



Joe Bowers

Life was good up until age 24. That's when I started selling and using drugs. As a consequence of that, I got divorced after one year of marriage and found myself facing criminal charges for the first time. Life went downhill from there. I started to abuse drugs even more. I was in and out of jails and prisons and drug treatment. Fifteen years of downward spiraling.

In the early years of my incarceration I found Jesus, but that only lasted while I was incarcerated. When I got out I returned to my old lifestyle and I kept getting the same results--in and out of jail. In 2004, while in Eau Claire County Jail, looking at a six year prison sentence, I met Chaplain Tom Herro from Good News Jail Ministry and I gave my life to the Lord. This time I took it seriously. I started to do Bible studies, read the Bible daily, and volunteers visited daily to encourage me. Soon the jail staff started to notice the changes in me. When I got sentenced, I was sent to Mount Zion House, a Christian rehab house in Lake Geneva, WI. My 5 year sentence was stayed pending the outcome of the treatment program. As a result of this program I received a strong spiritual foundation and felt my faith grow. I completed the 6 month program and stayed an additional two years in Lake Geneva because of the strong support and steady job that I had there.

When I left Lake Geneva, I transferred to Dominos in Onalaska. Then I worked full time at Sprint, as well as part time at Dominos. I started to focus on work and not so much on the Lord. I stopped going to church regularly and I got back into the world--Bars, drinking and drugs again. As a result, in September '09 I got in a high speed chase, ended up with a month in jail and lost both jobs. After I got out, I began attending Neighborhood City Church. I was looking at a five year sentence but then the case took six months to settle. All that time I didn't know if I would be free or going back to prison. Instead of focusing on my troubles, I started to focus on God each and every day. When the case settled, I ended up getting two years probation.

I never thought I would be where I am today--coming to Bible studies, volunteering, being hired as building manager. I am trusting God to lead me in the way He wants me to go. God has called me to help others avoid what I went through and He has shown me not to give up on anyone. When I was down, the Lord never gave up on me, and there were people who didn't give up on me either.

Proverbs 3:5-6 is my life verse. "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight."