said when I finished, the crusade was over for the week. The audience got still, no silent, no flushed as I stood to take what appeared a much too small podium for my 6 feet 3 inches Texas frame, "Howdy", I said, "It's A Blessing to be here". My voice boomed out on the sound system. Some people laughed enjoyably, some said, "Howdy", back, and others seemed to sit at attention, they were expecting a spiritual blessing. As I looked over the audience, talking slowly with a strong Texas drawl, I noticed people from the basketball courts and football fields coming closer to hear this strange sounding man from Texas. I guess some wondered why I was at a drug rally. Realizing the tent was packed, people were standing all around and there had to be more listening in the closed darkness, I began my message. I talked about my childhood briefly, my two grandmothers and their sometimes old fashioned ways of living. The audience seemed to enjoy my down-home method of delivery. They seemed to press very close to the podium. One group I noticed to my right was looking and listening. A couple I could tell were drug addicts. The message changed when I started into the life I had as a drug addict. I told them about my friend who overdosed, my cousin, the many children, and then I told them about myself. Some seemed to look shocked as my voice deepened describing my despair and depression, one shared by so many drug and alcohol abusers. By now it had gotten to the bottom.

Now I knew it was time to go, but I had to tell them about my friend, in the hospital room, the Sunday School teacher, the Band Professor and keeping the beat, my mother and two grandmothers, old time faith. I had to tell them all bout my Jesus, who took a drug addict from the depths of hell and turned his life around. I told them how this friend of mine let me go to school and become a doctor. I told them how my two boys

now call me Daddy on the way to church. I told them, “He is still able to hear and answer your prayers”. Tears streamed down my eyes, as I pleaded with drug dealers, users and parents – to try my friend. By now I hadn’t noticed, but the brothers from the basketball court were in front of the podium crying. The tent was up on its feet, the choir was singing and the Holy Spirit fell down on that meeting. Weakened, I fell back into the chair, now crying uncontrollably, shouting, “It’s a Blessing, I’ve tried Him for myself”.

Pastor Sawyer took over as he had done each night. Drug and alcohol abusers and addicts came forward with tears in their eyes. Over three hundred and fifty had over the week. My, what a beginning in their lives, I thought. In my closing remarks I said thank you for heeding the spirit Pastor Sawyer and that I would take the territory west of the Mississippi and he had the rest and oh yes, call me whenever you need me, I’ll come. On the plane home I thought about many things. Most of all, I thought about the young man who held me after the service, and I held him in my arms, with tears streaming down our eyes, no words, just tears. Unable to speak, we just stood there as others gathered around to join into what was a huge circle of tears and hugs. I said to him, “He’s your friend now and remember “It’ A Blessing”.

The war on drugs continued in Houston and now across the United States. The first order of business for the new President, George Bush was to make it as official as possible, with teeth and a Drug Czar, William Bennett. I would meet the Czar in passing as the Houston Crackdown Rally and hear him talk of the many models now coming out of Houston. I smiled to myself and said, “That’s A Blessing”. Chief Brown continued a major effort that has helped clean off many streets in the Houston area. The only problem seems to be in the area of treatment facilities and resources for ex-abuser needing a way back, just like I did. The joint efforts of cooperation by International, National, State and Local leaders will continue to make a significant impact on the trail of death and human destruction left by drug abuse.

I am convinced that the real problem after dealing with the business of drugs is mental, emotional, or let me say – spiritual. This was my last attack or development of a model that would not cost any money, nor would it take away from any existing programs in the church. I was now finishing my fifth degree and teaching at the Houston Graduate School of Theology. I started developing an approach for training churches to be referral sites for drug and alcohol abusers. I remember how earlier some pastors had told me, “They didn’t have a drug problem in the church”. One national leader in the problem of finding homes for adoptive children told an audience one night this story. Father George Clements, from Chicago had spoken with four members about some personal drug problems in their family. During Sunday worship he asked, “Would those families that have the drug problem, please stand for prayer”, Clements told the banquet audience, “Over 400 members stood up with the problem”. Father Clements hurriedly has added drugs as a national item for his forum to increase awareness across the country in churches.

My only disappointment is that as I go to national, state and local meetings of religious leaders from the church, they don’t seem to have the problem of drugs and

alcohol abuse on the agenda. After I finished my thesis, which was on the development of a model for use in the church, I have tried to make presentations to my national Religious leaders. However, I am not worried, I just ponder, “What will it take to get all of the churches involved in America’s Crusade”, and Then I think regardless, It’s A Blessing”.

America’s crusade does not take large amounts of money on the grass root level. What the war on drugs needs is individual support. My efforts in the crusade are small in comparison to the millions of individuals involved on a day to day basis in the drug war. We need to make the next decade a time to develop programs, strategies and plans for the war – while trying to find out the real causes for this epidemic in our nation.

I truly believe the spiritual, emotional, physical and psychological damage from drug abuse in America will take ten years of all out effort to stop and prevent. We must remember the past three decades were almost accepting of drug behavior and more so in terms of media images of drug use and abuse. It is not likely that education alone will cause massive prevention. In some instances it will create a problem of awareness.

For the next ten years there should be involvement from the local, state and national levels to make the causes and effects of drug use a top priority. Other suggestions should involve the major religious, educational, business and cultural institutions in America. Expert advice is critical for the sake of impacting this sore from our lives.

- 1) Religious institutions must plan programs that would assist and aid leaders to develop long term programs for individual churches and communities.
- 2) Educational leaders, authors and researchers must dig deeper into the practical elements of prevention and of course the true causes invoked in drug abuse.
- 3) Businesses must realize that the efforts of drug and alcohol abuse effect profits; therefore here should be a rethinking of those lost investments.
- 4) Cultural organizations and groups need to begin short and long term approaches to highlighting lost elements of our history, for the sake of education.
- 5) Local, state and national leaders must work together, in a realistic manner, while meeting the primary objective for all groups involved – winning the drug war in America.
- 6) Community level involvement must increase from the church to the school, in a variety of diverse ways to combat the problem.
- 7) The individual leader, whether in the community or on the job, must become a force in providing leadership to win the war on drugs in America.

Finally, my primary task has been to share how to become involved; however, my main concern is for all of us to realize we must become involved. The drug problem affects us directly and indirectly, regardless of our personal involvement, we still are affected in many ways. Increases in social support services, mental problems on the streets, more facilities for criminals and of course, a larger responsibility in tax supports for National and Local government will not solve the real problem. Money

is not what America needs. What we need is the aid of each and every boy, girl, man and woman in America to join the war against drugs because I know there is “Hope After Dope”. And remember don’t expect someone else to do what you are not doing yourself.

Chapter 9

A Church Model

The Houston Graduate School of Theology had given me an opportunity to teach as an Adjunct Professor, my first year as a Masters of Divinity student. The school was founded in 1983 by the Friends Church. Dr. Delbert Vaughn and Dr. Ronald Worden were instrumental in its becoming accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, later the Association of Theological Schools would also accredit the M.Div. program. One of the unique elements of the HGST Program was its diversity and potential for theological depth, over 25 denominations were represented my first year as a student and teacher.

Programs that were planned for the future ranged from pastoral counseling to missions, to inner city ministry, a range of unique and diverse areas that would give any future pastor or minister a wealth of training and knowledge. The opportunity for me to begin a program was a double blessing for the school and for me. One in that I was already involved in urban ministry programs, two in the fact that the school would support my efforts in the academic field. Immediately I began to make nationwide contacts and work on my thesis, which was primarily focused on a drug program for my denomination. After graduation in the summer of 1989, I started to teach HGST students in a series of Summer Institute classes on urban ministry. The classes were well received, and it gave me time to develop further concepts of urban ministry for future teaching and possible research. Several bright students from various denominations had already started implementing urban ministry concepts and programs. I realized this training would go much further than I had planned, much further. My most successful efforts were included in my M. Div. thesis project. I started on the beginning of 1989. It would be my basis of a church model for training members to set up drug abuse programs.

The relevant history of our Missionary Baptist denomination was tied to the “being” of the church movement. As early as 1783, there were individuals involved in the missionary field in the West Indies. In the 1830’s, a strong effort for racial progress was started in Baptist Associations and other conventions. Today, the four National Baptist Conventions are still the largest organizations in major urban cities throughout America, which have the most impact on the lives of Black Americans. I felt the church was ideal in regards to the development of drug programs and models for further urban ministry. My association was called, “the Independent Missionary Baptist General Association of Texas “and its general moderator was the legendary, Dr. E. Stanley Branch, pastor of the historic Fourth Missionary Baptist Church in Houston, Texas.

The Independent District Association was organized in 1917 for the purpose of maintaining the independence of the individual Baptist Church. It was instrumental in helping organize the Baptist State Convention. The primary purpose of the association was Christian association, training and providing leadership to necessary churches with various problems. All missionary Baptists were involved in several areas of importance

before and after the Civil war, areas such as education, mass communication, economic and social development. I knew that the drug problem was a central issue to many pastors and communities where members resided or had relatives affected by its deadly grip.

The development of an “urban ministry” model/program started with an evaluation of significant problems or issues by members of the Association. The churches were located throughout the Houston-Galveston region and were diverse in size, educational levels of members, church income, problems and goals of the individual church ministry. - A major presentation was made to the moderator and key association members. Later, I would present at a larger gathering for their formal approval and acceptance by the association. Once this was accomplished, I proceeded with the planning for the actual training session. We had an office building that I would use, and I had two weeks to get the program started

Matters such as publicity, marketing, materials communications, schedules, outside resources and space were a few of the many issues that were important for the programs success. The moderator, secretary, and treasurer established a separate account for the program and gave me the full green light to proceed. Over thirty-five people enrolled in the first six-week session class. I had developed a training module and book for each student in the class. They met twice a week, until the program was completed. Admittingly, adjustments were made as we went along. In one case, actual drug users were sent from the church – knowingly or unknowingly, but I do know they were definitely on drugs.

