

NEVER MEANT TO SELL

BY BLAKE STEIDLER

Chapter One

I made it! With 29 seconds to spare! I'm sitting here congratulating myself that I managed to pour myself some mountain dew, quickly nosh on some tortilla chips, and start up my lap-top all before the start of the new year. I do not type very quickly so you can probably guess at this point that we are already in the start of a new year. The year is now 2013. This is the year that I am predicting that I will be homeless. They say that 13 is a very unlucky number and my gut instinct is telling me that my misfortune is coming. If it didn't come then I would make it come. Yes I am just that crazy.

I have a rare mental condition known as schizophrenia and I'm more paranoid than a one legged dog expected to do some kind of trick like jumping through a ring of fire in front of a live audience. Even as I write this story I am convinced that right now the government is spying on me via their satellites in outer space. I'm so paranoid right now that I am convinced that the government has the ability to change the scripts on demand with any given television show. They do this to plant fear. To plant fear and bully schizophrenics like me. I am not worried though because you know why? I have God. Now they have the actors on television laughing at me as I try to write this story. Everything they do just seems so immature to me. I am only into the second paragraph of this story and already the government has some sort of remote control that shuts this lap-top down. **But I still have to tell this story.**

My name is Blake Ryan Steidler. To the best of my knowledge there is only one of me in all of the United States. I guess I should be proud of my name but over the years I have come to the conclusion that my parents had too much free time on their hands to give me an uncanny name like Blake. If they would have been in a hurry I'm sure I would have been bestowed a name like Bob, Joe, or even just another John. But God has blessed me with a name like Blake, so a Blake I shall be.

12/25/2011 CHRISTMAS IN JAIL

Today is the birthday of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ. I am in an 8x10 ft cell all by myself this special Christmas morning. It is not my first Christmas in jail but it is one that I will definitely always remember. I am stuck in this cell pretty much all day except for meal times and a few opportunities to use the phone. But there's a huge problem. Nobody will accept any of my phone calls. Unlike the federal prisons I used to do time in these county jails only seem to allow collect calls and I am not worth a \$7.00 phone call to anyone in the world. I am 30 years old, single, and already 20 pounds lighter from when I first entered this jail two months ago. I am not in solitary confinement because of my bad behavior. I am in solitary confinement because I've been forgotten by my superiors who dictate the special housing section of the jail that they use for processing. I am being processed because I am returning from another county jail where my crime was committed just 82 miles away.

I have no commissary to snack on this Christmas because this section of the jail doesn't allow it and I am doing my best to keep my rashes under control that have transpired as a result of not having access to clean laundry in almost two weeks. I am stuck in a smelly jail cell this Christmas morning all alone with nothing more than a small piece of cardboard about the size of a quarter for entertainment. I have managed to find a three inch pencil which I have used to write on the small piece of cardboard. One side I have marked a "Y" for yes and the other side a "N" for no. I have pretty much spent all of my Christmas morning so far talking to this piece of cardboard and asking it questions. *Will I be finally going to court next month? Will anyone take a phone call from me today? Will I ever get the money back that my company has stolen from me?* The questions just keep going on and on. I find myself continuing to flip the piece of cardboard like a coin until I get the answers that I want. The piece of cardboard provides very limited entertainment but I don't even have so much as a Bible. All I have is this piece of cardboard and God.

Eventually my small piece of cardboard falls onto the floor too many times and I get too lazy to pick it up. The craftier inmates at this point would already be engrossed in a good game of chess with another inmate across the hall without either of them ever leaving their cell. Just like the old saying goes *where there's a will there's a way*. I was amazed to eventually learn how inmates were able to play chess without ever getting a chance to meet the person they were playing with. Unfortunately I would not be playing chess this Christmas day because I was one of the very few inmates that had never learned the game. I packed a mean scrabble game but chess always seemed too confusing for me to learn. My hobby was writing. I hoped to be a famous writer one day but with my willingness to learn I knew it would be a long shot. After publishing two novels that never received much recognition I was eventually learning that I would need God's help.

Everybody wants to be a famous author but is it really God's will? One thing that always confused me was that the Bible is a very large book but what about the size of all the other Christian literature? Was it that man had run out of things to talk about God? We should give God the glory!

