

Ricky's Story





I want to glorify God not only for what He has done in my life but also the changes He has made in my family. My wife Margaret was saved in 2010 and I had seen a complete change in her life but I wasn't sure if God could do for me what He had done for her and did I even want God in my life.

There are two ways we all do life... one is by choices... the other is by circumstances. We all make choices in our lives... some good... and some bad but they're our choices and we live with the consequences of them. Circumstances, are things that happen in life that are out of our control, but they still have an impact on our life's.

The best choice I ever made in my life was to ask Jesus Christ into my life as my personal saviour that was back in August 2013.

But let's go back to the time before I was saved and some of the wrong choices, I made in my

life choices that led me to a place of self-destruction. I was a child of the "TROUBLES" born in 1971. I was the third born of four children I have one sister and two brothers. Many men at that time got involved in paramilitaries, my own father included and because of this he ended up in prison. This left my Mum on her own with four kids. It was a struggle for her to cope and she turned to alcohol for a crutch, but she soon became dependent on alcohol to manage. Because of my Mum's problem with alcohol and my father being in prison, social services became involved in our family. They felt at that time it would be better for us if we were fostered out (a circumstance that was out of our control).

My Granny at that time was sixty-five years old and wouldn't have been able to cope with the four of us. My sister Mandy (because she was the only girl) and my brother Philip (who was the youngest) went to stay with her. Myself and my brother Stephen ended up being



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put in a children's home. The first home we were sent to was Palmerston in East Belfast and we stayed there for six months. This was to give my mum an opportunity to try and get herself off alcohol. Although she tried her best things didn't work out and Stephen and I were sent to Barnardo's in Ballycastle. I was six and a half years old and Stephen was eight. We stayed in Barnardo's for three and a half years until my dad got out of Prison and brought us home to live with him.

Whenever we left Barnardo's I tried to put the experience of being there behind me, I tried to normalise it and justify it by saying there were lots of family's in Northern Ireland (because of the troubles) going through similar things as our family had went through.

Unfortunately, my brother Stephen couldn't let go of the

past he was always wanting answers to his questions answers that nobody had, this always led to arguments between Stephen and my Dad. Stephen couldn't get his head round why we were sent away and felt rejected. As he tried to come to terms with the rejection he turned to alcohol and soon developed a problem. He got married at 17 and left home. I also from an early age turned to drinking and relationships to find self-worth.

I was married by the age of 18 and had a child, but that fell apart and I moved on to the next relationship. I had another two children. And then that relationship fell apart as well. All through these relationships I was drinking and taking drugs. I was trying to find what was missing in my life with worldly things. I met my wife to be Margaret in 1998. She was a friend of my younger sister Angela, Margaret also liked to take drink and drugs. We started going out

together. I had found a partner to take drink and drugs with and our relationship revolved around drink and drugs. We lived for drink and drugs we didn't even realise at that time that we had a problem, we thought we were just normal. We were just having a good time doing nobody any harm. We were what you call functioning addicts which means we worked Monday to Friday then we would party at the weekends with drink and drugs. That's how it started off, then gradually the weekends became longer; they became Thursday to Sunday, then Thursday to Monday, then Friday to Friday. We started to lose control of the substance - it started to control us. Because we were holding down a job we thought we were OK, we thought alcoholics and drugs addicts were people who couldn't work or people who were on the street corner with a plastic bag. How wrong were we. We were just in denial that we had a problem.

During our own mess, I never noticed that my brother Stephen's drinking was out of control and unfortunately because of his addiction he died in 2006 at the age of 36. After his death I remember thinking to myself is this what life is all about, you have a terrible childhood, you get older and nothing changes, life doesn't get any better, you just exist then you die and go to hell! After Stephens death, my own drinking and drug taking just increased to the point where I was taking at least a gram of cocaine a day along with the drink. I remember one night my wife said she had something to tell me, she told me she had become a Christian, I remember saying to her if that is what you want to do that was OK but keep me out of it.

Things started to change in our marriage; instead of drinking and taking drugs at home I would go elsewhere. There were times I would have been drinking and

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drugging for whole weekends. For three years after Margaret was saved, I continued to drink and take drugs, so obviously, our marriage was shaky to say the least. We seemed to be arguing a lot, or even at times not speaking at all. We had nothing in common, Margaret had God and her Christian friends, and all I had was work and my drinking friends.