The program lasted for a total of thirteen weeks. Over 45 people, representing 12 churches from 5 key areas in the city of Houston, were trained. One year later the programs were active and expanding into other areas of ministry. A major point in my instruction was how to keep the program active and interesting to its members. Moderator Branch was quite pleased with the results and gave me approval to continue in the very near future. A second model was being prepared during the writing of this book. I focused on drugs and its external effects. Other denominations started calling and making inquires concerning the next training session. This proved it could be successful with the United Methodist, Church of God In Christ, Catholic or whichever one chose to get involved in America’s Crusade.

The Church represents the greatest single source of power, uncontrolled by governmental controls and guidelines, by that I mean operative on a spiritual need basis. The founding fathers of America never had such a diverse culture in mind s it related to multiethnic groups or cultures. From 1790 to 1900, urbanization leaped by forty percent, in 1900 fifty percent lived in rural area; by 1900 only fifteen percent of Americans lived in the rural area.

Culture has played as much of a role in the behavior created from urban patterns of living as the environment itself. Modern society has developed an extension of the prior culture, norms, beliefs, and values. Culture then is a representation of all factors,

institutions, experiences and reactions which distinguish people. This leads to a concept of multicultural philosophy or theory, which in itself is a larger concept in regard to education, social, psychological and even economic theory. The Church represents a different culture in the midst of a drug society; therefore, it must look at a different means of implementation.

Urban America with its diverse elements of existence has created a need for adjustment in the struggle for equity and fairness. There is a dual relationship of Christian duty and social responsibility. Modern society in its urban settings has created disadvantaged groups of people and population. The church has a responsibility to meet the needs and concerns in society. If the church tries to confine itself to theology and the Bible, it will become mythology notes an unknown author.

The need for support in the urban setting is universal and the types of ministry innumerable, as many as there are people, they are contained in three categories.

- 1) Spiritual Ministries – an activity which expresses the love of Christ to other persons;
- 2) Physical Ministries – any activity which on Christ's behalf meets the physical needs of persons;
- 3) Psychological Ministries – understood to be an activity which serves the cause of Christ with integrity.

Ministry in the Bible can be viewed from a religious perspective; however, Christian ministry is first and finally the continuing ministry of Jesus Christ.

Modern ills in urban society place a critical eye toward the level of participation that theology adds to a ministry. Drug abuse and its deadly grip have given persons a Christian objective with diverse forms of ministry in the Church. The Church seeks to transform lives and in turn have them become a part of the transforming process in society as a whole. This obvious transformation is reflective of the Kingdom of God confronting individuals at the local Church level.

- 1) The Kingdom means service, not dependence on others.
- 2) The life of the Kingdom removes all anxiety and fear and worry which come because of the competition and strife with other men.
- 3) Fellowship with God.

Ministry and the Kingdom of God, when viewed in light of Christian purpose for the twenty-first century, are important for the concept of developing an urban ministry program.

The reality of urban ministry cannot be viewed from a solely religious perspective, for there is a multidimensional view and sense of wider reach into the community. The Church and its ministry, therefore, take on the larger problems of whatever the area. Its task is to go baptize itself in the world around us to bear witness in word and life that Jesus Christ is the Lord of politics, the Lord of economics, the Lord over sociological strife. Religion has as much right out in the community life as it does within the four walls of the Church. This view gives further evidence of a practical model for the use of urban ministry, with a multicultural perspective.

What then is the place of the Christian in the modern world? One author states, It is not a place where correctness of opinion is guarded and maintained; not a cold – storage warehouse for uncorrupted truth; not merely a place of religious utterance, or of religious symbolism, or a gymnasium of ritual for the calisthenics of the soul. It is, to use the language of our modern life, a “powerhouse” where there is generated a supply of spiritual energy sufficient to move the world with wisdom, courage and peace. Significant still is the reality of urban populations, multicultural in nature, along with the reality of existence and spiritual survival. Another author states, The Christian faith promises to each individual a personal destiny, a destiny which depends on his own particular response to God in this life. This great emphasis on personal responsibility and on eternity has often caused the church to take a quietist, passive attitude towards social justice in the world and sometimes led Christians to reject their responsibilities as members of the society in which they live.

The Spiritual Experience

There is a reality of meaning in all of life, that which gives people a perspective of purpose. When the level of existence a person experiences is real, then the life of the individual can be measurable. One of the most life changing elements of human existence is that of the spiritual experience, which can come in a variety of ways and with a mix of meanings. The one which is most critical is for the sole purpose of aiding the drug abusers, one change that starts an evolutionary cycle of positive progressive growth.

Whenever people with problems recognize the need to change it makes for a more open and receptive spirit of change. There are few possibilities that give greater meaning to an abuser. The physical, emotional and psychological state has already caused a significant erosion of reality; the spiritual level is a final point prior to the end. The one element that makes a strong statement for spiritual change is the Church. The Church represents a spiritual channel by which countless individuals have been directed and saved spiritually. Primary to its purpose for salvation is the idea that it is a community in which believers trust and worship the savior. Each and every drug abuser has to identify a particular church family, which can nurture and develop their individual faith in God. Central to this idea is a family by which the individual can receive family instruction, discipline and advice during times of potential disruption. Finally, each person that is affected by the drug and alcohol problem needs to have a church for spiritual growth and ongoing direction. I would hope that as individual church programs are developed there could be more concerns for the reality of different programs.

The Church must realize that one of its primary missions on earth is aimed at the clarification of values among citizens. History has well documented the problems associated with a misunderstanding of values and the destructive nature of life. Drug abusers need more so than any other group, a spiritual experience, one that will transform

the individual for life. Serious consideration must be given to the true objectives in many cases, where this type of guidance is to be followed or even understood.

My greatest problem in many cases has been in understanding the rationale and logic of religious leaders in not becoming involved in the drug problem. I realize that there are various levels of involvement that individual Church members can become involved in. I know there are views which range from conservative to liberal in the religious institutions. However, I believe every Church can become involved if not directly, then surely indirectly. It is even more important for the inner-city/urban congregations to understand this concept today.

Each pastor, minister, leader and member needs to know the means to bring about an effective end to the drug problem in America. Hopefully, members can realize the Church is no greater than its community and if the community is confused, misguided and directed, what about the Church community. Every Church should enlist the following means of support:

1. The Church should have a committee or group responsible for on-going educational programs, counseling and ministry for drug abusers;
2. Separate groups in the Church should program at least three indirectly related programs to aid in the war against drugs;
3. Special consideration should be given to a task force in the Church to analyze problems affecting the particular community in which the Church is located;
4. Professional services and individuals should be employed on a voluntary or paid basis to assist in developing long range programs to combat drug abuse;
5. Many of the interrelated problems of drug abuse need examination, so as to warrant programs in other areas of education and prevention;
6. A spiritual time should be set aside for the up-building of the Church and community to cooperate in the war against drugs;
7. Religious community leaders should assist authorities in a variety of ways in combating the drug problem;
8. Legal concerns should be understood so the Church will have a clear understanding of assisting the drug problem;
9. The Church needs a crisis counseling program to best serve during emergencies;
10. Learn all you can as a leader to best equip you to teach, preach or direct your religious community to become a leader in the war on drugs.

I feel that until the national leaders make the problem of drug abuse in America a priority, then the local leaders will not work as hard to combat the ills of its effects. There must be a national agenda with religious leaders to make this war one of the most all out efforts that the religious community has ever taken together. Each denomination, group and organization can plan and work towards a long range series of programs to fight in America's war against drugs.

CHAPTER TEN

An Affective Communication Theory

The increase of drug use and abuse in America has grown to epidemic proportions, reaching into rural as well as urban cities and towns. Every school, college, business, community group, citizen and organization should be involved in “America’s Crusade”. My main concern is that a serious consideration be given to the world of drug abusers or casual users, if the problem is going to be solved effectively. My position is to use “affective communication” because of the degree of personal and interpersonal interaction required in combating the problem. Affective communication is a basis for emotional or feeling in relations to the communication process, with a view towards an effective solution. It is important to distinguish the difference then between effective and affective.

“Affective” is defined by Webster Dictionary as (1) relating to, arising from, or influencing feelings or emotions, and (2) expressing emotions. The difficulty of expressing feelings by people towards one another is a difficult task. The effectiveness of communication then can be viewed as even more complex and varied. But, most of all, to deal with a specific issue or problem compounds the matter into different perspectives.

Solutions, as I have tried to discuss, can be significant especially when addressing a problem as critical as drug abuse in our society. It is hoped that my view as a “drug addict” will add the missing elements of an effective drug education program whether in the home, in the school or on the job.

What Are The Objectives?

The primary objective for any organization in the “War On Drugs” is to deal with the following:

1. Methods of Prevention,
2. Increased Awareness/Sensitivity,
3. Direct Methods of Treatment,
4. Development of a Network,
5. External and Internal Resources,
6. The Holistic Approach,
7. Identification of the Drug Abuser.

One objective has no more or less ranking, as it relates to the order of overall objectives. The degree or need would be based primarily upon the organization itself.

The second and final objective should be aimed at addressing, any of the identifiable problems found in your home, school, organization or business. This process, once clearly identified, has to have individual or specific objectives, which deal

primarily with your specific need. Affective communication then can be viewed as an overall approach towards solving your drug problem.

Methods of Implementation

Implementation methods are another important factor for an organization to consider. Some methods are:

- 1) Seminar/Workshop – primary objectives and goals would be taught to each specific target public and used as a basis for continuing evaluation and re-evaluation.
- 2) Resource Development – resource development of programs to expose and continue on-going communication with the organization (media, newsletters, etc.).
- 3) Policy Implementation – awareness of policies and procedures for organizational control, methods of support and identification of key groups for support.
- 4) Treatment – development for the treatment and recovery of substance or drug abuse members.
- 5) Testing – methods of detection or identification of the drug being used or abused.

It is always important to note that there are a substantial number of external and internal related resource groups that could be utilized, possibly at a significant cost saving. There is a specific purpose or objective for the development of a drug program that would address significant concerns of any director, professional or concerned citizen.