It is a known fact that of all the books in this world ever written the Bible tops them all as the number one seller. So many homes have a Bible located somewhere and so do a lot of hotels. The Bible is everywhere but how many people actually read it? Because of my schizophrenia I knew that God would never call me to be a pastor so I could encourage people to read their Bible. My faculties would become impaired and I would risk fits of hysteria trying to speak in front of a crowd. My audience would get confused and try to surmise where I was trying to go with this. But what about my words? God has blessed me with the ability to write and the greatest thing I could do for God is do my best to preach to people through my skill with writing. I could be the pastor preaching to people with the use of my words. The use of my words that I could only put on paper. But maybe that's the kind of pastor that our Lord wants me to be.

These thoughts ran through my mind as I stared deep into the yellow concrete walls of my cell. I knew that right now my family was miles away eating only the finest Maryland crab soup and digging into some fresh jumbo shrimp salad that more than likely my uncle had prepared. I felt like the games my overseers at the prison were playing were getting old. I'm the type that tends to notice the small things but those small things eventually add up over time. I often wondered if my superiors had an inkling that there was virtually nothing too subtle for me not to notice. I don't remember everything; but the stuff that I do recall is always accurate. I regressed at the time when I had first been released

from Federal prison and started attending my brother's church. Near the end of the service they opted to do communion but never went through with it. Half way through the prayer the pastor caught a bad vibe and informed us we weren't doing communion that day because the grape juice was spoiled. Really? Did he really feel this way or was it the fact that I was among the crowd? The subtle things.

I gave my life to Christ on May 5th 2007, or what some people like to call Cinco De Mayo. To this day I can still remember which inmate it was that led me to the Lord. His name was Richard but I always like to refer to him as the pocket sewer. I don't know how he was able to do it but Richard could stitch home made pockets into any pair of sweat pants or shorts and make it look professional. I never questioned where the material came from but his work always looked like the pockets had always been there from the get go. The pocket sewer was a short stalky Spanish guy doing some serious time. He had a few of those tear drop tattoos underneath his eyes. He had been to "the hole" numerous times for disciplinary reasons and I often caught him cursing like a British sailor. His mother had passed away during his incarceration and it was rare that I saw him standing in the line for church. **But he was telling me about God.**

It was his testimony that led me closer to the Lord until I finally took Jesus into my heart. All of my life I had been exposed to healthy Christians growing up in sheltered lives and the majority of them had experienced very little adversity. Those people had all the reason to keep Jesus in their lives but what about the pocket sewer? He'd lost his mother, and many years of his life! But he still had good things to say about Jesus! And even though he ran with a rough crowd Richard still made a point of advising me to start a walk with Christ. I did notice more peace in my life since my conversation with the pocket sewer. There was less profanity in my conversations, less anger and resentment inside of me, and yes I noticed a lot less stress in my life. I can still remember back in 07 how one of my biggest struggles was flourishing my Bible amidst the inmates to my walk up to the church. I was one of the better attenders of church but I always gave little testimony and can still remember my walk up the sidewalk covering most of my Bible in the crook of my arm. But why? I never kept it covered up once I entered the church with the other believers so why hide it from the unsaved? Perhaps my walk with God just wasn't what it ought to be.

Mark 8:38

"For whosoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him and the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes to the glory of his Father with the holy angels."

And there it was right there for me to see in black and white. I was leading a scrupulous life behind bars but I was still ashamed! I could behave, never steal, and give away those crackhead soups to the more indigent inmates but I was still failing in God's eyes! My Federal time behind bars went better with God in my life and I was eventually released from Federal custody 4/29/2009. I was excited about going to church after my release but I was up against yet another problem. They were doing background checks in church! At least at the church I was momentarily attending in Philadelphia while still at the halfway house. The Pastor's son wanted to know what other churches I had attended in my life and said he was going to call my previous pastors. He did his best to dissuade me from getting Baptized and eventually I gave up asking. A few months after getting released from the halfway house I moved back to my hometown 65 miles away but still felt daunted from pursuing my Baptism. I still

continued to attend church but had my doubts about getting dunked in the pool. I constantly reminded myself that maybe that church in Philly wasn't quite so pleasing in God's eyes. I knew it would not hurt to pray for that church.

