



# Alex's Story

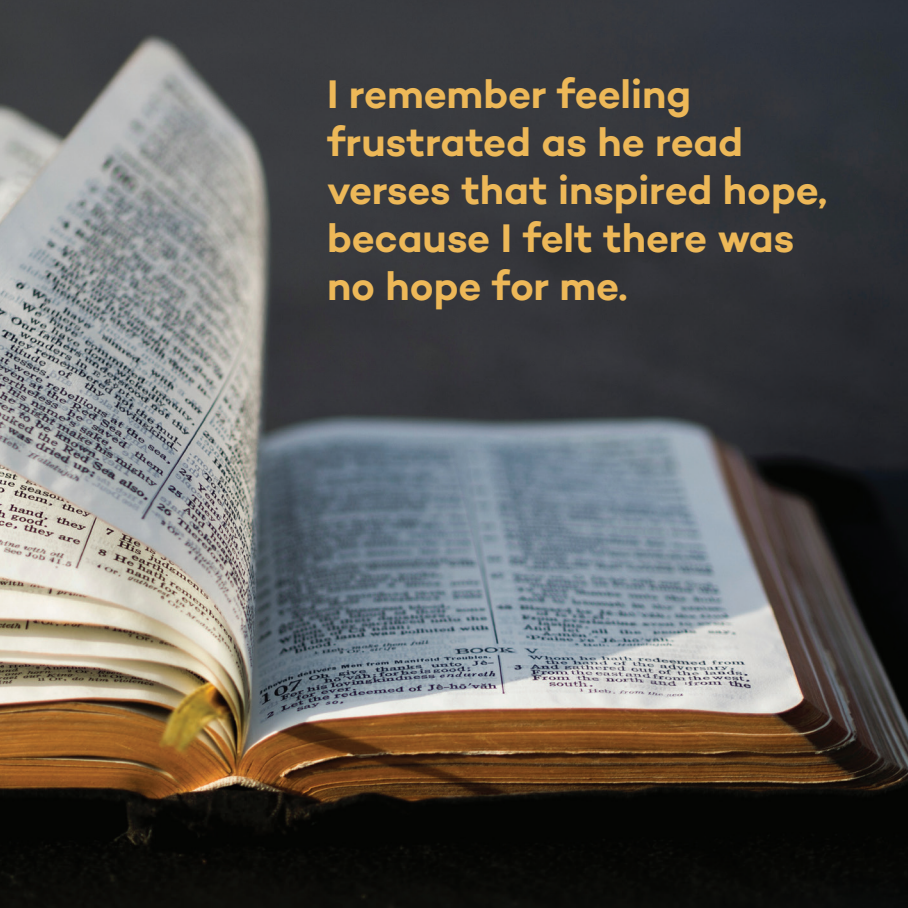


I was born in South East London and I have three brothers and two sisters. My mum and dad separated when I was four years old and we all grew up in a single parent family. My mum was a good mother who cared for us and she worked at establishing a strong family bond. The neighbourhood in which we lived was fairly rough, and so to survive everyone needed to be fairly tough as well. Unfortunately for me, I learned from an early age to put on a tough act, and this performance prompted me to make some bad choices, especially around the age of thirteen.

The local shopping centre was a place where I would have hung out and where I got to know some lads who were drinking. That got me started. At first I got sick from the alcohol, but after a while I got used to it, and the only side

effect I suffered was a hangover. My drinking started to affect my school life and my education never really recovered. After a while I started to sniff solvents, mainly glue, and it was my daily use of solvents that really established my addiction to drugs.

It was around this time I started getting into trouble with the police, and by the age of fourteen I had a criminal record. Although it would appear my life was already starting to go downhill, to me it felt as though things were going quite well, because I was gaining a reputation amongst my peers. When I look back on those days now I can see that drugs already had a grip on me, but at the time, I had no idea I was an addict, and I had no idea what was in store for me. As I got older I started to use other substances until eventually I ended up on heroin.