- 1) The elevation and increased awareness of ones knowledge as it relates to drug education.
- 2) To influence members to say no and be aware of methods in which to deal with drugs on the job, school, home, etc.
- 3) The level of denial in the community, on the job and in the home as it relates to drug use.
- 4) Clear identification of drug abuse problems in the home, on the job, in the community.
- 5) Identification of types of drugs, most likely to have a significant effect upon members in the organization.
- 6) Facilities and resources available to best serve the organization members and areas of expertise.
- 7) Community resources that would be effective in the development of an effective method of education.
- 8) Short and long term coordination of resources that to some degree could provide effective solutions to the drug problem.
- 9) On-going development of mass media resources that could be used in the education of members to the dangers of drugs and drug abuse.

- 10) Different concepts and methods by which the organization can affect a change in the attitudes towards drugs and drug abuse.

External/Internal Cause and Effects

You've got to look at the causes first, because the affect comes last. I believe that causes are two to be precise (1) external causes and (2) internal causes. It is important to look at the external causes first because they have a significant impact, as it relates to a persons internal behavior towards using drugs.

External

One of the most important facts is the perception of other people on you, as individual in terms of using drugs. As a very important effect, the first affects externally are most of all parental or family effects. So most of those effects to a large degree are given some kinds of models in our family, whether it's mothers, fathers, uncles, aunts, successfully family members or the like. We've given these people as examples of what we should be like, I believe that this first cause externally has a lot to do with a child's development and perception of themselves, not necessarily in terms of deviant or criminal kinds of behavior, or even drug abuse, but just a good positive perception of themselves.

The second factor that needs to be looked at critically are one's peers and friends, which serve probably the most important external force as it relates to how we feel about ourselves. Questions such as how much money your parents make, is there one parent at home. If you're staying with relatives, have you been abused, are the parents unemployed – all of these are examples of external causes that can have a very significant affect as it relates to a child or teenagers perception in terms of using drugs. And of course, we've got to look at some of those causes, which although they are external, they can be identified internally. That is the perception that other people have of you, and you in turn have about yourself.

Internal

As it relates to internal causes, which can be defined as somewhat psychological, there can be a variety of factors which will lead one into a deviant lifestyle of drug use and abuse. One is the fact that one's own perception about oneself, which to a large degree has a lot to do with how one relates to using drugs.

Second is the fact that ones own self esteem is not acceptable for a positive image about oneself. Third, of course a word that has been used over and over through the years which is indicative of ones internal feelings - - self hatred. And so I remind you

that ones perception, self esteem and self – hatred have something to do with why, how and what types of drugs, one will eventually use.

The Question is Why?

The question you ask yourself, over and over is how anyone or somebody else could give one the impression that one didn't like themselves or feel good about themselves or even hate themselves. Societal pressures, TV models, radio personalities, movie stars, entertainers, etc., are the ones who by and large, we look at larger than life, that have a lot to do with our perceptions towards life. Then, of course, some of those external forces, which you really didn't have anything to do with, such as, unemployment, family income, life successes, and failures and how it affects you, are important.

I think some of these things need to be looked at importantly as it relates to the healthy development of a child, in terms of trying to live in a society that continues to be not only fashioned and shaped by role models, but also able to see some of those external factors that we have nothing to do with. All of these external forces have a lot to do with causes, but then I'm also reminded that internal causes are the ones that make you react by using drugs because no one really puts a gun up to a drug user's head.

One factor I think will help young people, primarily because the cause comes from within and certainly the perceptions that an individual has about his or her self has a lot to do with how the person reacts when they're in certain environments, or certain situations where drugs are being used and drugs are being passed. Now, it's obvious that we cannot control some of the behavior of our friends or our peers or even loved ones or some members who are in our families, but we can have a lot to do with how we feel about ourselves.

The Larger Audience

It was brought to my attention in three years of counseling and urinalysis testing that an important effect, is the fact that drug abuse affects your family members and societal relationships -, whether it's your job or your friends' jobs or parents' job. I say that because it's very important, that one understands drug abuse affects a larger audience, than merely the drug user. Some points you should consider why one starts using drugs can be categorized as some of these things: grief, pain, embarrassment, and stupidity. But mostly that being self-hatred, which begins to come out as a self destructive kind of behavior that a drug abuser or addict enjoys. I remember hurting friends, family members, loved ones, and wanting people to hurt in return—people with a very self destructive approach to life itself.

A major internal affect is mental instability, which appreciates and applauds rationalization, denial and self-justification, words a drug user will rationalize with the use of drugs to deal with life realistically. The drug user knows without a shadow of a doubt that the problem is not being dealt with realistically, most then are skillful in evading any ASSISTANCE, AID or HELP.

Responsibility and Reality

One learns that a major perspective is that the drug user has to be responsible. You have to want responsibility as a major requirement of the user. One needs to want responsibility as a major requirement of the user. One needs to have a (1) good perception about oneself, and (2) how others perceive me. I began to understand very clearly that the effects of drug abuse and use, made me not only irresponsible, but, it also made me realize that individuals felt I was irresponsible. So, you have irresponsibility from yourself and irresponsibility in terms of the thinking of others, which simply compounds the problem of drug abuse.

So one needs to be brought to a certain reality about oneself, that of being responsible for decisions as it relates to drug use and abuse, and sometimes the responsibility as it relates to other people in terms of who it will effect. There's a main point here we need to look at, which I consider as irrational behavior. The irresponsibility of a drug abuser or addict.

This simply means that a drug user at no time feels that societal rules, values or even beliefs are to be abided by or adhered to. A drug abuser merely reinterprets and redefines those same rules to a personal form of reality.

Methods of Prevention

Two very important factors we might consider, certainly in the Cause and Effects of Drug Abuse, are the external and internal forces that might have a lot to do with a person using drugs. We need also to consider the excuses that a person uses in order to use or abuse drugs. Certainly, when you begin to look at methods of prevention, one of the most important external factors is peer groups, those environmental kinds of circumstances, individuals that might have a great deal to do with your drug abuse or use of illegal drugs.

Let's begin by giving a certain notation to external groups because it was the first way in which I became familiar with drugs and illegal drugs, so I'm not only going to caution you and warn you but give you some information that's somewhat good if trying to look at your child, your husband, loved ones, and employers as it relates to prevention.

Peer groups, friends, associates, are the most effective ways of identifying individuals who use drugs. Because of certain societal pressures to conform to behaviors

that friends introduce to you, it becomes more evident to be accepted by these individuals, as opposed to having an individual kind of approach in being accepted by the general public, or even by these same individuals.

Conformity

I had a need for other individuals, and whatever methods they used to conform to the larger society in terms of being accepted. Now, of course, we can't agree that the larger society uses drugs, or abuses drugs, but, to continue to looking at the external groups we have to look as some of the role models that sometimes fashion our thoughts or concepts. Friends that introduced me to drugs, top sports figures, entertainers, and other noted figures who to one degree or another have used drugs and later on at some point in life feel the affect of drug abuse.

Whether it's death, the destruction of organizations, or the destruction of the individuals themselves, people want to conform. Individuals by-in-large, when I say individuals, speaking of the peers, friends, the associates seemingly were molded and shaped by these other figures, more noted, more renowned, more media flavored kinds of figures. But at the same time the introduction of the drugs was not from the media stars, or entertainers. It was from local peers and friends.

So it becomes evident that even in my consideration, that young teenagers to a large degree are not introduced to drugs even on a more intimate level by people of like ages, of similar backgrounds, or similar environments, but most young people are introduced to the drug world or the subculture (drugs) by older persons, adults who some times utilize young people as a new market, in which to expand the use of drugs and the sell of drugs. It's like being introduced to a new form of candy or more hip way of having more friends.

And so I began to realize even after this immediate introduction to the illegal use of drugs by my peers that there were other individuals in the background; drug dealers, other members of a more deviant kind of society with behaviors that my friends, my peers, my associates were not use to on a normal basis. But there were older individuals who later on I realized, and certainly can relate to some studies that note there is some correlation between drug abuse, drug and crime. Yes, I began to realize that some of these individuals were not only ex-criminals, but some of them were current criminals in terms of the kinds of actions, types of employment, and the ways or means which they derived their incomes. Not only did the drug culture introduce me to these individuals through my peers, it also introduced me to a much more aggressive external environment.

Drug Sub-Culture

This type of environment took me away from the Christian background, good home, mother and father, even the environment at the local school. It took me into a more deviant subculture filled with much more deviant activities even more so than drug abuse. To name a few of the deviant behaviors in which I became involved as a result of this subculture were pornography, stealing, burglary, and robbery, or whatever activity that would furnish money for drugs.

To a large degree these are the kinds of things used to perpetuate the use of drugs, and individuals who are considered as peers and friends bring in this different kind of environment. These are the same individuals whom you might consider friends, who introduce you to drugs, to the drug dealer, and then the person who deals in illegal drugs. This made me realize that there were certain kinds of environments any young person, (this is something that certainly if you want to help someone in your family, community, or even your job you can relate to) who leaves home on a daily bases who goes then into an environment, to a large degree, that is influenced or filled with illegal drug use and becomes associated (even if you are not aware) with this underground drug sub-culture.

Signs of the Time

Something you really need to make sure you're aware of, is that not only does the behavior change of the individual, the loved one, the teenager or the family member, but their behavior changes towards themselves, abruptly because of the reality of this subculture that exists, and the introduction to individuals who continue to perpetuate drug use by them. It also starts to change one's personal outlook towards drugs, not only towards their family members but orientation toward themselves, the environments, home, school, job and the person begins to look at the external and internal environment in terms of daily activity (work, school, etc.), as being different.

This then brings in another point, that being the irresponsible. This is the kind of behavior that the individual looks at for himself or herself. You need to begin to look at it, because we can admit to ourselves that once you can have a young person or adult introduced to an environment that is illegal. The drug culture is filled with individuals who continue to perpetuate some forms of crime or of other forms of deviant behavior that obviously has got to affect you and your family.