In January 2013 three years after Margaret was saved she told me she had had enough she told me I had to choose either drink and drugs or her and the kids. To my

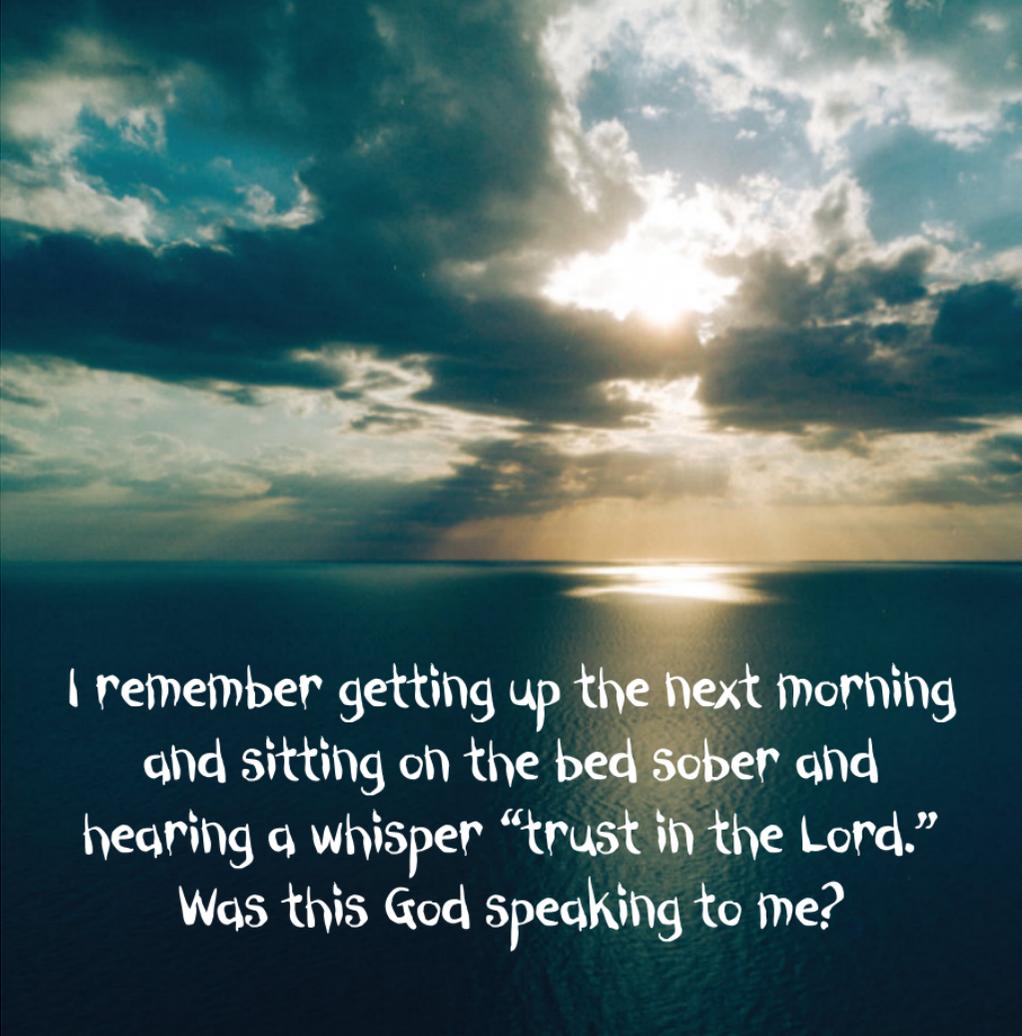
shame I chose drink and drugs. I left home and carried on drinking and taking drugs. I moved in with a friend, and Margaret had to give up the house that we lived at that time. She moved back into her mum and dad's with the girls. I used to go up most days to visit the two girls. After about seven months I remember Margaret saying to me that she didn't care if the whole world was crumbling down around her as long as she had God in her life that was all she needed. I remember going back down to my mate's house thinking is this it for me, is this all

there is. I remember thinking I don't need anyone to help me. I can get off drink and drugs myself. A week later on the Friday night I started itching and craving for drink and drugs. I thought if I just go to bed early and get up early that's another day over. I remember getting up the next morning and sitting on the bed sober and hearing a whisper trust in the Lord, was this God speaking to me? I got down on my knees, prayed to God and asked him into my life. It was like a weight had been lifted off my shoulders. I would love to be able to tell you that after I was saved my life was great there were no more problems, no more trials no more hurt or no more pain, but I can't.

I have had my difficulties personally and, in my family, but I now have a Saviour who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, **“For we do not have a high priest who cannot be**

touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.” Hebrews 4:15

Whatever touches us touches him. He knows what we are going through at this very moment. When we have, some knew difficulty to face, or some new mountain to climb, or some new temptation to avoid, God is with us, even though at times the way forward seems impossible, even though at times we can't even see a future for ourselves. Remember God sees the end from the beginning and He can lead us through. It took a bit of time, but God has healed our marriage. I have no more depression and I am now in full time ministry for Stauros. God has made so much difference not only in my own life but also our kids' life's they now get the childhood they deserve. I would be involved in street outreach with my church in Belfast City



I remember getting up the next morning
and sitting on the bed sober and
hearing a whisper “trust in the Lord.”
Was this God speaking to me?

centre at the weekends, I just go in and give out tea and coffee and tracts and talk to people about Jesus.

