

Lost for 40 Years

By Gustavo Miller

I have spent the last 24 years amending the first 40 years of my life!

I have been struggling with pain and substance abuse since -let me see, oh yeah, as far as I can remember.

Normally in testimonies start talking about yourself, about the person who is giving testimony, but I won't, I will start telling you a couple stories and then I tell you about how I found recovery.

Last year, I have lost a dear friend due to addictions (and I am sure it won't be the last). His inability to stop struggling with life, the crazy thought that we can control and take advantage of every person God put in his path. Unable to see that Jesus has already given us a way out. A way to remove us from the shipwreck we had become, which entangled us, held down by a noose around our necks that kept tightening and tightening.

Today, he struggles no more, but the ripple effects have caused a catastrophic damage to people who loved him, some have been left behind unable to understand why, left behind without understanding and feeling that it was their fault. Some other family members, not able to move forward, to move on in life, knowing that drugs have snatched their father, brother, husband, and friend away. All they want; is their son back, their brother back, their daddy back. But he isn't coming back anymore. The lord has taking him home. He struggles no more; he is

free as Jesus promised all of us, believers. He was a believer, but never was able to stop sinning. John 10:10 says *“The thief (that is the devil – the prince of this world) comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full”*.

Another friend, not long ago, relapsed quicker than he could settle into his new room, within days he found himself out on the street (again). This is not a young individual anymore. This is what he said to me: “nobody cares for me, no one wants to give me a chance, I might as well kill myself”. This kind of attitude is normal when a person struggles with drugs abuse or alcohol dependency. Always trying to manipulate people’s feelings, pointing fingers at everyone but it all on himself. He is unable to see what is happening, what he is doing.

I know that because I was there once; that was my story too.

Guilt-tripping, is a natural behavior for an addict. Another one is, Denial. This is a hurtful, powerful and aggressive mental position, a terrible state of mind and feeling. According to medicine, Denial, is considered a defense mechanism, one that is very difficult to recognize and break down. Based on my experience I would say it is an avoiding mechanism; denying is easier than accepting, because, accepting would mean a lot of work, a lot of shame.

Our denial and other negative feelings are like the lava in a volcano pit, bubbling out of control, hot, dangerous and threatening to burst anytime. And when it erupts anything in its way will get burnt. Yeah, that is an addict, that was me.

But it could be calmed down. As quickly as we relieve ourselves from heartburn. One pill, and heartburn is gone. Unfortunately, there is no pill for denial. How is the stronghold of denial destroyed then? Only when the person has a revealing moment, call it a celestial moment, a Jesus moment or intervention from heaven, whatever you want to call it, is when that the person can start its way to recovery.

I don’t want to focus on what others do and don’t do. I want to focus on me; I like to review what I had to do to stay afloat. Believe me it was not easy.

There is only ONE reason why I continue in the fight, one reason why I still have hope, one reason I find the strengths every day and that is; **GOD**. In 1 John 1:8-9 we read this *“If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our*

sins and purify us from all unrighteousness". Let's get this straight, I am no saint, the bible calls me saint, but the trail of my life is filled with pain, drugs and destruction.

My road to Damascus started in Toronto -maybe I should call it the road to de-masked-us. Well in reality things started in Peru, south America, where I became a cocaine addict at a very short age. But that is a story for another article, so I want to focus on how I was redeemed, so let's come back to Toronto. At that time things were blurry; I was completely out of control, incapable of stopping. My life was very messed up, very messy, what am I talking about I was an absolute mess. I didn't know which way was up or down. I could not recognize myself in the mirror, and could not come to terms that I was the only one responsible for what I had done. I had destroyed my life and also the life of my children.

I had no hope -so I thought, until I heard about Jesus. I was familiar with the story but had never realize that I could have a relationship with him, I had done terrible things in the past and was not sure he would forgive me. John 3:15-17 *"That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved."*

All I had to do is repent, accept that I had done those things and surrender to him. 1 John 1:9 *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness"*. A clean state, a new start.