I believe that you need to begin to look at the association with some friends. This is critically important because not only will this present a problem to you, but you will be able to look at some of the friends, associates, loved ones or the family members. Two questions that need to be asked are:

- 1) Has it progressed to a normal interactive conversational kind of relationship, or

- 2) Has it progressed to the kind of relationship where the activities become more increased as it relates to drugs?

Listen

Being in this environment on a daily bases, you often hear individuals and certainly I can attest to this from my own experiences, you often hear individuals once they've been involved in this kind of environment. I can vividly remember buying the drugs, being out most of the evening in fact into the early morning hours of the day, coming back home to be confronted by individuals who loved me, wanted to know about my welfare and were concerned. And I, in my irresponsible kind of approach, would merely shove off their concern. Later on you notice the behaviors start to change and my behavior started to change. It was evident that the individuals could not understand what type of relationship I had with my friends.

I'm saying that primarily because I realize now after being able to think about it over a long period of time, after being off drugs and what types of interactive experiences I had with family members. What was more important to me at that particular time? Was it really the loving environment? These are the kinds of questions you need to ask yourself, was it the kind of drug environment looked at, or the concern others tried to show, in terms of your own welfare even if you don't understand I was headed down a very destructive path, or was the environment that I began to understand, later on, as being more or less acceptable in terms of illegal drug use?

Question? And Look

Now one point and a major consideration in terms of your being able to deal with preventive measures is to begin to not only challenge or question the individual, who you believe to a large degree has a drug problem, but you need to being to look at the peers on a very active level or just begin to observe the relationships. When you begin to ask the particular question, out of welfare, love or concern for the individual, you'll have a better idea. Then you can see if the person is being defensive, or is the person trying to rationalize the behavior? In fact, some individuals including myself, can remember vividly not even admitting to my parents that I had a drug problem.

Denial

Most individuals who are involved with drugs will not admit to any degree that they have a drug problem. They will always rationalize the fact that you have a problem or society-at-large. Remember, we talked about the irresponsibility that you always must keep in mind. That is a key factor when you begin to identify maybe the type of drug.

You can't always say that individuals may be using heroin, cocaine, or marijuana some might be hooked on more acceptable kinds of drugs.

There are acceptable kinds of drugs which certainly can be abused more so. Some legal over the counter drugs can be abused, when you begin to see changes in the behavior it's the same effect. Now keep in mind the external methods, by which you can identify individuals in a particular environment which is most helpful.

The Affective Approach

I believe that if individuals could have identified, in other words my parents, friends who really appreciated and loved me (who did not introduce me to drugs) my minister, members in the church I believe that if these individuals would have understood and looked at the environments and the persons and my behavior changing, they could have begun to address me in a more responsible manner. I would have had to take a look at my irresponsible manner, and then a look at my peers and the friends but I had to take a look at where I was heading.

This is headed to the second element I think that's critical internally, as it relates to the external way that you can look at an environment or a people or circumstances or organization in terms of a preventive measure and that is the internal way, in which you can begin to examine not only yourself but others can begin to examine you.

A Level of Reality

What I would like to share is basically one major idea as it relates to this approach. It's very real, it might be somewhat dogmatic, but certainly it might be somewhat beneficial to the drug abuser and that is the questioning and bringing this particular individual up to a certain level of reality. In terms of not being able to deal with not only the drug problem but methods and ways in which they can begin to look at the environment that's having some affect on them.

This is very hard to do because as you well can imagine when you begin to question an individual's welfare there begins a very unique dialogue in terms of defensive kinds of ways. This goes all the way back to causes in which irresponsible kinds of behavior begins to rationalize why society has done certain things, why the parents live a certain way, why I don't have certain kinds of clothes, why I don't have certain types of jobs, regardless of this particular kind of information it really has no bearing on a drug abuser. I can honestly say that myself, because it was one of my best methods of being defensive. Believe it or not when a drug abuser, certainly I as a drug addict, used these kinds of tactics and methods it begins to throw you off as a concerned parent, a concerned member of an organization.

Persist, Don't Rationalize!

Unless you have urinalysis testing, unless you have already found a particular drug or found signs of a drug being abused by the individual you have some concern for, then you need to begin to not only question the methods and the motions the drug abuser is beginning to take you through but, don't rationalize the behavior. Somebody has to maintain a very responsible approach. To continue questioning, to continue to antagonize, and bring the drug abuser into our reality. Now, I say this for two reasons because I've heard a lot of individuals rationalize the abuse of drugs and see the destructive behaviors associated with drug abuse and not be questioned to a large degree by individuals who love them and have some concern for them and their welfare.

I'm saying this because sometimes it creates a lot of anxiety for the person who is trying to deal with the drug abuser. Certainly I can relate to that in having created a lot of anxiety in my parents, other loved ones and even my coaches, who I felt had a great deal of concern for me as an individual playing sports in high school. But, it really created a big problem for them in terms of trying to maintain a certain kind of responsibility with me, and then having their own functions and everyday responsibilities that they had to do. But I really believe and I think this is a key element here when you're dealing with your child, a family member or in a corporation, and that is the responsible kind of approach you need to take.

Help?

What happens is that to a large degree when a drug abuser begins to have deeper and deeper associations with these external groups that I've talked to and about, they need more help. They begin to cry out for some form of help, some forms of counseling, some forms of aid, because at that point, a drug abuser more than anybody else realizes that he or she have a problem. But, the problem is who can help them? Certainly, this is not a counseling session, but I want to entertain the fact that if you can begin to identify the external types of problems, forces, people, associations, pressure, you might be able to not only penetrate into the internal core that the individual abuser has toward themselves. But, you might be able to identify some external resources that might be helpful.

Resources

Various kinds of resources, of course, the minister in the church, there might be a United Way type program, some type of program at the hospital, college or community center that you might be able to relate to. There might be individuals giving out information you might be able to pick up, cassette tapes, booklets, pamphlets, etc., more or less help guide the drug abuser or the person you believe really is going down a very destructive path in, because of the kind of external environment and associations they're beginning to pick up and have.

I can assure you beyond a shadow of a doubt that after you have certain association, and if they're not dealt with in a much more realistic vain, in terms of trying

to identify certain kinds of problems that are creating these kinds of relationships. There's going to be an increase in the types of individuals that they associate with. These individuals do not become friends. They only become acquaintances with specific objectives, whether it's stealing, breaking into cars, robbing or whatever the objectives are. The primary reason or goal for these particular objectives and for these relationships which are mostly temporary, is to basically obtain more drugs.

Watch Out

This is the key element especially when you have a person who might not have a job, or might be on a job but having a great deal of trouble as it relates to the use and budgeting of their money, this is a person who is acting irresponsible in their behavior. I'm saying this is realistically for us to understand that irresponsible behavior can be associated with certain kinds of actions. An example being the kinds of things that would make a high school student stay out late at night, then be late every morning going to school. The same kind of action that makes the same kind of student after being on drugs, after being late in the morning, fall asleep in class daily because they are tired and need rest. Or whereby you begin to notice certain kinds of external goods coming through your home, or certain people with goods either for sale or just for use on a temporary basis. So, we need to be more observant of these external kinds of forces or associations, groups, and then the last and most important factor is the internal behavior.

Excuses

You see in one part of my own life I didn't want to deal with reality as it related to my drug abuse, I didn't want to deal with my own responsibility of taking more control in being responsible in my action, whether being on time in school or staying awake in class or passing the class. This is something I observed later, much later when I began to realize it was just a way for me to use terms of rationalizing with my parents, with the coaches, other loved ones in terms of how I would treat them. I say that literally because drug abusers have a certain approach of treating people who do not use drugs. In fact, drug abusers think everybody else is crazy except them.

Now honestly I would have to end up methods of prevention by giving ways that you might be able to identify to help you by saying you don't have all of the skills necessary to a large degree. Working with a drug abuser, or a person who is getting deeper and deeper into drugs creates not only anxiety and stress on the person who has love and concern, it also questions your own approach to having this person in your life. It was very easy for me to rationalize with the loved ones who were in my life, but it was harder for the loved ones to rationalize with themselves cutting me out of their lives.

Wake Up

In other words when you see and you have some concern and love for the individual whom you know beyond a shadow of a doubt is evading responsibility, who is not being realistic, in terms of their own admission of drug abuse or the problem that they have by using illegal drugs, it's very hard for you to begin to cut them out of your own life, your own interaction. But what happens a lot of times is that we sometimes have shields that we begin to use. So you don't begin to see them coming so late, you don't begin to argue or create some kind of interest in their behavior in school, you don't begin to respond as positively or as responsible as you could to the teachers calling, or the minister even calling you. So you begin to close off, and use a shield. You could help a drug abuser; but one simple term called CONCERN, but mixed with a great deal of love.

Go Beyond

You've got to be able to go beyond the anxiety, go beyond the stress this is causing you, even the embarrassment sometimes that come with knowing others knowing that your child, your associate, your love one is a drug abuser. You've got to go beyond that until you can look at not only their welfare, but you can look with a great deal, into dealing with the problem directly. This is why I say it is very important for you to begin to identify resources, good strong resources that you can use.

Strong resources that you can use on a much more conserving effort, in that once the individual leaves you at your home you can talk with the counselor or coach and share the problem that the individual can begin to look at and identify and help you in identifying other kinds of relationships which you might not even be aware of.

You might be able to then talk with a minister, your local minister who to a large degree could begin to articulate to the person's spiritual concern and needs from a different level. And so you might be able to identify other agencies which could give you further information that would help you to identify ways and methods by which it could help you bring this person from a point of irresponsibility, to looking at reality and then trying to at least identify the problems that they are having maybe with the external environment with associates, or friends. Then try to bring that person to a point of responsibility. Here is the only way you can begin to address this problem.

It Takes A Long Time!

