

## **Monty's Story of Experience, Strength and Hope**

*(What it was like, what happened and what it's like today)*

Greetings Family and Friends! My name is Monty Meyer, I am a recovered alcoholic, and that is to say I have recovered from a seemingly hopeless state of mind and body through a renewed spirit due to the power and grace of a loving God.

When I was in 8<sup>th</sup> grade I took my first drink of alcohol. It was a giant mug filled to the brim with Christian Brother's brandy. I figured it was made by a bunch of Christian brothers so it couldn't be all bad. Boy was I ever in for a surprise. Not only was it "not bad" (in my perception) but it was the glory land. I had discovered the magic elixir, the Holy Grail that would lead me to freedom from being picked on at school and feeling like the odd boy out. What alcohol would do for me in the next few years was nothing short of a miracle. What it would do to me from the very first drink was not known for many years to come. I had never even taken a sip of booze until that day, but I drank it down in one big swallow and then poured another mug and then another. I was on top of the world. For the next two hours I would find myself talking with my parents about the wonders of life and philosophies of man. I had become a genius. Keeping a safe distance from Mom and Dad as not to give away my intoxication, we chatted for what seemed only a few minutes but turned out to be much longer, however, our discussion was cut short as I had to get ready for the school dance, and let me tell you, I was spectacular at that dance.

During my years in Junior High and High School living in Petaluma California, I had become quite the accomplished artist, musician and social animal. I was gaining recognition right and left; even within the physical achievement department. Though I had always been a heavy kid I found myself so driven to convince people to accept me that I won the admiration of many by completing 3,043 sit-ups in a row; a task which took all day to complete for the soul purpose of getting other kids to like me. I never was any good at sports but endurance was something that was wrapped around my little finger. In fact, endurance almost killed me. I think it allowed me to drink so much more than many of my friends.

While in High School, I earned the coveted Eagle Scout Award, received the Vigil Honor Award in the Order of the Arrow; I even became a student/teacher before graduating High School. I had traveled to Japan when I was 16 with the Boys Scout of America and was introduced to rice wine. With so many friends, why was I so addicted to acceptance? Why was I always trying to get people to like me when all the while they already did?

Though my High School days were filled with accomplishments and a great deal of joy, they were also accompanied by sexual abuse brought on by older boys that proceeded to rape me and many times beat the living Hell out of me on my way home from school. It was a deep dark secret that belonged to only me and my abusers, but it soon became an escape as I would welcome the abuse. For some reason it seemed to fill a void in my life. It felt like acceptance but it was the great deception that would almost kill me on several occasions. Once I was able to be freed by my abusers and the sexual prison I was in, I then had to find a way to deal with my shame. Welcome once more to the bottle. It became my solution. I could hide behind the amber colored glass and burying myself in false pride through the consumption of brandy. I stayed drunk for several years.

One day, while driving home drunk from Boonville; a little town in the Northern California redwoods, I flipped my VW bug and ended up in a hospital in Santa Rosa California. The car was flattened as it rolled three times before it came to a rest against the middle pillar of an overpass that was part of the freeway exit to the California Highway Patrol office. I vowed that I would never drink again and began what I thought was a spiritual search for my truth. It wasn't but two weeks when I applied to

attend a little Bible school called San Jose Bible College, now William Jessup University in Sacramento, CA. I was accepted into college and began a course of study to learn about God and to become a minister so I could help others. Something I thought would solve all my issues. The truth is, I stayed sober for one year and began drinking all the way through college. I paid for my alcohol by driving cab, flipping burgers, tossing pizzas and working as a hotel clerk for the local Best Western Hotel in the Red Light district of San Jose, CA.