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A couple of times I tried to curb my drug use but it only ended in failure, and that failure led me to an acceptance that addiction, and eventually death, was all I had to look forward to. In those days there was regular news of someone I knew having overdosed, and so it became an accepted part of the lifestyle. I believed that either drugs were going to kill me, or I would end up murdered because of some criminal activity. I just accepted this was the way it was! My drug use was not conducive to holding down a nine-to-five job, and as my habit needed funding, I became more and more involved in criminal activity. I had numerous court appearances and a number of short (thankfully) prison sentences.

The first time I went to prison I came to my senses after a couple of days, and I remember being very troubled by the things I had

done wrong. I felt bad for anyone whom I had hurt in the process of my lifestyle. I wanted to be normal, but I knew that was not going to happen for me, and sure enough, as soon as I was released I was straight back to my destructive lifestyle.

However, at the age of twenty-six a series of events occurred that changed my life forever. First, a close friend of mine overdosed and died. Next, I was sent to prison and it was while I was in prison on this occasion that I was first offered a Bible by a librarian. After refusing the Bible I told my cell mate and he actually went and got one. Over the next few weeks he would read verses from the Bible aloud to me, in particular verses from the Psalms. I found this a little frustrating, but because he owned a fairly large amount of marijuana, and because I was stuck in the cell with him, I endured. I remember

feeling frustrated as he read verses that inspired hope, because I felt there was no hope for me.

After my release I was homeless, so it was back to friends' sofas until eventually I found a hostel. Whilst in the hostel the lad in the next bed started telling me that he went to church during the day, while the rest of us were out doing what we needed to do to get drugs. I asked him what he did all day in the church, and he told me he prayed and read the Bible and did odd jobs around the building. Although I felt churches had their uses, like giving people like me money, free food and clothing, the idea of prayer and Bible study seemed very strange and boring.

Eventually I was thrown out of the hostel for threatening a member of staff, and I began to lodge in an underground car park. One evening whilst asleep I was woken by a

noise and, as I opened my eyes, I was confronted by a luminous cross moving straight towards me. I was a little afraid, until I realised it was attached to a van full of do-gooders and free food! I took some food and had some tea, and they began to talk about Jesus. Although I found it annoying, I couldn't help but notice how happy they all seemed, and I was reminded how my former hostel friend and my cell mate seemed happy when they talked about Jesus. It stood out because I was so miserable and bound.

The next day I found myself outside Kings Cross station trying to raise money, when some more Christians approached me and invited me to church. At first I refused but then, on the promise of food and thinking of the possibility of tapping some well-meaning Christians for a few bob, I accepted. When I walked into

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the building I became a little afraid and felt like walking out, had it not been for one of the Christians behind me – I didn't want him to know I was fearful. All around me everybody seemed happy.

The pastor introduced himself and told me that they had a home that I could go to, a home where I could get my life together with the help of Jesus. He introduced me to some men from the home who were in the church. They began to tell me how "Jesus had set them free". I remember thinking they

were all crazy, but yet something was keeping me there. My attempts at tapping people for some money were unsuccessful, so I decided to accept their offer and stayed in the home. I was thinking that when they were all asleep I could rob them of what I could and leave. However, at the home that evening I actually enjoyed myself. When it was time for bed, and time to put my plan into action, I went upstairs and, the next thing I knew it was six am and I was being called for prayer.



I started to worry about my withdrawal symptoms. Even though I didn't feel sick, I feared withdrawal would soon kick in and I had missed my chance to steal money for a cure. At prayers, after a short Bible reading everybody got on their knees and put their heads on a chair or settee and began to pray. The pastor knelt next to me and I began to listen to what he was saying. I realised he was actually talking to someone and I suddenly became overwhelmed with the desire to know the person he was talking to.

So, for the first time in my life, I prayed. I said "If there is someone up there who this pastor is praying to, I want to know who you are."