My cell gate slides open and I know that it must be lunch time. The three other inmates stuck on this block race to the phone to squeeze in another phone call. I don't even bother. Every contact I know has already blocked me from being able to make a collect call. It's not that I said anything wrong to upset anyone, no, I can't make a phone call solely for the reason that hearing my voice is not worth \$7.00 to anyone. Not after knowing that all of my family members are probably sitting around on comfy sofas and calculating the cost of Christmas this year. *I got \$50.00 from Grandpa but had to spend \$40.00 on my sister so I guess I'm up \$10.00 but wait I used that \$10.00 for gas money to get to the Christmas Party!* Was pretty much the mindset I had surmised was going through each and everyone of my family members. But I asked myself *would God want that? Would God want that on his birthday?*

I lost my train of thought when I looked at my Christmas meal. As I mentioned before I've done time in Federal prison so I expected big things on Christmas even if this was county jail. But I was wrong. I didn't notice anything fancy about our meal and I wasn't even sure if there was enough on that tray to fill me up. I entered the prison at 205 pounds and was down to 182 pounds and it had only been a few months. I could feel my body emaciating right down to my hip bone. No phone call for me today and now we were getting short chumped on our Christmas meal? Say this isn't so. But it was.

There was little Christmas spirit on the isolated block I was being held in and I was not surprised to notice that the sentry working today were all the more recently hired. I finished my spaghetti and looked over once more at the phone. It appeared that phone time to one of the inmates was so important that he was willing to skip out on his spaghetti. I desperately wanted a cup of instant coffee but this block I was on did not allow commissary. I couldn't help but wonder how long my overseers were planning to leave me in processing. Had they forgotten about me? Or was it just that they were disgusted at me for landing myself in jail when my zip code was different from everyone else. Yes I do read. I realize that experts can now make predictions of teenagers growing up based on their zip codes. An announcement came over the loud speaker and I realized it was time to return to my 8 x 10 ft. cell. I took one last look at the phones then climbed up the stairs and headed all the way back to the cell in the corner. I stepped back and braced myself for the shock from the sound of the mechanical cell door getting slammed shut. There was no cell mate standing behind me reminding me to ask the guard for a roll of TP or a ½ once bar of complimentary soap. This Christmas of 2011 was going to be just me and God.

It was like a feeling words couldn't possibly describe. I laid on that cold piece of steel and felt a mysterious warmth permeate my body. It was as though God had sent down an angel to give me a warm hug or God had taken a time out on his special day to give me a hug himself. It made no sense how it was happening but I honestly felt someone was hugging me from up above. I stopped thinking about my family. I stopped thinking about what led me to jail. I even stopped thinking about whatever became of my Christmas meal. My heart was on Jesus! I knew that God had me here for a reason and I soon found myself rejoicing for all my blessings surrounding me. I had access to water. I had a blanket to keep me warm, even if it did feel scratchy. I didn't have a Bible but that was still okay because I had a lot of verses memorized! I quickly thought of a Bible verse that would keep me in tuned with God.

Proverbs 23:7

“For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he: Eat and drink, saith he to thee; but his heart is not with thee.”

I let my spaghetti digest as I squirmed around in my bunk and pondered on that verse. Was my heart always right with God? Or were there so many times my heart was on my wallet? Spending years of my life in Federal prison had caused me to become more astute to my finances. I started to study the college kids to take notes on how that “I’m a poor college kid” card would pan out when they purposely left their wallet at home and it came time to pay for things. I liked to refer to these people that capitalized on other people as “wolves”. I was slowly becoming a wolf but I had purposely left on my sheep's clothing. Most of my life had been spent with sheep. Many of my friends growing up had trouble holding onto jobs or keeping a driver's license. They often mooched off people and were very terrible with money. I still enjoyed hanging out with these people but over the years I became privy with my finances. I didn't trust the chemical imbalance in my head and trips to prison had proven to be very expensive. I've already witnessed indigent inmates emaciate almost to the point of ossification. The government simply didn't care whether or not an inmate went to bed hungry or not and they cared even less by the time they reached the halfway houses. (If they were ever blessed enough to make it that far.)

And so this is Christmas and God still had my attention. It was mid-day and I was still feeling all warm and fuzzy inside. I take my psychotropic medication at night time so I knew the *high* I was feeling really must be coming from God because the effect from my medication surely would have worn off at this point. I folded my arms across my chest and waited for another Bible verse to pop into my mind since I had no Bible.

Jeremiah 33:3(A)

“ Call unto me, and I will answer thee,”

The verse was succinct and easy to remember mostly because it rhymed. I knew there was a little bit more to the verse but my Sunday school teachers had always taught us to memorize the first part. Here I was this Christmas of 2011 unable to make a single phone call because nobody would take a collect call from me. But what about Jesus? He is there any time and he promises in the book of Jeremiah that if we call unto him he will answer us. There would be no robotic woman intercepting my conversation with God advising me to hurry up because there was only one minute left. God is there for me any time and all I have to do is call unto him!

