



## Henderson, TX

I was raised Baptist and both of my parents were believers, but we never attended church. When I was 13, my father passed away, and took his final breath in my arms. I became very wayward, lost, and angry. I started filling the void with drugs, alcohol, sex, and a lot of violence. I had my daughter by 16, and it slowed me down and made me appreciate the good things in life. Having become estranged from the rest of my family since my father's death, I had become emancipated and was considered a legal adult. I believed in something, but wasn't sure truly what I believed. By 17, my son was on the way. The God that was responsible for blessing me with a family was a good one, but I still considered myself not religious but a spiritualist. By about 2013, my son was around eight and my daughter was ten. I had finally just started rebuilding my relationship with my family. Then my little brother was killed in a motorcycle accident. I became lost and angry again. My kid's mother and I were separated, and she was engaged to be remarried. I decided to move in with my mother to look after her. She was not handling the loss of my brother at all. I was also lost and broken, but being around for my mother kept me afloat. Sometime in 2014, I met a woman. My mother and her had a nice relationship and they started reading from a devotional called Jesus Calling. And

my mother started trying to get me to watch services on Sundays with her. But I wasn't ready and was still angry. But I was happy for her. Soon Lisa, the woman I was with, and my mother, were both trying to get me to receive Christ. But I refused despite their best attempts. After some time passed, Lisa and I decided to take our relationship to the next level, and we moved in together. A week after I moved out of my mother's house and into my new family's home, my mother took her own life. She shot herself in 2015. About a week later, I found myself sitting in county jail with my first felony ever, on my way to prison. While sitting in jail, I told my story and they told me that I needed to write a letter saying goodbye to my mother. I was very reluctant at first, but I finally caved, not sure what put it on my heart, at least not in that moment I didn't. But I sat down and probably wrote the hardest letter of my life. I broke down, sobbing and weeping in a whole dorm full of men. All I knew is, I wanted her to be OK. And then I found myself praying that God was going to look after her and not only her but my little brother and my father as well. I asked God to please be with me because I was so lost and broken and hurt, and in that moment, a warmth filled me that I can only explain as that feeling you get when you're embraced by someone you deeply love. And it was in that moment I knew He had

just told me yes to everything. I cried some more, but that was the day that God started changing my heart. I got out of jail and started attending church. Life was very much a roller coaster. When I was living right, things weren't just good, they were amazing. But when things were bad, they got downright awful. And the more time that passed the more I came to rely on alcohol and less on Him. Before I knew it, I had pushed away everyone that I loved. In August 2022 I was arrested yet again. But on the verge of suicide myself, it was my saving grace. From the day that I walked into that jail till now, God has been doing crazy, wonderful things in my life. I have been locked up for almost 3 years this time. My children have grown into adults in my absence, and Lisa has moved on. But I am more free now than ever before in my life. As I said earlier, I got to work for God here under the unit chaplain, at East Texas treatment facility. I am also a unit mentor, and I go and speak to large groups of men in attempts to break the cycle. Looking back, I see God at work in my mother a lot longer than just the last couple of years, but more over the last six months, than the last 20 years. Let me rephrase that, I think what finally changed was my heart. And in that, God was finally able to heal my pain. I don't just want to live for Him, I want to live to serve Him. That being said, my next steps are His.

**M.R.**

## **St. Petersburg, Florida**

### **The Cowboy In Me**

It was January 18, 2008, and it was a cold day when Father God and Jesus Christ found a broken-down cowboy gone astray, full of sin. He lassoed me from the white stallion, saying, "Partner I am here, I have heard you calling for help. Just open the door of your heart and invite me in, allow me to lead you onto the right trail and the way you are to live your life. I will wash away all your sins and never remember any of them. I know your life is full of pain, but if you come to me now, there will be no more sorrow, no more pain, and no more tears or hurt. So partner, gather your bed, saddle up your horse and let's mosey on". As we rode the dusty trail that God has planned for my life, we stopped, and God turned to me, leaning on his saddle horn saying, "If you ever go astray, just know that I will lasso you and pull you back to my side". We put the spurs on our horses and began a new ride. We came upon a stream and stopped to rest our horses. God opened his saddle bag and pulled a cloth-wrapped booklet. He handed it to me, and I laid it on my lap and begin to unwrap it. I found that it was a Holy Bible. God told me, "That Bible is a map to the way I want you to live your life". I turned and thanked Him. God told me to remember that His words are the bit, bridle, and reins of life. Keep His words close to your heart.

As everything fades to black, I can still hear the gnawing of a horse, and as I open my eyes and look around, I realize I am sitting in the barn on a bale of hay and am in front of my horse Stardust's stall. I look down

and on my lap is laying the holy Bible open to Psalm 23. I know my life is in for a change and that God and Jesus are going to be there to help along the way. **P.H.**

### **Edgefield, SC**

My name is Tommy Taylor. I have been locked up since 2017. I am locked up on drug charges. I got a 15-year sentence and after getting locked up, I did a sit-back-and-reflect moment on my life and about me coming to jail. I thought long and hard. I realized how many warning signs I had been given back to back. Warning signs to not do this, and stop doing that! And after realizing that I had rejected every warning sign the Lord gave me, it made me realize two things. First, I deserved to be in jail and second, it made me realize that this Jesus thing is for real. Who else could give you warning signs back-to-back? That's the still small voice, or we could call it the Holy Spirit. Realizing that while I was doing wrong, Jesus was still there, He did not leave me or forsake me. And that is what put me on this path to see God and His kingdom. I had to lose everything I had to wake up. I ended up all alone during this jail process. And what appeared to be a curse has turned into a life blessing. Accepting Jesus as my Lord and Savior has taught me many life lessons. I am now doing Yale Bible Institute and trying to work on a degree. **T.T.**

### **Milton, FL**

My name is Wayne E. Brown Junior, and I have been in prison for about 40 years now. I was a Wiccan as well as a Satanist. However, I was led to Christ by a former pastor

named Dennis Lofner. I understood that God calls and draws us, and that it's not us that has anything to do with the regeneration of a lost person. After five years of hard-core college, I am now doing a ministry at Santa Rosa Correctional Institute. I am blessed to be able to do God's commission. I have four life sentences, however, God opens doors that we can't, and closes doors too. My obedience is the key to receiving God's blessing in my life. My testimony goes deeper than this letter, however, that is for another day. **W.B.**

### **Psalm 100:3-5**

<sup>3</sup> Know ye that the Lord he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

<sup>4</sup> Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name.

<sup>5</sup> For the Lord is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations.

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