I can relate to that because it took three years of individuals being concerned in a drug program with me. It took three years for me to understand that my responsibility to the job, as well as to my interactive kinds of relationships even my communication with other individuals was being listened to, with a great deal of concern mixed with a great deal of love. So when I went to the job or when I went to my home or when I went to visit friends, I became concerned.

I became concerned that I wanted to then become more responsible. I began to realize something very unique in myself. Certainly, it might help you to understand who might need to bring this individual to this great deal of responsibility in their own lives. I began that not only should I become more responsible but other individuals, organizations whether it was the school, company I worked for, wanted me and looked to me as being responsible. At that particular point I wanted to be responsible.

A Network

Now I realized something, and it might help you in thinking of a way and a method in which you may build up your own network. I realized that once I came to a point in my own thinking with the aid, of course, of these other resources and individuals, once I came to this point I wanted to be more responsible. Therefore, I looked at ways and methods by which I could become and show my responsibility to loved ones, friends and even my job. Whether it's simply being on time everyday, going to school to improve my reading or my writing or whether it's just giving the kind of respect to my loved ones that I'd forgotten about in terms of my irresponsible behavior.

But I began to realize that the more responsibility I acted toward myself in my own actions toward others in these environments especially associates in environments in which I had to show more responsibility, I began to see that people showed me more and more responsibility. So the more I enjoyed the more I used, but I began to realize that there was a certain level that I needed to maintain to ensure to other individuals because I remember being told, "ONCE YOU'RE A DRUG ADDICT, ALWAYS A DRUG ADDICT", whether I use the drug two months later, two years later, ten years later, or even now. It's still in my mind that realistically I'm still a drug addict, but I don't have to be irresponsible. I can prove to individuals in my community, on the job, in personal relationships that I am responsible.

Summary

So you see in my concluding statement for consideration to you is that you need to begin to identify these external forces or associates or friends or peers which the individual might be having so strong a relationship. Be reminded that it begins to bring the individual into another subculture, one that you as a non drug user are not familiar with. This subculture of drug abusers is filled with dealers, prostitutes, robbers, thieves, some murderers, etc., all types of deviant manner that continues to perpetuate the kind of income whether robbery, porno, etc., it sets the kind of environment the individuals involves themselves with. As long as the individual is involved with those environments the person will never be responsible to a great degree and certainly not responsible in looking at their own behavior.

So, there's got to be a breaking away from the environment that is filled with drugs, the environment that's filled with the subculture of drug abuse and use. I began to realize something myself the more I did not use drugs the longer I was taken away from drug abuse, I began to realize I was not that environment, and those environments then were not important to me. There were other levels of importance I began to create for myself. The long and short term goals that we talked about, and how individuals or loved ones can assist and aid people and groups in helping individuals access or attain more goals.

And then the last part the one that stays with you a long time, the internal approach, that is, how you view yourself. We talked about low self esteem the low attitude I had toward myself. It's very evident that I could not at any point then during the admission stage as being a drug addict or even now today 15 years later relate to the fact that other people would give me my own perspective of myself. You've got to help the individual build up his or her self esteem, showing them ways they can look more positively at themselves.

It's not how we look at the character of others but how we feel about ourselves. Be reminded that the external factors are important as well as the internal factors and certainly you can't forget when I think about the causes and affects of drug abuse and drug use. For those of you that might need more hope after drug use. For those of you that might need more hope after going through the drug experience, that is, if you give up on the drug addict or user, then the addict or user **WILL GIVE UP**.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Personal Communication Network

One of the most important methods of communication has to do with a development of a network of personal communication. This network is a human interrelated chain of communication, utilized as a method of feedback for whatever problems that have been identified and in turn articulated to those individuals. I think that this network can be created with members from your family, individuals from your working environment, professionals in communication positions and of course strong models that one can identify or relate towards. Let me also point out that this network can be expanded upon, taken from or made more effective simply by being aware of its existence.

Have a Purpose!

First of all one needs to identify a significant purpose for the network, this is in relationship to significant problems, specific goals or intrinsic needs. In other words, what is your main objective in need of as it relates to a human network of communication. Is it emotional support? Do you need a sounding board? What are the main aspects of your network, as it relates to accomplishment of your goals? There can be a variety of reasons, specific or general in regards to the creation of a network of communication. This is your sole responsibility.

Family First!

The first primary source for inclusion in a personal communication network should be family members which exemplify role models, successful examples, wisdom of a great degree of simply experiences which make them worthy of good parts in a strong network. Let me point out that family members should be used in the same manner as it relates to the utilization of “extended family” concepts, which use older family members to support and teach younger members values, beliefs and customs concerning the family. Critically important of the family member is to be aware of long term aspirations or even historical facts concerning or in relationships to the family structure. Family involvement should be the first and primary link in this human network of communication, because of its intimacy and of course its potential as it relates to sincere concern.

Respected Individuals Second!

A second major source of development in this network is the inclusion of a social component such as from your job, professional environment or in the community. The one basic criteria is your personal respect or admiration of the person, this is in relationship to helping you cope with the reality of meeting your objective goals or specific purpose. Another key element is awareness on the part of the person that is the focus of your network, in regards to respect towards the identified person in your network. In other words, the person should be highly respected by the individual in whom you are trying to effect some change or purpose that is intended. I cannot stress this element enough, simply because it is a major component of the network and can be used to a greater degree than the family component.

Professionals Third!

The third significant aspect of your personal communication network is the addition or identification of professionals in communication. This is another major component because it relates to what I consider a “Holistic” approach in regards to an individual. The mind, body and spirit are important elements as they relate to identifying professionals in communication. In the community—the minister, counselor, family physician, or close intellectual friends would become strong elements in developing your network. A final and most important point for consideration here is the fact that each of the elements (mind, body and spirit) could have varying degrees of success or failure in regards to your intended purpose or specific goal.

Strong Role Models Last!

Finally, the last component to the development of a personal communication network is the identification of strong role models or examples which can be used as they relate to the network purpose. This final component is vital in that usually there are potentially several strong or positive elements which might be useful in the network, important is the fact that some might not be readily available or accessible. Examples of some models could be teachers, athletes, police officers, entertainers or just plain workers which over a period of time have left lasting impressions upon the person involved or benefiting from the network. There should be a great deal of concern to find out who, if any person has made this type of impression upon the person, this is very important simply because of the level of respect given the role model.

Family members, professionals or community members, a communication professional from the “Holistic” perspective and a strong role model represents the significant persons that can be used in your personal communication network. Keep in mind that there is no set number that makes the network “good” or “bad”. The number of persons needed would depend upon your personal need in relationship to any specific problem or goal that you have, in regards to the utilization of the network. Also, the

network can be expanded upon, added to or even reduced if need be, simply upon the need or objective that you have in mind.

The “Personal Communication Network” can be used to identify more concrete problems, look at and receive feedback, become more aware of external as well as internal concerns. I think that there is a wide range of pertinent points for consideration, as they relate to the use of a personal communication network. The main objective, regardless of the other factors is related to your particular goals or specific purpose for the utilization of the Personal Communication Network.

The “Personal Communication Network” is what I believe is one of the most basic means of aiding the individual drug or alcohol abuser. So often the person affects so many close family members. The tragic fact is many times the family members have affected the abuser. However, the main objective is to assist in whatever means is necessary to fight the ills of drug abuse, to the point of bringing some sense of stability into the relationship. Study the basic elements of the network, often times there are individuals able to aid, regardless of the unlikely outcome, it can't be any worst than the existing problem.

Individuals closest to the abuser must always take the first step, that which will seek out persons, programs and support to deal with the issue at hand. Often I have found out the spent time has added to the need for greater help and assistance in addressing this critical problem. The prior chapter pointed out some of the games that are played by abusers and with family members, friends and co-workers. It's important not to play, but realize this as a sense of the reality created by the drug abuser. Always have a means for a Personal Communication Network. You need it for your own help in this long-term solution.

Long term is the word I use because the problem once started, never really goes away or is seemingly solved by the individual or the family. Persons not concerned should not be involved, unless in one of the areas I noted in the Network. Today there is a higher sense of awareness in dealing with the problem of drug abuse in our society, which has given you more individuals to use in the War on Drugs. Whether school, church, job, community or family – there is a real point to be made as it relates to dealing with the problem.

Often I use the network for on-going short term reflection or guidance as it relates to the specific problem I might have, the same approach can be taken in regards to the problems which created the abusers rationale for drug abuse. Keep in mind the deep complexity of thought needed for long-term care and not a short term fix. The network can aid in helping accomplish those short and long term goals without the benefit of exposing the real problem at hand.

Special focus for the network members can make for a much expanded approach in solving problems or reaching solutions. The level of objectivity in the group is limited by your subjective opinion of how it will assist you in the process. Different problems

surface which sometimes make for difficult solutions in the network individuals, in that case it can always be expanded for practical results.

The simple fact is most individuals with drug abuse problems have very limited ideas about dealing with their problem, even if they recognize it as a problem. I would caution you to follow some simple rules when locating members for the Personal Communication Network:

1. Find members with some prior experience or awareness of the drug problem.
2. Locate professionals with a sincere interest and not professional opinion first.
3. Influence persons with a possible impact to assist in developing your network.
4. Communicate the need to establish a good strong link that would aid in different issues or problems that might come up in the future.
5. Make a serious attempt to utilize resources established to aid in the specific problems identified.
6. Relax and ask for more assistance during high times of stress or pressure.
7. Make as many potential contacts for the best possible future.
8. Explain clearly the role you want individuals to have in your personal communication network.
9. Identify the strongest persons for results then measure whenever possible the benefits.
10. Always have an understanding of the basic purpose of how the network serves you and the abuser.

Finally, I think over the years the Personal Communication Network has for me become the greatest assets in my recovery. Even when I was not completely sure of its origination, it seemed to be in place and working to my advantage. Whenever situations or problems came up that I realized were too great to deal with, seemingly I could always wait for and find answers in the Personal Communication Network. Every person has a network around them; sometimes the awareness of it brings the greatest results.

