

Instead of starting in the past and the extent of the mistakes I have made, I will be starting my testimony in the BEGINNING (or the start of the beginning anyway). For the 2 years previous to my admittance into DEC I had been in constant searching. Searching for something...I didn't know what at the time. It was at the beginning of those two years that I started my recovery from drugs and alcohol. That searching led me to many places. It was a journey through everything in life that COULD have meaning, but didn't. Each avenue I turned into I reached a dead end. The drugs and alcohol were taken out of my "equation" of life, but not only the drugs and alcohol, but every self perceived idea I had of what life was meant to be like was challenged. It was like my identity had been taken away, the person I was, was no longer. I was told that I have the disease of addiction, and that although it was treatable, it was not curable. I believed I had something wrong with me. And having this disease seemed to have given me an excuse to blame those around me. I blamed my parents and family. I blamed my circumstances. I blamed myself.

Throughout my recovery over those two years I believed I was a victim, and that I deserved to be a victim after all I had gone through. I came from a broken home. I believed my parents weren't the parents I would've chosen given the choice. That my circumstances were the direct fault of those around me. I was "clean" from substance for a long time but still "craving" for my drug of choice, and still significantly depressed because of the life I had given up for a life I didn't want. I was admitted into hospitals for what they (the doctors) deemed as mental illness and was swamped with psychiatric medication. So that was me, a person with the incurable disease of addiction and a mental illness as a consequence for my addictions. Eventually I realized this constant fight to stay clean and trying to be "happy" was not worth living life for. In between the hospitals and rehabs I tried to take my life many times. I tired so hard to just not exist anymore, with real intent I failed in my suicide attempts. I gave up...and gave in to just settle and to merely EXIST. After a while I gave up giving up. I was at my rock bottom realizing that this was all that life had to offer me. I had all the support and love anyone could ask for. I had the outer resources to draw on. But, my inner resources had dried up. I was attending psychotherapy twice a week and seeing a psychiatrist twice a month for her to evaluate my medication. I was at a point where I believed this was it, this is the best life can get for me. I sunk lower than what I thought was my rock bottom. I relapsed, hoping this would somehow pull me up from the hole I was in. I did some stupid things in only 24 hours of using, and realized that the morbid life I had in recovery was better than this choice. I was clean for another month and decided I didn't want to live anymore. I went "missing" for about 10 hours using and drinking as much as could. I had no plan other than I knew what the ending was going to be like. Before I could give the ending a try I was found and the next day sent to DECM at Noupport.

My parents had decided to send me to DECM because they felt this was their last resort. I felt I had taken my last resort months before. I still wanted to die. I still felt despair. I was 24 years old and broken in every way. I didn't know what to expect when I arrived at DEC. They were very welcoming and on about "true freedom" and "acceptance" etc. I also knew that they were very Christian and this wasn't new to me as I was an avid Christian at one stage of my life, but was not looking forward to being "bible bashed"!(which definatley was not the case) I started off on the 28 day detox program. I hated it. I hated being there. I hated myself for the things I had done and the choices I had made. The detox program gave me a lot of time to think. And all I could think about was dying. I didn't want this...I didn't want 8

months of this, let alone the rest of my life. All through the detox we were taught about grace and forgiveness, two words that were not in my vocabulary. I fought with them, and myself. This challenged my beliefs and thought patterns I had throughout my life. I felt that I did not deserve this grace. I knew who God was, I knew He was the creator and I knew he loved me. I had no inkling of unconditional love. I didn't believe in Unconditional love. And this is what these people were teaching me. I started on work detail (painting walls) after I had finished my detox. After about two weeks of painting I felt like I was losing my mind. EVERYTHING I was, was being challenged. And the fact that I had to paint while I was losing my mind...painting walls forced me to think. After about three months I surrendered...EVERYTHING. I was at a dead end...and seeing the staff at DEC and how they lived and spoke...I wanted that...I wanted the freedom I saw in them. I remember asking, how do I get it? What do I have to do to become free from it all? I was told that we are human "Beings", not human "Doings"; it was simply a CHOICE to just BE. I made the choice there and then. I made the choice to be the person I wanted to be, to be free from all bondage and to give that grace a chance to work in my life. I believed now that God has forgiven me and in turn I forgave myself. From that day...I haven't looked back. That for me was the beginning. I started rooting out everything...allowing for new seeds to be planted. A new me! Something I never knew could exist. I decided to come off all my "mental illness" medication. If I believed that this incurable disease I had could be cured...I would believe that I didn't need medication anymore. I stopped completely. It was hard, but I was determined and was given the strength to miraculously go against the medical diagnosis I had. I conquered it.

I then started to learn carpentry. Something I had never done before. I found that I loved it. I loved seeing my growth...in EVERYTHING! And it shocked me that I was good at it. Not just the carpentry, but thinking in this new way. I was definitely free. Free from drugs and alcohol. Free from unforgiveness. Free from bondages I had put on myself...the limitations I made the choice to put there. The following months at DEC I continued to learn. I learnt about people and how to co-exist. I learnt more about myself...finally seeing that I actually am lovable, and that I can move on with a life that I choose for myself. Leaving DEC I was no longer nervous or fearful that I would make the same mistakes. I knew that God was with me wherever I go. Obviously I was nervous about the logistics of me leaving. How my family would treat me, finding a job etc. I never ever thought that I would say it...but I would miss DEC and do miss it and the people. It was where I found my new life. I am currently in a steady and very good job. My relationships with my family have been given a second chance just as I have. And I wake up every morning with an excitement of what is to come, whether it be good or bad. It wasn't the drugs or circumstance that held me back before, it was me. Knowing that, I know that I have the power to decide my future, and with God at my side, I will make it. I am living proof that ANYONE can make it...regardless of circumstance. I live everyday like it is a blessing, because it is. I would like to thank everyone at DEC for literally showing me how I can change my life – I will never forget you. Know that you played a part in the person I am now...a new creation. The support and acceptance you showed me will be in my heart forever.

**Proverbs 23:7** For as a man thinketh in his heart, so *is* he.