After college, I was hired as an Assistant Manager of a Kmart store in Los Gatos, CA, transferred to Seaside, CA and then to Pleasanton, CA. I walked off the job at Kmart and took to managing two Taco Bells in the East Bay (one in San Leandro and another in downtown Oakland, CA). My drinking had stopped and my heavy narcotic use exploded into a full-fledged \$300.00 a day habit with a needle in my arm at least 20 times a day. Believe it or not I took on several ministry positions as Youth Pastor, Associate Pastor and as Christian Concert Host for a few Christian rock concerts in the San Francisco Bay Area. One such concert I was scheduled to emcee was in the South Bay. It was attended by several thousand spectators; the only person that didn't show up was me. I had been introduced to mushrooms earlier that day and, with the mixture of the speed and the alcohol, I simply couldn't make it to the concert. Instead, I drove far away from the San Jose area until I could drive no more. Days turned into weeks, weeks into months and months into years. As far as anyone else was concerned, I had vanished. Well, I had vanished alright. I had disappeared into the black hole of meth addiction, cocaine, whisky and intravenous drug use. I lived on the streets of San Francisco, Houston and Los Angeles for the next 18 years doing whatever and whoever I could to get my fix. I sold my property, myself and my dignity for a bag of dope and a bottle of booze. No immoral act was too bad for this junkie and deep down in my spirit I knew I was going to die. I was going to die alone and without family, friends or even God. How anyone could forgive me for what I had become was beyond my comprehension. It made me sick to even look in a mirror except the one I was using to do my drugs.

I traveled from one U.S. State to the other, always in search of someone that would love and accept me, but ended up always pushing those very people away. I stole from those closest to me, lied to those who trusted me and ran from those who sought to help me. Eventually, a friend of 25 years would inform me that he no longer could have anything to do with me if he, himself, was going to recover from his alcoholism. I was alone, I was afraid, I was homeless and I was ugly. Ugly at only 175 pounds and ugly inside.

At one point, I did manage to clean myself up and take a job in the beautiful valley of Yosemite National Park. As in the past, I was able to snow my way to a management position in order to make enough money to feed my addiction to alcohol, but once again I was able to make a meth connection and lost my job, my home and the friends I had made while in the park. After leaving Yosemite, I was hired by Holiday Inn International but soon was kicked out of a few states where I worked as Guest Services Director for the hotel chain. I found myself in Los Angeles working as an insurance agent. A job that lasted a total of two weeks. My roommate left for three days for our company convention while I stayed behind and house sat. Yeah, I took care of his home alright. I took everything he owned and sold it for narcotics and booze.

On the day before my roommate was to return home, I remember sitting in my truck at the end of Santa Monica Boulevard in L.A. I had just injected something into my arm of which I had no idea of its content. I literally woke up three weeks later at a rest stop just outside of Albany, Oregon. I had experienced a 22 day blackout and had no idea how I'd gotten there. I looked down at the floorboard of my little Nissan pickup truck only to see three empty bottles of Wild Turkey 101 proof and syringes spread all over the cab of my truck. My hair was down to the middle of my back and it had been dyed

blond with black and red tips. I had three piercings in each ear and terrible sores all over my face and arms. I looked in the mirror and said out loud, "We're not in Kansas anymore Toto." After I did my best to gather my thoughts, I started up the truck and drove to a little town outside of Portland. It was in Milwaukie, Oregon where I would make the phone call that changed my life forever and was to be the link that would begin my journey back to sanity.

Reaching in my pocket, I found just enough loose change to call the information operator and asked if she could locate a friend of mine named Dan Clark. Dan was someone I had always admired and respected while in Bible College. We had lost contact over the years and he had no idea of my active alcoholism and addiction. Likewise I had no idea where he lived or even if he lived in Oregon but I had to take a chance so I asked the operator to look up his name. What happened next can only be considered the hand of a loving God working in my life. I will never forget the operator's voice as she told me that Dan Clark lived in the very town I was calling from. As it turned out, not only did he live in Milwaukie, his house was just two blocks from the phone booth I was calling from. For the first time in years I began to weep. I cried for what seemed like hours and then with all the courage I could find buried deep within me, I called my friend. He was happy to hear from me and when we met his first words were, "Give me your driver's license and give me your keys".