CHAPTER TWELVE

Hope After Dope

The idea for this book was born out of a true story, my story, no a testimony of how a drug addict would later become a respected doctor. This is a story of mercy and grace, two powerful factors in my telling the real side of a destructive life, one that overcame a million to one odds of failure. But what is the true message for even those that will not accomplish what I have? Just the life-long battle with drugs and alcohol is enough to cause a living hell. The message becomes one of hope that which we trust will give us the courage to fight the daily battle in the War against Drugs.

Every community, State and individual must realize the true power of hope, for without it surely we have already lost the war. Hope shines in the midst of drug infested communities as the sun does on a clear day. It adds to the daily struggle of coping with individuals' hell bent on destroying themselves and the lives of loved ones around them. Keep in mind the power of influence, the same influence that has taken on the person in the form of a drug. However, your influence and that of the community can become stronger, strong enough to break the chains of despair and depression. The same hope needed for the abuser is the same hope you need. That is why it is important to maintain a level high enough to sustain you during the long war against drugs. You can never give up in your belief that the individual the community and the nation will win in this war. Individual hope is based on faith, and, of course, that faith should be grounded on the friend I have often referred to in this book. My hope and faith are merely examples. There are millions of others with similar testimonies of hope and faith.

Remember the basis of short and long range goals is based on hope; hope to accomplish a task as simple as staying off drugs for one day at a time. Once you and others begin to realize how important this simple step of faith is worth, obviously it will grow with each passing day, week, month and year. Often there will be times of no hope; in fact, those are the instances where a network of hopeful persons will be most important.

To give up on one individual says we don't have hope in all of the individuals. That is why it is most important for the heavy abuser, as well as the light abuser. Each person has self-worth and potential for change from the problems of drug abuse. It is hoped that the real factors which have led to the problem can be addressed in the long term. This hope has caused many professionals to rely on techniques and on faith, to relay this reality to others is critical for overall success.

I believe God provides the strongest possible hope through others. History documents the countless stories of divine intervention and even miracles when all else failed. This is the level of hope that must be used in fighting this war on drugs, for truly it is a war with evil at the highest levels. The perception by many doesn't reveal the low level of reality that drugs can take an individual; there is no rationale, except – evil. Our

hope then brings that light to overcome the darkness that I believe has captured the spirits of individuals through drugs.

Spiritually, there are levels which can be accomplished in the spirit. Drug abusers must be brought to the level whereby the sense of hope can have its strongest impact; every person has that potential for progress. It is always helpful when you can enlist the strongest possible people to join in your hope for a better solution, people with the power to move mountains of drug abuse.

Some people say actions speak louder than words. I say your words lead to some type of action. Hope is alive when the results are evident. This cannot be underestimated simply because of the many problems which will occur in the life of a drug abuser or the family members. I relate this to a movie with part one, two, three, and so on. It ends when the last movie isn't made. I would hope that more people realize their indirect involvement could very well lead a person to the right start and make the difference.

Over the years, I have often evaluated the people responsible for giving me their hope, the hope that has lead me to this point in my life. Those persons always seem to believe in a dream, a dream for a better society, a better community, a better job – the only difference is it's never on themselves, but always on the other person. Maybe that was the key, they believed in me, or what I could become in the future. For some reason I believed them; no, I wanted to believe them. Therefore, I became what they believed in truth. It has always confused me when I have heard persons with no hope. It seems as if they have no hope even for themselves. The reality is someone believed in me, when I did not believe in myself; therefore, their belief had to be on a higher level of reality. One I didn't, no, couldn't understand.

We must never stop hoping, for a better day, a better world, a better community, a drug free child, relative or friend. We must never let go of a dream to be the best in a world of losers and winners. It's always a dream. A dream to become better in the long-term, not just the short. Remember the hope that our elders gave us and we must give to our children in the future a hope based on dreams.

I believe we must not forget the ones that have lost hope, for they are the ones that will need our support the most. Certainly, we will need to give them hope. Many times I have been inspired by others less hopeful, after hearing my testimony, my hope, no the hope that was given me by others more hopeful of me. That is the role many of us must have in life, to give and be given to a spirit of hope that will change individuals, communities and our nation.

I am always hopeful for I know "It's A Blessing" just to be alive and yes to hope.

CHAPTER 13

Urban Ministry Programs with a Multicultural Theology

The post-modern era has produced a wealth of information and technological achievements over the past two decades, which aims at a new awareness into the 21st century for urban dwellers. Population shifts which began after World War II from rural to urban areas will be 95% complete at the turn of the century. Major services and future industries have already fallen victim to progressive progress. Continental changes in minority ethnic populations, diversity of religious beliefs and the reality of a multicultural society will affect change for generations to come.

Central to this focus is a concept of ministry relevant to the rapidly changing urban areas of America and, in fact, the World. Religious organizations will increasingly need to define and plan for the explosion of change in beliefs, values and behavior. Certain groups have already begun to deal with the enormous challenges ahead and to plan for objective success.

The idea of impacting factors in the post-modern era views the issues, questions, problems and answers from several perspectives, which must be considered for progress and of course growth. Advances in technology have far exceeded human ability to the point of mass illiteracy in some instances (computers, robotics, etc.) displacing thousands to levels of despair and poverty. At the same time, opportunities are outpacing individuals as it relates to personal progress and achievement. This creation seemingly has been a direct result of the age of information.

Basic to the survival of humans in the social, economic, political and cultural environment is a concept of community. Although the idea holds a better definition in smaller concepts, it should be viewed from the larger perspective, that of a human community. Events and change are already destined to effect systems whether on a practical basis or philosophical, we are a global village. This concept has even more impact on a smaller scale, in the actual community and with specific goals for its success.

My orientation has focused on the protestant traditions of ministry, which has evolved as the concept of various theologies, have evolved in church history. The post-modern era will however need to develop a "Multicultural Theology", which can have some foundational elements in origination from independent denominational doctrines or policy, but must have a culturally pluralistic view of outside bodies. This is not a philosophy in the sense that other organizations use the doctrines as a means for practical application and community belief.

Multicultural Theology can be defined more vividly in the environment of multicultural populations, ethnic groups, communities and, of course, individual beliefs or attitudes. There is a great deal to consider when we look at or examine the extremely close relationships that groups or organizations have with one another. A theology which

is multicultural, therefore, has a strong basis of origination in the urban community, which can be viewed from an international perspective.

Realize Multicultural Theology is based on the reality of belief in existence and not a creation of new belief. This is a strong statement for those unaware of the diverse nature and existence of other groups, in some cases the knowledge of one's own group. This is extremely important for the many confused and seemingly purposeless individuals in our communities and world. Therefore, an objective goal of any concept of multicultural theology leads to an urban ministry program of development. In some instances, the reverse has occurred. For the purpose of examination, this view supports a protestant concept of ministry a direct result of our call and commission to witness for our Lord Jesus Christ.

In reality still is the view that concepts for urban ministry were in an abstract sense from a Biblical perspective, until the beginning of this post-modern era. History well documents the commitment of missions by religious orders, denominations and of course individuals. In fact, the historical, social and traditional development of American Church History is full of the rich sacrifices made for the advancement of its true goals.

In Luke 4:18; Isaiah 61: 1, the Old and New Testament authority of mission is relatively clear, but yet abstract. It is to "preach good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord".

Karl Barth in the 1930's, asked questions relative to the Theology of Mission, which would in turn influence the likes of Hendrik Hraemer, Walter Holsten, Walter Freytag and J.C. Hoekendijk. Although Barth viewed missionary endeavor and theology as two independent acts of the church, there are critical areas for direct correlations and effects. Today, it must take a more pragmatic view, which is realistic as it relates to a community. There is a relationship for the Church community to fulfill in the world, one that today focuses on an urban ministry. Our involvement is one of reconciliation, which always leads to a mission as Jesus is described in word and deed (Luke 24: 19). Further clarification was brought out by Barth under two headings entitled (a) speech and (b) action.

The elements of speech are defined as the ministries of (1) praise, (2) preaching, (3) teaching, (4) evangelization, (5) foreign missions and (6) theology. Elements of action are (7) prayer, (8) the "cure of souls", (9) the production of outstanding Christian examples, (10) physical and material space, (11) prophetic action and (12) fellowship. In the areas for speech and action there has to be a continued view of expansion or progress, which would always broaden the range of individual elements under each area. Urban society gives Barth's idea even more substance with the mass reality of sociological issues, problems and factors for ongoing study and implementation.

Many scholars in the area of missiology give way to the impact of practical theology for the urban environment. Multicultural Theology suits an urban ministry

program for the express purpose of using power legitimately. Raymond Bakke notes, “Cities are about winners and losers. Urban Theology must address both the top of the bank and the bottom of the ghetto”. There are five legitimate uses of power that Bakke states can be used as functional theory of power to inform their priorities or practice.

1. The gospel as power. The gospel is news about Jesus, not advice for us.
2. Ethnicity and power. Cultural anthropology has helped missiologists see that the recovery of roots is key to healthy self acceptance, strong community and family relationships today.
3. The leverage of solidarity with the poor and oppressed as another legitimate use of power as an urban Christian, it is not that you have power, you are a power unit.
4. Development is a legitimate power: Ignorance is powerlessness.
5. Power encounter is legitimate power.

The idea is based on a strong orientation of ministry, ministry that is biblical and basic to an urban ministry program.

Ministry is service; thus, we see the impact of urban ministry needs in a post-modern era. Today the people of God are called to share in that ministry of needs in our society. The ministry of Jesus was a liberating and reconciling ministry. Luke 1:51-53 highlights the work of God putting down the mighty from their thrones, exalting those of low degree and a host of needful issues today in our society. Christ’s authority was evident with the sick, afflicted, challenging the arrogant, transforming traditions and a basic call for ministry to modern urban populations. The freedom we have as a church community (II Cor. 5:17, 21), we are to share as God’s gift (Rom. 5:2). Therefore, we enter into a struggle with Christ in urban ministry as a part of our responsibility with the community (Col. 1:24; Heb. 12:2, Gal.6:2, Phil. 1:29, 30; Matt. 25:31-45). A final idea is the fact that the church should be and is equipped to deal with whatever ills society brings forth (Rom. 12:6, I Cor. 12:7), in fact this is a sacrifice (Rom. 12:1). While all things are being accomplished in heaven and earth (Eph. 1:10).

