

My Testimony – A Scary Thought!



I was raised in a home where my mother and father were very religious. My mother was the daughter of a Baptist minister and she insisted that we attend church every Sunday. I was baptized and confirmed in the Lutheran faith, attended a Lutheran High School and College (for a year), but still had no idea of the basic teachings of the Christian faith. It was as if it was taken for granted that these things had been learned in Sunday school or at least sometimes earlier. I knew the stories of the Bible. I even had two favorite characters: Jonathan and Paul. Jonathan, because this is the type of friend I wanted to be and thought that I was to the few friends that I had. Paul, because I could relate to the violent part of his life before his conversion, and I knew that it would also take an act of God to turn me from my wicked ways and destructive attitude. Little did I know, God was already at work in my life. Hello, my name is Edward Brown.

For me, the task of giving my testimony is frightening, because at some point I must address why I'm incarcerated for the rest of my life. I choose to get the ugly out of the way first.

Know me...I was a man without a true identity – drifting from one façade to another to fit in, to ease my fear, or because it was the reputation I had established or acquired.

Know me...A man with an explosive, violent temper, reckless, hotheaded, a time bomb, and on the path of self destruction.

Know me...A man who made wrong decisions, addicted to drugs, alcohol, and mayhem, which culminated in the taking of an innocent life and my incarceration for the rest of my natural life.

There is no way to make these things sound pleasant and the only reason I bring up something so appalling is because they are/were part of me. Please know, that I am not making excuses, I would be the first to say that twenty years ago, I would not have wanted to know me, because the things that I was doing at that time were dreadful to myself, my family and society.

There were times when I tried to come to grips with what I was doing, but I failed miserably. The truth is that deep inside I was hurting. Something was missing in my life which left a void right in the center of my chest. I tried to fill this void with different things – from drugs, alcohol, to women – hoping to ease the pain, but no matter what I tried, the ache remained. I hurt and because I hurt, I wanted others to hurt. This attitude sickened me – causing me to hate myself for lack of self-control and selfishness. If I could only put my finger on what was missing in my life and fill the void I knew that my life would be so much different. The truth of the matter was that at times I could be a very likeable person. I could hold a job and even be a productive member of society, but there were other times where I just didn't care if I lived or died – just stop this ache in my chest. (Notice that I didn't say heart, because at this time in my life, I didn't know if I had a heart.)



Sometimes, I guess for guys like me – who put on a tough exterior, we have to reach rock bottom before we'll stop trying to fix things ourselves. Rock bottom for me was after I shot and killed a man for no good reason...a man that I had never met and who had done nothing against me. I will not blame the influence of drugs and alcohol for my actions, because I had more things wrong with me deep inside. I thought that I was a fairly smart guy, but I didn't know how to fix a problem that I couldn't fully grasp. My incarceration still, didn't change much in my life. I was very angry and still in pain.

I had a meeting with a chaplain at the DuPage County Jail because I wanted to know if I could be forgiven for such a horrible act. I remember the first question that I was asked by him, "Have you ever received Jesus Christ as your personal Savior? I thought he was speaking a foreign language! Did I know that Christ had died for my sins? I knew that He had died on the cross, but I thought that He was killed for being the Son of God. Did I know that God wanted a personal relationship with me? Just wait a minute, give me some scriptures and let me go back to my cell and study them...because this is sounding very different from what I thought I knew. I did read the scriptures, but I really was not ready to follow through because I didn't want to lose control of my life. (In hindsight, how stupid can I really be...I had made a mess of my life, yet I still tried to hold on to it, still trying to be my god...Yes I needed help – I needed a Savior.)

Still it took me several years to really surrender my life to Christ. I have come to learn that I really had nothing to do with this. I fought it with every fiber of my being only to learn that this is what I had been seeking my entire life. That void in my life was the absence of Christ, the longing for God my Creator. I wish that I could tell you that my conversion was some spectacular event, that there was flashing lights, the sound of angels singing, but it was nothing like that. The only think that I can say is that I felt a great sense of peace wash over me and I knew that I had a right relationship with God, because of Jesus Christ.

Things are better now in many ways, but also more difficult because now my desire is to please God. With this different attitude comes the total surrender of self and I find daily that self doesn't die easily. I thank God that I don't have to depend on myself – that I can call on Him in my time of need (which is daily – every minute), and know that He will provide me the grace to see me through. I like myself today, because of the transformation that God has made in my life. I don't recognize my old self, which is a good thing, and even when the old nature does rear its ugly head, the Spirit is quick to convict me and lead me to the path of righteousness.



Please don't think this experience can't be yours. I firmly believe that God can transform the most evil, stubborn heart...because He has transformed me. Praise the Lord!

Relinquishing Control to Christ, Eddie