The noodles from my lunch swelled up a bit more in my belly and I began to remind myself how good my Christmas was even if it was behind these walls. I had heat and food and even a bed to lie on even if it wasn't to my liking. I knew that there was a good possibility that there might be some U.S troops in a hot Desert wishing they could lie on a bed and twiddle their thumbs like I was doing. I began to think that maybe, just maybe God had me in this prison for a reason. It was that instant that it all made sense. I was special! I had no cell mate to chew my ear off which meant God had me all to himself! This was going to be one of the greatest Christmas celebrations! No distractions, just me and God! When I felt I truly understood the blessing of the situation I was in, I concentrated a little bit more towards the meaning of Christmas. Santa Clause?

It didn't take me long to remember what one of my Sunday School teachers had taught us as kids about how man had twisted up the meaning of Christmas. How they had started by taking out "Christ" and replacing our Lord and savior with an "X". Pastor Hart had informed us that the word "mas" meant celebration thus we had the word "Christmas". He then proceeded to tell us that man was extremely backwards. He backed up his beliefs by telling us about the saying of a man's best friend being a dog when in fact it should be God because Dog spelled backwards is God. Pastor Hart taught us that man was so twisted that if you scrambled the letters of the word "Santa" you could come up with "Satan". These demonstrations sat so well with me that I could remember Pastor Hart's teachings when I was just 8 years old. It's been 23 years since then and even throughout my deviating times of faith, I have never taken "Christ" out of Christmas and replaced it with an "X".

Chapter Two **(The Counselor verses the Inmate)**

The drama was unfolding right before my eyes. I didn't have to talk. I didn't have to voice my opinion. I didn't even have to wink my eyes. What I did notice was Miss Barb constantly looking in my direction for my approval. She would get none. I had been to jail too many times. And I was completely aware of that *Big White Cloud*. That *Big White Cloud* that the less privileged people of Dauphin County had to face every day of their lives. A cloud that constantly rained on them and consistently capitalized financially off of every blunder of the less educated people in Harrisburg. But it was still entertaining watching the drama unfold. 60 year old Miss Barb wasn't holding up very well, and she was losing the argument.

"Oh boo-hoo!" She hissed, "And I had to wake up at 4am every morning to milk the cows!"

The inmates looked around at each other confoundedly. Where was she going with this? Was this professional? But the Brazen inmate didn't want to give up the argument.

"Yeah well I had to wake up every day to a gun pointed at my head! Do you know what it's like to live with a drunk father and a gun in the house?" He scratched the scar on his head without picking it open. The scar was given to him by the guards as a welcoming present on his way into the big house. He was 50 years old but looked in his early 30's, so many years in prison had preserved his body in such a way he was healthy as an ox. You could feel the strength exuding from his body just by sitting next to him. He wasn't the kind of guy to be messed with. The amount of scars on his forearms seemed to tell a story. I had surmised at this point that he had spent the majority of his life living in the bad lands of the city. I doubted that in his youth he was riding four wheelers through cornfields or opening up Nintendos on Christmas morning. There was a good chance that Ramsey didn't have a father to play catch with in the backyard after school. If he even had a back yard. No, Ramsey had lived a life under

the dictatorship of a big white cloud that specialized in sequestering him from society and taking all of his money. Offering no adequate means of education or exercise equipment so that upon his release he will be even worse off financially than when he first went in. I'd seen the aftermath of the big white cloud over and over again until it eventually reached the point that the correctional officers would make bets as to how long an inmate would last in society before they would see them again. With a return rate at 67% there was a good chance that the guards were saving a bed for Mr. Ramsey.

Miss Barb had dealt with plenty of inmates like Ramsey before. She'd met plenty of people in life during her twenty years of service in the Navy. She had a name for people like Ramsey. Babies. Big babies. There was 15 of us in the group and she couldn't understand why Ramsey always did all the talking. Perhaps he just needed some special attention. She often wished that he would act his age and grow up but she still had concern over his mental condition. Schizophrenia. Ramsey was a full blown Schizophrenic. There was no telling where the voices inside his head would take him. And now he was back in jail what felt the millionth time for yet another parole violation. Ramsey had been picked up for drinking a beer. A 24 ounce Natural Ice from what he told us. He wasn't too thrilled for being incarcerated for something so stupid. His family was fed up too with the system. They were making a lot of calls to the jail. Calls Miss Barb would have to deal with.