The church community is under obligation to the world (Rom. 1:14-16), clearly the harvest is ready (Is. 4:35), but the task is to engage in commission oriented goals. The fact is the church role has a more impacting force for seemingly modern ills, the church does not see or address as its problems. The question as mark 4: 26-32 brings out is relative to growth, however is that qualitative or quantitative growth? Barth states, “Numerical increase reflects qualitative growth, but qualitative growth does not guarantee quantitative growth – nor should it”. There is a distinction then for the level of and quality of church involvement, whether internal or external to the community. Bakke notes, “urban ministry is personal and public, prophetic and pastoral, lay and clerical’.

Karl Barth agrees that the , “Christian community’s ministry can and should develop special working fellowships to which all Christians cannot and will not necessarily belong, but in which a particular service is rendered”. The only factors are:

- a) That care must be taken to base their formation and divine gifts rather than self will;
- b) That these groups operate within the general framework of the community and not be disruptive; and
- c) That they be genuine working fellowships, not just organizations designed to gratify personal needs.

Happily, I must agree Barth asserts the central argument for urban ministry, that which gives it a far reaching effect upon individuals, communities and the nation. Indeed programs can be provided from a wealth of professional experiences and skills, those not directly available to the church programs.

Multicultural theology can give more impact in development of urban ministry programs, simply from the perspective of sharing, networking and appreciation of other religious communities. Areas such as Drug/Alcohol Programs, joblessness, crime, welfare dependency, educational opportunities and a host of related sociological issues could be focused upon by the affected community. The rapidly changing nature of urban environments demands an immediate response or method to implement short and long range goals. Kenneth B. Clark stated, “the symptoms of lower-class society affect the dark ghettos of America—low aspirations, poor education, family instability, illegitimacy, unemployment, crime, drug addiction, and alcoholism, frequent illness and early death”.

Certainly, some ethnic groups are affected more (African-American, Hispanics), but this is not solely identifiable with those groups alone. It is important to note that early sociological studies made grave generalization in regards to behavior and not to methods of prevention, education or treatment of the problem. The role of the church therefore is viewed as a catalyst for change in society, individuals, and systems of government and of course churches.

There are ten specific areas that need the immediate attention of the church and urban ministry programs; however, in no way is it a conclusive number of areas for ministry in this post modern era.

- 1) Education – cannot be viewed lightly because of the “Age of Information”, advances in technology and the ongoing scientific revolution. However, this highlights the importance and need for vocational, high school and pre-college training, as well as basic adult improvement training skills.
- 2) Drug/Alcohol – prevention, treatment and education must focus on the individual, community, national and International culture affecting our post modern era.
- 3) Family Life and its ever changing need in society, concepts such as extended family, single family and job family need clarification and definition to a new generation of families.
- 4) Child Care Training and Development sites are critical as the work force increases the number of women employed and children needing the short and long term psychological, social and spiritual development.
- 5) Senior Citizens programs will grow into one of the most demanding and critical areas as the “Baby Boom” generation matures into the largest population group in

- the 21st century. Areas of housing, health care, finance and of course purpose will be an exceptional area for ministry and growth.
- 6) Law and Order concerns have lead to over flowing populations in prisons and jails; the need however is for programs to offer individuals an opportunity or chance back into the main stream of society. The cause and effect of no care or realistic treatment is merely enhancement to the problem and there must be a stronger solution.
 - 7) Counseling will be an area in need of individual skills development or ministry because of the complexities of modern society. A support method of programs must have groups and individual counseling central to the program goals.
 - 8) Crisis Intervention programs which would be very important for the ongoing issues relative to modern life (AIDS education, environment, etc.),
 - 9) Resource management programs could aid in development of year round methods for critical enhancement of community success (financial management, investments, etc.).
 - 10) Multicultural Theology programs would be obviously beneficial in several appreciative ways to the community (multiethnic diversity, relationships, cultural pluralism and appreciation, etc.). An unlimited number of avenues could be explored, internal and external to your own community.

These are central to my individual observations for the next decade of ministry and post modern thought. The explosion of areas has created a vacuum in the sense of a lost community, which is and can always be viewed as a global issue of concern. Life has given the church many opportunities for ministry in an urban context with a multicultural view—however history well documents the successes and failures of our past missions of commitment.

This implementation and responsibility of development of urban ministry programs is the responsibility of each and every individual called to a ministry of service to God. From the highest religious and denominational leaders, to the local volunteers it is a responsibility to be concerned and aware of the least of God's people. Organizational strength is obviously the best method of large scale, long term programs for the widest possible effect. However, that is not to say a single-handed small effort is not as effective.

Institutions with the responsibility of service (Federal, State, and Local) must be understood and appreciated for the greatest possible benefit and service to best aid in the objective goals. At some point many organizations understand the principle of structure, to best serve and utilize expert specialization and skills. The next decade will usher in a new era of opportunities, problems, issues, and of course challenges for ministry in the urban environment, quite possibly using a "Multicultural Theology".

CHAPTER 14

Power in Prayer

The most impacting factor in my entire life has obviously got to be prayer and its powerful effects. From the earliest knowledge about the church, I knew about prayer; in fact, my two grandmothers believed in its mysterious power. One was a member of the Church of God in Christ, while the other was a member of the Spiritual True Church—both were on the level of a Holiness or Pentecostal Church service. I think it's important for anyone having problems relative to drug or alcohol abuse to understand the power in prayer.

When I was a child, my grandmother would often call us to her bedside when she was ill and ask different grandchildren to pray. Some would run off instead of praying. I always seemed to get a joy out of kneeling next to her bedside and lifting my small voice in praise and prayer to God. It made me realize there was a force greater than us, and you could talk to that power source. My memories are filled with church services, where that same power emanated from and into the members in attendance. It was always a spiritual experience to go to Church, to pray with my grandmothers and to pray as a child. However, I can recall at times I often thought they were a little off mentally or should I say a little crazy.

Several times as a child I would stand from a distance, listening through closed doors as my grandmothers in prayer. One would sit in a rocking chair, with Garret Snuff and her Bible – between rocking, and spitting; she would read her Bible and pray for hours on end. There were times when 'Other Mama' would be crying and wrapped up in a loud conversation with God. I heard some of the prayers of how God had brought her from East Texas and struggles on life's pathway. My other grandmother would stand, hands folded or sitting in a quiet corner with her feet propped up in silence. 'BoBo' never prayed out loud, but I can remember the tears, so often they would silently fall and read her Bible. My grandmothers were prayer warriors or soldiers on the battle field for the Lord. There were problems that came into the lives of our families, but they always knew what to do in times of troubles. I loved my grandmothers, I loved their spirit, I loved their treatment of strangers, and I loved their belief in prayer. At times and very often they would talk and pray. They were good friends, no sisters on a journey towards heaven. My mother and aunt have taken the roles of my grandmothers, and now they pray for the problems affecting our families, what I am grateful for is the legacy of prayer they gave to our family.

When I was depressed in the Philippines, about to commit suicide, for possibly the third time, I talked with my mother and she told me, "They will do something". They obviously did what I believe is the most powerful thing on earth and known to man, they prayed until the message was received that I needed help. I will never believe otherwise, simply because of their natures, prayerful and silent, yet assured that Jesus could do anything, but fail. There is power in prayer, through the force and impact of prayer warriors, the walls of hell fell all around me and the chains of drug addiction were

broken. I wonder what would have happened if they were not prayer warriors and not rooted and grounded in the Lord. I know, "It's A Blessing".

The Bible gives a specific message as it relates to problems and prayer, drug and alcohol addiction is no match against the power of prayer. In II Chronicles 7: 14, it states, "If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and will heal their land". These must be an active decision and choice to seek God, after your admission of need and sin because of drug abuse.

In James 5:16, a drug abuser must "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much". Admission to the reality of your problem will be the start of a new beginning; prayer can start you on a new life direction. In (Mk. 11:24, Je. 29:13, I Chr. 16:11, Matt. 7:7 and Matt. 26:41) several passages of scripture there are direct references to the need and potential for wonder working prayer. Prayer brings a change. That is my primary concern for families to understand in dealing with the problem of drugs.

There are Old and New Testament examples of powerful prayer warriors, Moses, Gideon, Samuel, Solomon, Elijah, Hezekiah, Paul, Simon and even Jesus. The proof is evident in their prayer lives. It must not exclude the many others that directed from prayer (Gen. 4:26, Jud. 6:39, I Sam. 1:27, I King 9:3, Luke 1:14, Acts 4:31). I stress the power of prayer because often times the results and damage of drug abuse has caused a great deal of pain, confusion, hurt and sorrow. Keep in mind there must be a method by which a family must deal with the problem that has created such a problem, only drugs can do such damage.

Drugs have created an illusion for the individual affected by the problems of its evil power and the closest members of their family. Directly or indirectly, the effects are often times viewed as traumatic by many that interact with the drug and alcohol abuser. Realize that the full impact of recovery takes a life time of support, and you begin to understand the need for strong support and on-going assistance. In this instance, you must recognize the need for a prayerful support base, whether Church members, family or personal communication network group.

My conviction over the years has brought home the fact that over a life time you need a great deal of faith, love and patience. There are programs that promise a quick thirty day program or a few weeks and later some visitation; however, I know you live with the reality of your addiction for the rest of your life. I highly recommend a weekly or bi-weekly program, at least until you develop the necessary support that will help you to overcome the problem. Twelve step programs are strong for positive reinforcement, however Church programs with a strong spiritual base or more effectual for several reasons. They are:

- 1) Church programs can be consistent and not costly for the meeting groups.
- 2) Provide a strong value base for a solid spiritual foundation.