I want you to know for every person who has ever failed in their past, there is a forgiveness that forgets! God's Forgiveness: God doesn't hold anything back if you come back to Him or come to Him for the first time no matter what is in your past.

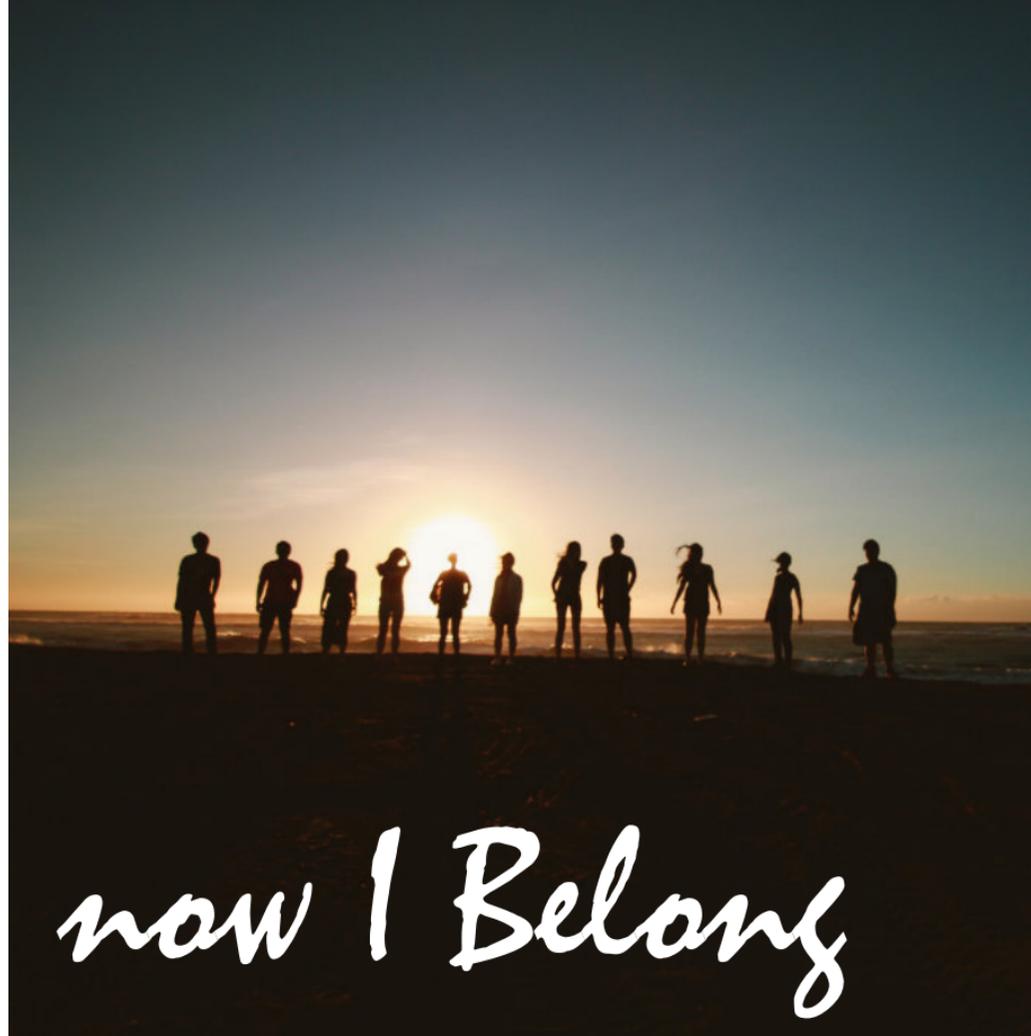
If you have been touched by reading this testimony, and wish to know Christ, whom Ricky has been speaking of, you may begin by praying a prayer such as this,

Dear Lord, I feel as though my life is without hope: I have come to accept that my future holds no joy for me. I feel guilty at the thought of the life I have lived so

far, and I feel hopeless. But I believe Jesus holds the key to my life. I believe that he can set me free from my addiction and from my sin. I want to know Jesus for real. So Lord please reveal yourself to me. Please forgive me for all the sins I have committed and for the times I have done things that break your rules. Please cleanse my heart from all my sin and save my life. Help me to come alive in Christ and please send the Spirit of Christ to live in me from this moment on and for the rest of my life. Lord, I know you have something better for my life; you have a plan and purpose for me. I surrender myself to you now and ask you to take control of my life. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen

Was Alone

now I Belong





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