The group seemed to get quiet after Miss Barb's comment about milking cows. I didn't know about the rest of the group but as for myself I think I would rather be milking a cow than having a gun pointed to the back of my head. Maybe there was a little more to the story Miss Barb was leaving out. Did she maybe have a gun pointed to the back of her head while she milked those cows? I noticed a hand went up and an inmate skinnier than Gumby took the floor.

“ Miss Barb, I had days like that too. My daddy used to make me sit in a corner while him and his cousin threw beer cans at me. They waz always playing with guns.” He said crossing his arms. He looked at Ramsey for assurance. They both nodded.

“Uh-hmm” was all we got from Miss Barb. It was evident that at this point she was giving very little attention. Instead she appeared to be engrossed with her doodles on her yellow pad. My vision is very good and I was amused at her doodle. It was the same exact one as yesterday. A cartoon of a girl looking exactly like Punkie Brewster only with a hair style that looked like a cha chia pet in full throttle. I was amazed at how the drawing looked like an exact duplicate of yesterday's. These groups were very exciting to me and I was hoping to assimilate as much as I could with hopes of one day including these experiences in one of my next books. As far as I knew there really wasn't one inmate in this jail that liked Miss Barb. The mean look we often saw in her eyes was intimidating and there were times it felt like she wanted to go old school on us and beat us down with a stick. But I imagined she probably wasn't allowed to do that.

Miss Barb looked at her wrist watch and stood up. “We're all out of time today guys and I wont be here tomorrow so there's no group tomorrow.” She said matter of factly, “ Kevin might do a mental health group in the morning.”

The group got up to put away their chairs. I wasn't very happy about the group ending. I actually enjoy listening to these guys wild stories in the hood. I was in no hurry to go back to my 8 X 10 cell where a smelly 52 year old man was probably pooping up the place. Quite honestly I was just

hoping it got cold enough in there that he would decide to put his pants back on. I was on a medical block and it seemed to have a lot of freaks on it. Not all of the guys in Dauphin County prison were straight and it sure made things difficult. Miss Barb looked at me as if she expected me to give the heavy set pedophile in the wheel chair a push. This was the part I really hated about prison. They don't pay me to provide health care but I gave him a push anyway to keep the peace. I didn't want to end up getting kicked out of group. This is the only prison I had ever been to that had no television. Supposedly Dauphin County Prison is dubbed the second to worse prison on the whole east coast. After eating enough of those green hot dogs I really didn't doubt it.

Ramsey had some parting words for us as we exited the door.” Hey everybody! Make sure you check out my book sometime *Touched By The Spirit Of A Black Man*” A book? Was Ramsey capable of writing a book? I've read many books but if this guy seriously had a book out I definitely wanted to read it. Nobody else in the group ever had anything interesting to say and even though the other inmates complained about him hogging up group time I liked this guy's stories. Needless to say Ramsey had very much spirit and I was touched by the spirit of a black man. I intended to check out his story upon my release. Whenever that day might be.

Chapter Three **(The Dopefiend that Loved Jesus)**

All of my life I had always wished that I would master the ability to keep my emotions under control. I laugh at the most dumbest of things and sometimes once I start laughing it is nearly impossible for me to stop. I will never be a public speaker or even be able to give a speech at a wedding without risking a huge fit of hysteria making myself looking like a fool. Because of my condition I often find myself shying away from any situations that might induce my symptoms. Unfortunately for me one of those places is the church services here at the prison. To the best of my knowledge some of the inmates were making a joke out of it and one inmate had gone so far as to put one of the outside volunteers in the spot light. This did not sit well with me that the inmates were not taking church serious and I did not want to find myself leading a bad example and laughing at their mockery jokes in the Lord's place. So for the first few months of prison I stayed away from the church services in the prison. That all changed the day I met Danny. Stress Box Danny is what they called him. It was his first week in prison and he had already earned the name “Stress Box” because of the way he bugged out. Nobody wanted him as a celly because all he did was whine all day long as if it was his first trip to prison. It wasn't. This was trip number 13. And all of the sentry within the jail knew him by first name.

“ You mean you're not going to church? Do you really want to sit in this cell all day? Come on it will be fun.” He said rubbing more hair gel through his hair. It wasn't his hair gel. And I of course was

too much of a miser for it to be mine. Toothpaste and soap are the only toiletries you really need in prison. That and TP of course. White gold is what we called it in the ARMY.

I defended myself the best I could.” I dunno man. I think I'd rather stay here and read my Bible. You go ahead and have fun.”

