





It is no secret...

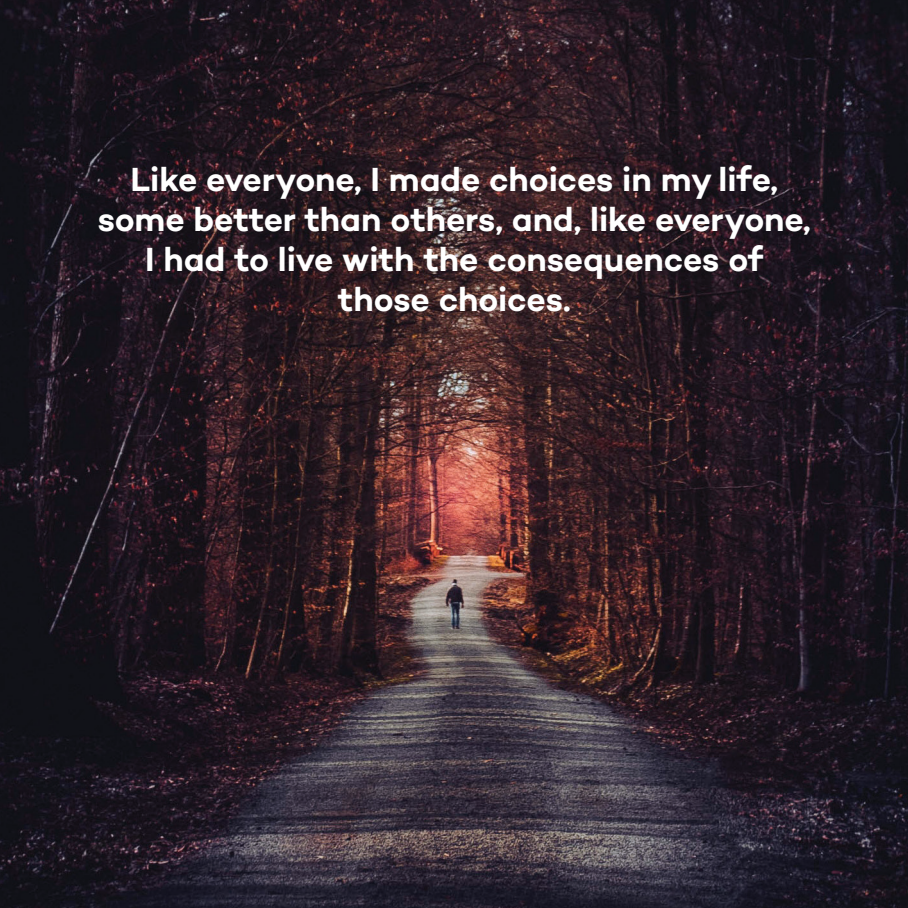
There is an old hymn called "It is no secret", and in the chorus it states, "It is no secret what God can do, what he has done for others he will do for you." This very well known hymn has a great message, but it was a message I found hard to believe. I had no difficulty accepting that God could change a person's life; I had seen that happen for others. My wife became a Christian in 1989, and I had witnessed a complete change in her life. What I had difficulty with was believing God would do it for me. Could God really do for me what he had done for her?

Like everyone, I made choices in my life, some better than others, and, like everyone, I had to live with the consequences of those choices. The best choice I ever made in my life was to ask Jesus Christ into my life as my personal Saviour, a decision I made in March 2001. At that time I was in a Christian residential unit for people with addictions, run by the Stauros Foundation, based in Armagh. It was while I was there as a resident that I came to know the Lord as my personal Saviour.

But let's rewind the clock to find out how I ended up in a Christian residential centre for people with addictions. What was I doing there? The truth is that before I was saved I had made a lot of wrong choices in my life, and it was wrong choices that led me into a lifestyle of self-destruction. My parents separated when I was

twelve years old, which left my mum to look after four children on her own, my brother, two sisters and I. My mum had to take a job working in a local fish-and-chip shop to keep the family together. She worked twelve-hour shifts from noon to midnight. This meant that I was able to stay out late at night, and, as long as I was home and in bed for 12, my mum was none the wiser! However, staying out so late meant that the people I was with were a lot older than me; kids my age should have been home and in their beds long before midnight. It was at the early age of twelve years that I did something for the first time;

I had my first drink of alcohol from a bottle of cider. Although I didn't really like the taste of it, unfortunately I did like the effect it had on me. Drinking helped me feel confident, it removed any

A photograph of a person walking away from the camera down a dirt path in a forest. The trees are covered in autumn foliage, with many leaves in shades of red, orange, and yellow. The path is dappled with sunlight and shadows. The person is a small figure in the distance, wearing a dark jacket and light-colored pants.