- 3) Welcomes individuals with a mind to start a new life in Christ.
- 4) Provide unlimited sources and people for new contacts and avenues to network.
- 5) Give you and your family a large base for counseling support.
- 6) Strong models for the Personal Communication Network.
- 7) Welcome opportunities to become involved as a positive influence on the other members.
- 8) Potential to develop a variety of community contacts and possible avenues to be a success.
- 9) Unlimited potential for spiritual growth and development.
- 10) Permanent home for solid long term impact on self, family, community, and members.

I believe that hundreds of thousands of addicts and recovering drug and or alcohol abusers need to discover the impact of prayer and its benefits. Often the relapse rate is high for addicts trying to clean their lives up; however, the fact is they need on-going help and support. Many times the environment does not change. The friends don't change. The pressure doesn't change, so how could the potential to start again change. I believe there are on-going problems which at anytime can bring a person back to drugs, that's why I believe in the power of prayer.

Realize that when people are in support of your success, you want to succeed. When they pray for your success, you pray also to succeed. I realize after seventeen years of being free from the chains of drugs, it was by the grace of God and most certainly prayer. The on-going realities of societal problems, individual aspirations and of course everyday life has caused a great deal of pressure, we now realize it continues to lead to abuse. My prayer is for each and every individual affected, whether directly or indirectly to realize they need special strength.

Prayer is a powerful force in dealing with the problem of drug abuse in your home, community and job. Make each and every effort to enlist others to join you in prayerful support, the more prayer the stronger the power. Drugs cannot be stopped by mere programs, money or advertisement promotion. I know that prayer is a key and primary force in this war on drugs.

CHAPTER 15

Action Speaks Louder Than Words

The final element of this book should address each and every individual. This would make the program and impact of “Hope After Dope” more than a personal story. It makes it a crusade. Yes, a crusade for each and every individual person, community, city, leader, organization, church, business or program. Actions speak louder than word and I mean the impact not just the message. There is a difference between speech and action.

Activity is central to the existence and survival of each and every human being, regardless of ethnic group, culture, social or even economic status in life. There is a level of awareness we all share with each other, one that extends itself beyond our small worlds of knowledge and awareness. Activity is the key for addressing any problem, in particular the number one problem in America – Drugs.

Drugs are not the real problem in our homes, our communities, our nation or our world – drugs are not the problem we face to survive in the future. Our problem is real activity, activity that is meaningful and focused on a purpose of meaning. People search for meaning, communities search for meaning. Our world is searching for meaning. Some find it in the family, some find it in power, some find it in objectives and some find it in drugs. No. the real problem is focused on what type of activity gives the person meaning, the type that can be a helpful element of our community, country and world.

I often think about past, the people that gave me the most meaning, their words – but most of all their actions. It often appears that their actions often spoke louder than their words. Believe me those individuals had a lot to say about everything. They had a lot to say about the Bible, about children, about relationships, about life and most of all about me. I seem to think not about the harsh words, kind words, helpful words or even no word – I often think about their actions – actions which seemed to always speak louder than words.

Words have a powerful effect on people, in the sense that they can tear an individual down or build the individual up. Words have been used to produce magic, create wars, heal broken dreams, lift up the masses or tear down the few – words are quite possibly the most understood and yet misunderstood elements in modern life. However, the power and pain of words is useless, unless they can produce the objective positive or negative effect. Herein lies the problem, what effect is most desirable, negative or positive. More actions must be given to the impact and use of words in the process of helping deal with America’s number one problem.

The plight of each individual, whether directly or indirectly affected by drugs in our society is dependent on the use of words. Those persons need to deal with the reality of shattered lives, hopeless dreams, broken visions and a lost sense of reality. I know that the problem is one with no easy answer, not enough solutions and definitely too little

time to deal with in a lifetime. The effects of substance abuse linger for years in the body, the mind and the soul. Persons seriously involved in fighting the problem of drugs in our society must realize it is a fight to the end, one of the constant struggles is with one self and with others. Action is a key I believe, because inaction cannot possibly be a factor in anything but defeat and passivity. My life, I know, has been filled with action—whether it was considered good or bad. The reality of life is not complete until the end of life, as we know it in this world. Often times I wonder if this action I think about is the fact of our purpose in life, because it certainly appears that some people don't understand action as a means for end in itself.

Individuals in various states of reality, whether on drugs or dealing with problems must address themselves from time to time as it relates to their own problems? Sometimes the force of our actions makes us respond in negative or positive ways. Drugs and alcohol abuse are brought on by actions, often times of others, not knowing the full effect of their deeds. I can't compare the past with the present, because there seems to be an unequal departure from reality. In other words, the actions don't explain the entire process; one that I can only say was in the hand of God. Yes, my only words can best describe this action, as an act of God – the only God I am knowledgeable about from my past, my studies and my present existence.

Explanations for some actions cannot be measured by the full use of simple and plain words; there is a dimension that cannot be explained in mere words. My words have actions, words such as Grace, Prayer, Faith, Love, Hope and Spirit. These are the words which give meaning and purpose to my world, even when I didn't understand it, a world of confusion, pain, anger, hurt and fear. I know the drug abuser doesn't fully understand those words, and I know individuals involved with substance abusers often use the wrong words for action. I often talk of the Band Professor, the Sunday School Teacher, the Old Preacher—the one thing I remember in my mind is their words—no the action in those words, words which lead to action.

The final impact of “Hope After Dope” is not a personal story, but a message of real action, words with power and effectiveness. There are certain points to explain the position and place of an individual in life. Hope After Dope continues as a daily explanation of what a person's life can be in the future with a view of the past. Individuals need to examine themselves in their daily struggle to overcome the problems of their lives, a challenge for each individual is to focus on the future.

America can be the most important example of what a great country should be in speech and action; however, we have fallen to depths extremely low in the international community. The problems of drug abuse have affected every major element of our society—education, the justice system, health care and business. What is even more evident in our system is the fact that the most important institution in America, the Church, is not responsive to its major ills and need for a spiritual conversion. The only salvation for millions already affected by drug and alcohol abuse is to become a spiritual agent for change.

The potential to use millions that have been affected by abuse, in solving the problem of abuse is the only solution. Realizing that there are not enough professionals or religious leaders aware of the problem has made me rethink the real issue, one which addresses each and every individual affected by the problem. Basic to the problem of financial obligations, is the reality of localized areas in the community for ongoing counsel and treatment. In this regard I believe the Church can serve as a major treatment. In this regard I believe the Church can serve as a major support and institution for identification, treatment, rehabilitation and counseling of alcohol and drug abusers.

Every family, individual and group has a direct or indirect relationship with the church. Leaders therefore need to become more concerned with the quality and not quantity of its members and community. Church represents community to many persons, more as the identifiable institution where values, beliefs and attitudes are formed in the community. We cannot let persons within the community become victims of alcohol and drug abuse, and then have no means by which to reintroduce them back into the community. Our role and responsibility is clear as a Church institution, we are to guide persons back into the mainstream of society and into our culture.

Primary is the fact that our community cannot be dependent upon persons that have no responsibility to self. Reality and responsibility are important factors in the training and education of abusers, regardless of personal educational background or status. Substance abuse has the tendency to recreate values for individuals, and in fact it has done so to the entire community. This dangerous reality has permeated the fabric of our society, more so into our institutions—the Church included. Each and every institution has a responsibility to invoke itself in the remaking of our communities, in many instances that is all we have in the community—a Church.

Jesus gave us an example of community, not in the location or physical space, but in the people and individual lives of its members. The greatest impact was on the lives of individuals in the community and how they in turn were changed for the total community. Noticeable is the fact that he impacted a single individual or groups of individuals in the community. There are several examples of Jesus impacting individuals—Lazarus, the woman at the well, the blind man, the lame man, the woman with a blood problem. Countless Bible stories of individuals give reason to believe their impact was felt in future community decisions, it is critical to note the power of many persons in situations beyond their awareness.

Future conditions in America must address a spiritual vacuum in our communities, one that needs to replace the secular concepts of mere material existence. The future is dependent on a healthy community, one free of drug abuse and certainly with a control on alcohol consumption and behavior. I know from personal experience there are millions of unknown persons, potential experience there are, millions of unknown persons, potential abusers with no sense of community or objective purpose for the future. Our prayers are not enough. Our words are not enough. The only force we must use must be one of action, one of Hope After Dope.

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The 2010 Hope After Project ©

The “2010 Hope After Project” begins my final decade of Real Urban Ministry, Inc. leadership and the process of building a stronger institution to carry its idea forward. Partnerships will be extended to individuals, families, groups, organizations, institutions, leaders and others that support the “Real Urban Ministry, Inc.” 2010 Hope After Project. Real Urban Ministry, Inc. began in 1989 incorporated in 1992 as a non-profit organization, it was:

“organized exclusively for providing charitable services or facilities to other organizations, including discussion groups, forums, panels, lectures, missionary activities, instruction and training. All activities are pursuant to the elimination of prejudice and discrimination, while working to create a multicultural society”.

The 2010 Hope After Project is significantly going to address substance abuse and mental illness as key aspects of support to provide technical assistance, training, consultant services, training and a variety of methods for accomplishment of Real Urban Ministry, Inc. goals. The opportunity to offer the dynamic and inspirational book on-line will reach a new audience of individuals, communities and leaders in need of best practices and evidenced based information. Vietnam-era veteran, heroin addict, attempted suicide twice, PTSD, early education problems, divorced, buried his parents, re-married, broadcaster, college professor, dynamic speaker, 5 academic degrees, national certified counselor, gospel preacher, known everywhere for saying “It’s A Blessing”.

A True Story Hope After Dope: From A Drug Addict To A Doctor

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If you would like more information, find out how to become a partner, make a contribution, underwrite specific events or comment. Please feel free to contact Real Urban Ministry, Inc. or link to facebook or myspace. Thank you in advance and don’t forget there is always, “Hope After....”.