I reached for my Bible to make it look legit. I was glad to have a celly that I didn't deem threatening but Danny was the kind of guy most people couldn't stand. The stories he conjured up all day long consistently contradicted themselves and everybody in the jail already knew that Danny couldn't be trusted. He was short, lethargic looking, and had the slick look in his eyes of a crooked car salesman. His dark curly hair was the only thing he had going for him and he never let 5 minutes go by without slicking it back with more hair gel. When he wasn't doing that he was constantly rubbing anbesol on all the sores on his tongue. Where those sores came from I didn't know but the needle marks on his arms looking like choo choo tracks made me believe he'd done his fair share of drugs.

Danny persisted, “Come on man! You mean to tell me that you're a christian and yet you don't come to church?”

I felt my face redden just a bit. I really don't like much when people challenge my faith. The church I had gone to when I was a kid had always accentuated that one could never lose their salvation once one was saved. Did he think he could get me to come to church by challenging my faith? I shut my Bible and jumped down from the top bunk. I can honestly say that in all of my years spent in prison I could never be seen on a bottom bunk unless I was temporarily left in a cell for a few days without a cell mate. I did sustain a grade 3 shoulder separation in my right shoulder from a motorcycle accident but that would never grant me a bottom bunk pass from medical. Over the years I had gotten used to figuring out how to climb up on the top bunks without a ladder, regardless of my pain.

“Okay Danny. If you think I need to go to church then I'm ready to go to church.” I said tucking in my shirt. Danny looked pretty shocked.”Are you serious?”

“ Yes I'm serious. Why wouldn't I be?”

Danny had a quizzical look but he picked up his paperback Bible from the desk.” I thought you said that everybody in there turns the church service into a joke?”

I rolled my eyes.” I dunno man. Maybe that was just that one time. We should be alright as long as nobody tries to monitor my thoughts. Are you ready to go?” I watched that sneaky smile jump on his face. Something told me that there was a pretty good chance that he was going to try to steal most of the service with his wild stories that seemed to change every time he told them. We heard the scraping of keys outside our cell door and we both turned our heads.

The door slid open and a correctional officer about 5 years younger than me stood outside our door. Deep down inside I felt pity for those guys knowing how much money they had to spend each year on hair cuts. I guess their jobs required them to look sharp.

“ You ready for church Danny?” Asked the blond haired pretty boy guard. It seemed to me as if

he made the statement jokingly. Every prison offers Christian worship but yet the inmates just keep coming back to prison. The correctional officers see this kind of stuff all the time. Danny rubbed one big dollop of hair gel through his hair and then stepped outside of the cell.

“ Yeah, I'm ready can my celly come too?”

The guard shook his head. “ Did he sign up?”

Danny gave the correctional officer a stupid look.” Come on man! Nobody pays attention to that sign up sheet. He can sign up right now.”

I watched the guard slide the door back open so I could come out. I was a bit nervous at first because all the other inmates were staring at me through their cell door windows. The church here at this prison never seemed to drum up a big crowd. All eyes were always on the ones that decided to come to church. Today I would be one of those inmates.

Chapter Four

My gut instinct had panned out to be right. Danny had stolen the floor and now our church service had deviated from talking about God. We were now talking about Danny's case. I couldn't help but wonder how many times this has happened in the prison's church services. The volunteers from outside churches really couldn't help us with our cases but that never hindered the inmates from asking for prayer for their courtroom appearance.

As Danny droned on and on about how unfair it was that the authorities had taken him to jail I couldn't help but wonder what God would want at this time. Did God want us learning about him or did God want us hearing about Danny and how he might be stuck with us for a few months because he just couldn't seem to stay off the needle. I daydreamed a little bit as my celly told us the story of how the bank teller had ratted him out to the police because she knew something wasn't quite right with him by the glossy look in his eyes and his erratic behavior. To his dismay, his girlfriend had patiently waited in the car and was disheartened when the police picked up Danny for his third parole violation just for this year.

Although there was only 4 of us in church today, I couldn't help but wonder if God wanted us hearing stories that did not include him. Wasn't the purpose of church to lead us closer to him and learn more about him? Every church that I have ever visited on the streets consisted of a pastor. And every church service was led by the pastor! Was my celly a pastor? Why was he doing all the talking?

Romans 10:14

“ How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?”