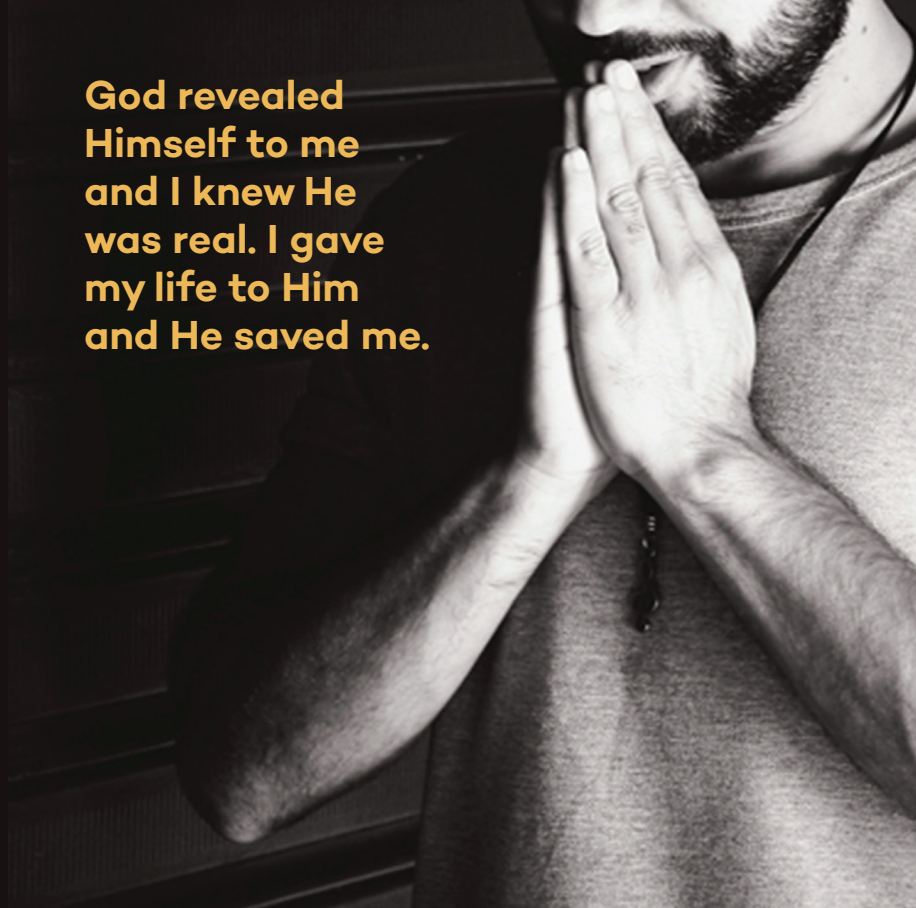
At that moment my life changed forever. God revealed Himself to me and I knew He was real. I gave my life to Him and He saved me.

All of a sudden I was filled with hope and joy and I never did get sick from withdrawals.

Whilst in the home I was taught the word of God, and I learned that God had a plan and purpose for my life. After I left the home I continued to serve in the church, and that's where I met my wife Leah, who is from the Republic of Ireland. We now have two children who are approaching the final stages of their education.

In 2003 I began to work with the Stauros Foundation as a volunteer and became full time in 2004. At that time I worked in The Haven, our residential centre in the Republic of Ireland, until its closure in 2009. Since then I have worked in the community and my work takes me all over the country. It is a true privilege to be able to tell people who feel hopeless, like

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I once did, that there is hope in Christ, and then to accompany them on their journey to a fruitful, hope-filled life of victory.

If you are praying for me or Leah, please pray for God's continual leading in all we do whether it is our work with Stauros or in our personal lives.

If you have been touched by reading this testimony, and wish to know Christ, whom Alex has been speaking of, you may begin by praying a prayer such as this,

*Dear Lord, I feel as though my life is without hope: I have come to accept that my future holds no joy for me. I feel guilty at the thought of the life I have lived so far, and I feel hopeless.*

*But I believe Jesus holds the key to my life. I believe that he can set me free from my addiction and from my sin. I want to know Jesus for real. So Lord please reveal yourself to me. Please forgive me for all the sins I have committed and for the times I have done things that break your rules. Please cleanse my heart from all my sin and save my life. Help me to come alive in Christ and please send the Spirit of Christ to live in me from this moment on and for the rest of my life.*

*Lord, I know you have something better for my life; you have a plan and purpose for me. I surrender myself to you now and ask you to take control of my life. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen*





**Want to know more?**  
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