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I had just started secondary school, but to be honest I wasn't a lover of school. All I ever wanted to do was play football and I didn't need to be educated to kick a ball. Football was something that I was good at, and it was a world I could hide in, I could hide away from all that was happening in my life.

I met my wife to be, Pamela, in the pub I drank in known locally as the 'The Farmers Rest.' Pamela was 15 years old, and I was 17 years old. Within two years we were married, and in another two years we had two beautiful children, a boy and a girl.

People talk about how much their lives change when children come along. All that changed in our lives was that instead of going out to drink, we just stayed at home. Before long our home was known as a party house; there were many mornings when we would wake up not knowing who had stayed over, or who was still there. In fact, many mornings we did not even know who had been there the night before. To our immense shame we were not being the good parents we should have been.

There are situations that occurred through my drinking and gambling years that I could recall here, unsavoury events when I got myself into situations and places I should never have been. During those dark days there were some 'not-so-very-nice' people I got involved with, but that is not what I want to talk about. The only reason I have mentioned the

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details I already have is to give God the glory for his hand of protection upon my life even then.

I remember the night my wife Pamela told me she had become a Christian. To my shame, as I pushed Pamela away, I remember saying, "If that is what you want that is ok, but keep me out of it." From that moment things started to change in our marriage. Pamela stopped drinking, and so our house was no longer available for parties. Instead of drinking at home I would go elsewhere, sometimes to my mum's house, or sometimes to my brother's or my sister's homes. There were times I would have

been drinking for whole weekends, going out Friday and not home until Saturday or even Sunday.

For twelve years I lived my life like this. Obviously our marriage was getting shaky to say the least. We seemed to be arguing a lot, or sometimes not speaking at all. We really had nothing in common, Pamela had God and her Christian friends, and all I had was work and my drinking friends. In March 2001 I realized I couldn't keep living the way I was, I just couldn't keep putting Pamela and my kids through the things I was putting them through.

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It was at this point I left home. Talking with Pamela now we laugh and remember things a little different! Pamela would say she asked me to leave, but I would say I choose to leave! Really it doesn't matter, what mattered was I wasn't at home with my

wife and kids. There were nights when I would walk the streets arguing with God, and telling him that I was ok, explaining to him that there were other people who needed help but not me. At that time the things I was doing were no longer satisfying me, or meeting

my needs. I wasn't enjoying drinking or gambling, and the life I was living was just an existence, just existing from day to day.

It was then I realized I really did need help, but more importantly, I knew I needed God's help. I recalled how I had seen God change my wife's life, and the lives of many of her friends. God was changing and freeing many of our friends from their old lives of sin. That was when I plucked up the courage and admitted I had a problem, and needed help.

That is why the hymn I mentioned at the beginning was so important to me. It was no secret what God was doing for others, but could he do the same for me? The time had come to find out, and it was on a Monday night, on the 11 March 2001. On that night I finally realized that my drink and

gambling problems were not the real issues destroying my life: the real problem was my sin and that that is what God needed to deal with. At that point I got on my knees and repented of my sins, and I asked God into my life as my personal Saviour. No more running away.

I had spent 40 years of my life going in the wrong direction before I met Jesus, and then after I met Jesus I started going in the right direction. The day God saved me He also gave me a burden for other people and, in particular, a burden for people it seemed life had given up on, people like me, before God came and give me hope and a life worth living.



I now have the privilege to work in full time ministry for the Stauros Foundation. Amazingly I became the manager of the residential unit for addicts for ten years, the very same place I first met with God. Stauros no longer runs the residential unit in Armagh and has moved to new premises, and now I work in the community. I feel only God could have done that; only God can change a life and give people a life worth living.

The message I have is that for every person who has ever failed in their past, there is a forgiveness that forgets! When God forgives sin, God forgets that sin. God doesn't hold anything back when we come back to Him, or come to Him for the first time. No matter what is in the past. Do you want that? Do you want a life changing experience? If you do then come to the one who can give it to you. Remember, "It is no secret what

God can do, what he has done for others he can do for you."

If you have been touched by reading this testimony, and wish to know Christ, whom Roy 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 made some very poor choices in my life. My family relationships are breaking down to a point from which I am afraid can never recover. I know I have hurt those closest to me, even my own children. I feel guilty at the thought of the life I have lived so far, and I feel hopeless. I wonder if you can do for me what you have done for Roy?

I know I need help, not just any help, Lord, I need your help. Sin is destroying my life, and has been destroying it for as long as I can remember. 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. I repent of it all. Help me to come alive in Christ, and please send your Holy Spirit, 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





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