It was often that visitors from outside churches came to visit and lead a worship service. Sometimes the messages were good but sometimes I felt the inmates talked too much. God had a special plan for Danny and I needed to blot out of my mind the thought that he could never be a pastor because of the lifestyle he lived. I've read through the Bible numerous times in my life but I knew deep down in my heart there was still a lot in there for me to learn. Sometimes it befuddled me how I could read an entire fiction novel and assimilate everything but yet forget some of the most important scriptures in the Bible. Maybe God wanted me to learn just a little bit of his word at a time so that I could spend the rest of my life learning the rest of it!

My daydream abruptly stopped when Danny had finally put a lid on it and one of our outside guests was talking about speaking in tongues. The subject always piqued my interest but I couldn't help but remember my mother's opinion about it. “ *That talking in tongues stuff is a bunch of hooey! I think they do that stuff at your aunt's church.* ” Maybe my mother was right, I really didn't know. But what happened next shocked me.

A big warm hand went on my shoulder. “ Ahbe goo hash nah boo mub majone!”

I waited patiently for something to happen. Nothing. I thought for sure that my attention seeking cellmate would at least pass out on the floor for us but he looked befuddled as well. We all were befuddled. The big hand remained on my shoulder a bit longer as our outside guest continued to speak in tongues. Eventually it slowed down and it turned into a simple prayer. At the time I was very confused but as I write this story a very free man I now know why God led that worship leader to do that. God did that because he knew that would be an experience that I would never forget. God didn't want me to forget that day because that strange man is now my pastor.

Chapter Five

God has a plan for all of us. As a writer I can't think of how many times it has been on my “to do” list to finally come up with a spiritual piece of writing to tell people about Jesus. I believe that although I consistently fail with life God can still use me to tell others about his word. One of my favorite Bible stories is Jonah and the whale. God purposely imprisoned Jonah into the belly of the

whale to get his attention. Just like God had put me in this county jail to grasp my attention as well. Did he want me to tell the inmates about Jesus? Maybe he did. But did I? No.

2 Timothy 1:8 (NIV)

“ So do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord or of me his prisoner. Rather, join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God.”

The 9 months of incarceration I was doing for my Rosa Parks stunt had left me plenty of time for suffering. Sometimes I felt as though I just didn't have the courage to tell other people about God. I felt I had always led a scrupulous life but I struggled with telling others the good news. I was in my 30's now and struggled with depression along with constant racing thoughts that plagued my mind. I hadn't been in a relationship since I was 22 and had never married. The relationships I had been in never worked out and never lasted more than a month or two. I wasn't good at making friends and my world was soon turning to a life with cats and dogs. It was harder for me to maintain employment since my plastic surgery accident in 2004. But I know that Jesus loves me! And some day he will give me the ability to tell others about him!

Because I belong to the Feds I constantly have to be bounced back and forth between two different prisons for all the different arraignment hearings. Inmates constantly like to refer to this treatment as “Diesel Therapy”. People that have never been to prison don't know the half of the games that the overseers play. I've personally witnessed inmates lose as much as 40lbs in just weeks from Diesel Therapy. They can't activate their phone accounts, can't keep up with their mail because loved ones don't know where to send it. And most importantly, they miss many meals. It is not wise to fight your case, especially on a Federal level.

I'm sitting on my scratchy blanket Indian style going over my paper work in my cell. Danny is at medical for the third time today. The sores on his tongue gross me out and it wouldn't surprise me that he might have AIDS. He talks incessantly so I am glad for the 20 minutes alone that I can review my paper work. The Affidavit I have confuses me. It clearly states that my civil lawsuit against my company prior to my arrest had already been resolved. Really? I didn't remember ever going to court on this issue? Why was I here then? Certainly if my company would have reimbursed me for the money they stole my Rosa Parks stunt would confuse a lot of people? So why were the Feds lying? Why was there exclamation points all over the place? Was I not only sitting in a chair?

Jesus died on the cross for our sins. They nailed him to a cross. They whipped him 39 times to be exact. But what had he done wrong? Was he trying to pick up a paycheck? No he wasn't. He was hanging on the cross getting ready to die for our sins. I'm sure a “Sit In” like I did would have sounded a lot more benign. Just before Jesus finally died on the cross he looked up to God and said “It is finished”. I still can't help but wonder how the government in those Biblical days were able to drum up charges against our Lord and savior. But what I did know was that after God experienced all that I'm sure he could understand how I felt as I scrutinized my paper work. I eventually put the papers back into the manilla folder and picked up two pieces of loose leaf paper that I had written on. As a writer I knew that at some point I should eventually dedicate a story to God but I found myself constantly succumbing to writer's block. Just 2 papers? Was God only worth 2 papers to me? I was capable of writing 470 page mystery novels but unfortunately when it came to writing a book to lead people to