The process was not easy, and I say that because I forget the feel the shame first. See, the shame is what brings us to the cross. If we cannot feel shame then we are in trouble, we are in danger; we might be "repenting by convenience" and that does not work. I know that because I have experienced it.

I needed help, I could not do it on my own. I registered myself into the Toronto East Health Network on Danforth Av. I hated the place because they highlighted my shortcomings, they called me up on my behavior. You see, you cannot tell those things to an addict because they don't have a problem! LOL. In that place they hook me up first with a boot camp, and thing did not work there. Then they sent me to the Salvation Army in Ottawa -the Anchorage Withdraw Management, which I thought on first impression – it was a joke.

Taxi driver dropped me off and there were people smoking crack, drinking and other things. I thought to myself, I will never make it here; that was 24 years ago. Something clicked in, and I felt God's call to work the program. It was a Christian-based treatment center. So, I did work the program and I graduated 6 months later. I was free! So, I thought. I had to deal with so much more, now on my own.

As time passed by, I realized I had to get rid of a lot of things. My way of thinking, blaming others, judging others, my tongue -nothing good came out of my mouth. That was probably the hardest thing to change. Out of 10 words, at least 3 were the "F" word. Most importantly, I had to surrender completely to the will of God, allow me to go through these rough changes.

Going back to the tongue. Oh, brothers and sisters, that one was by far the hardest one I had to change.

The bible says in Ephesians 4:29-32 *"Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you"*

Anger. During my first year of my recovery, I enrolled into a program at the Royal Ottawa Hospital; this was to comply to CAS request so I can see my children. During my program I volunteer for a Phallometric test -this test screwed me up when I was using cocaine, reason why CAS was NOT allowing me to see my children. Have you ever heard the expression, Sex, Drugs and Alcohol?

According to the internet this test is "testing using the penile plethysmograph (also known as PPG) is designed to measure sexual response to visual and auditory non-pornographic stimuli". LOL! "Non-pornographic stimuli", well let me tell you, that is a lie, because they DO show you pornography scenes (men with women, men with men, and women with women) and then mix it with other images. In other words, this is the most messed up test I have ever gone through. And they call this "a study", that is no study, that is a trap.

Anyways, after I had achieved 3 years clean, I did go voluntarily through the test (twice) to prove CAS that there was nothing wrong with me. They bounced the results, my doctor at that time was outraged that CAS had nulled out his prognosis. Fighting against CAS is useless, you will never win, but it is a necessary evil.

See, drugs can get you in all kinds of problems, some of them are embarrassing, humiliating and diminishing. You can get locked up because of the consequences. But this is to be expected; the bible says very clear, the wages of sin is death. Death not necessary means you die, you can die spiritually, you can become numb to your family, you can lose your mind, or you can lose your freedom.

But God does not want that from us.

God expects from us, a transformation, since he has given us a new body a new mind. We still have to live in the body that has been given to us, but this time living to please God. *“Anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!”* 2 Corinthians 5:17. It is like, a new person living in the same body that took me to jail, the one who abused drugs and destroyed the live of my children, yes, sharing the same body. Psychology would call this a double personality. But it is not, it is just accepting what I have done and what I am capable of doing. I can fall into addictions again, easier than what it took me to come out.

In 24 years, I have learned to put down the other me. The old Gus still in me but he does not control me anymore, God is in control. I have learned to fight the desires of the flesh, to see women with love and respect, to love my wife unconditionally. There is a Spanish song from Santiago Benavides that says “if I speak words of God but I don’t have love, it is useless”. That is so true, we need to be kind to people, love our children and wife, we need to help the one who need help.

I have been a member of New Connections Ministries for the time that I have clean, 24 years. I am a registered volunteer at the Salvation Army – Anchorage Withdrawal program, yes, the one I thought it was a joke. I am a member of Baptist Church Efata in Lima, Peru.

Every achievement I have done belongs to the Lord, to him be all the Glory for ever and ever, amen.