The next several weeks passed slowly as I began to detox from the chemicals that had racked my body for so many years. Through the guidance of a loving church I was able to check into a Teen Challenge center only an hour away from the Clark's home. It was at Teen Challenge that my journey of recovery began to take shape. I went through the year-long program and after graduation became the first Outreach Coordinator for the Pacific Northwest. It was while working for Teen Challenge that I met my beautiful wife Marsha. During our early dating life, I relapsed and was terminated from Teen Challenge.

After moving out of the Teen Challenge center I went to live in Albany, Oregon where I began attending 12-Step support meetings. I had gone to them a few times in the past while living with my folks in Stockton, California but it had been years since I had darkened the doors of those rooms. Here I was back again but this time something was different. My desire to escape this horrible Hell I had been living in was no longer powered by my own efforts but by the loving providence of my creator. God had always been with me over all those dysfunctional years but now it was as if He had come to live within my very spirit. It was during the process of working the 12 Steps with my Sponsor that the God of the universe came to reside in me to do for me what I never could do for myself. Though it took a great deal of time and hard work, and I might say some relapses (on September 2<sup>nd</sup> 1997 I took my last drink of alcohol and my life changed forever), there was no more empty feeling of being alone. That horrible pain I felt for years of needing people to accept me, love me and desire to be my friend, it had vanished. It was no longer holding me prisoner. I had found a new freedom. The freedom that can only be experienced through a spiritual awakening as a result of the Steps that I took and the grace of the God I now serve. Substances were no longer needed to fill that empty void. I now had substance.

What I have learned may sound a little weird to some but I truly believe that there is no power in the Twelve Steps. The Steps are there to show me my need for a power. You see, though I knew God in my head I did not have Him in my heart. After completing the Step process I discovered what I hope everyone reading this will discover for themselves. I discovered that my creator had come to literally reside in my spirit. He and I had become one. I simply cannot explain it other than to say it is the most marvelous thing that has ever happened to me. It can happen for you too. Believe me; you don't want to miss it.

After serving in several different capacities within my 12-Step fellowship and maturing a little, I went back into ministry. This time working on the pastoral staff of a local church as a layman during which time I began to learn about emotional sobriety and why I had been so addicted to acceptance. Though it was somewhat painful to look at, it has been an incredible experience that I wouldn't trade for the world.

Today I can stand on my own two feet and declare to everyone that my spiritual well-being is not based on your feelings about me but on the unconditional acceptance and grace of my creator. It is He that is the giver of new life and the one that lights my path. As far as my sanity goes, the world didn't give and the world can't take it away. I am truly living today a free man.

Well, many years have come and gone and now I live with my incredible wife Marsha and we have two wonderful boys. Cameron who is now married to his wife Amber and Colin who is married to his music and football. They are a powerful part of my recovery but they are not the power on which I lean on for my sanity or my sobriety. That job belongs to God. I am still active in my 12-Step fellowship as well as work full time as a recovery radio talk show host.

A little over ten years ago a member of my home group and 12 Step fellowship got really angry with me because I was quoting from our own recovery literature. He suggested that *"if I wanted to be so opinionated I should start my own talk show but should keep my mouth shut in the meetings."* Well, you know how we are right? I took his suggestion to heart and bingo bongo, Take 12 Recovery Radio was birthed and we are now broadcasting worldwide through Internet Radio, You Tube, social media and other terrestrial radio networks. We are a Traditions safe radio station as we don't affiliate with any particular 12 Step program. This form of service work has been of great joy to me and my family and has been an absolute privilege to be a part of. I am so grateful to God, the program and all those in the fellowship that have been walking along side me all these years. And as for the gentlemen who was so upset with me ten years ago, well, no one knows what happened to him, so I pray for him and will always be forever thankful for the day he came into my life. He blessed me and he didn't even know it.

Thanks for letting me share.

I'm wishing God's perfect serenity for you!

~The Monty'man