Jesus all I had were these two pieces of loose leaf paper with the writings of a disgruntled man. I knew God could have me do a lot more better than that. But what did he want me to tell people? Just prison stories? Maybe juvenile stories? By the age of 13 there were already rumors about me that the reason my middle school was under construction was because I had blown it up. It wasn't true. Yes at the age of 13 I did indeed plant a remote controlled explosive under the stair well but they were firecrackers as small as my thumb. I got expelled for that but I think deep down my electronics teacher was impressed with my ingenuity. Or not. Luckily at that time Mr. President Bush had not coined the term "Weapon of Mass Destruction" yet so I didn't end up going to Juvenile Hall.

When I returned to school the next year I had accrued many nicknames within the first week."Unabomber" and "Mad bomber" ended up getting used the most. The firecracker incident was only meant to be a prank but all the nicknames left me feeling compelled to do bigger bolder things. I found that I could get a pretty good rush by stealing cars. I was only 14 and already known by many cops. I didn't have any interest in drugs but I was having a field day with vandalizing. The preppy kids in school were starting to hate me because I was trashing their house in the wee hours of the morning. Because I was only 14 the newspapers weren't allowed to release my name so they circumvented by commonly referring to me as the "East Earl Boy" for every time I had struck again. I once had unloaded 5 cartons of eggs all over the house of a person who had once ratted me out to the police. Needless to say it was hard for me to procure employment by the time I reached 16. Fortunately the Mennonite pastor down the street offered me free counseling and helped me with finding a job at a bakery just three miles away. They loved my work ethic and were disappointed when I left for a higher paying job at a smorgasbord just across the street. For the next seven years I lived a very quiet life but that all changed the day I met a plastic surgeon.

God is good and he knows when we need him. God also puts many challenges before us and if we trust him we can get through those challenges. I hear stories all the time from other Christians giving their testimonies about their life before they met God. Many of them describe what they call that "empty hole" in their lives. I never could fully fathom what they were talking about but for me I had always struggled with being bored. I had struggled with so much adversity that every time life would start getting easy for me I would question it and end up doing something stupid. Stupid things that would land me in jail or have me reach a financial debacle. For me I only felt that "empty hole" when things started looking up. Maybe things would start going well at work or I would be in a relationship. I would find myself crying out to God asking "what's next?". Did God have a special plan for me?

I looked at the writings on the two pieces of loose leaf papers. Weak. And confusing on top of that. I honestly didn't know if I could ever steel myself to complete this project. What would I write about? How would my writings help lead people to God? Would it be as easy as writing crime novels? What about dialogue? Who would be doing the talking in my story?

These thoughts continued to plague my mind as I tried to enjoy what little time I had left before Danny would return from medical and chew my ear off. I knew that my career as a writer would have breaks in it but I would always end up submitting more stories to my publishers later down the road. Everybody has heard of the saying that the pen is mightier than the sword and it was literally the only weapon left that the Feds would ever let me play with. Maybe my stories down the road would upset my readers considering I had always written under the pen name "Pastor Edwards" and I was nowhere near close to being a pastor. For the time being, I was feeling as though God would want me to write a

book that focused less on myself and would glorify him. I made a promise to him that day. I would use my gift he has given me to glorify him. I would use that special gift to the best of my ability. I promised myself one more thing that would make God proud. I would put in my best effort, and I would keep it clean.

Chapter Six

6/13/2012-F.D.C. Philadelphia @ 11AM

The floor of the bull pen still looked the same as it did 7 years ago. Nasty. Unfortunately I was stuck sitting on it Indian style in a green jumpsuit covered in dust bunnies. The only sounds to be heard was soft mumbling from the other inmates and an occasional twinkle sound emanating from the dirty toilet that sat off in the corner. Everybody in this room was nervous because today was the day that we would finally get to see a judge. A federal judge, the kind that never smile.

I clicked my water bottle a few times and made it clear to the other 8 inmates that I was not eavesdropping in on their whispers. Or “ear hustling” as they like to call it. 7 years ago when I sat in this very same holding cell I was accused of being an undercover cop. With no tattoos on my body and no sinister look in my eyes, I always tended to stick out like a sore thumb when trying to blend in with these brazen inmates. Not to mention I keep to myself and offer very little information about my personal life. The uptight inmates looked relieved when they saw a heavy set Spanish man talking to me as if he knew me. He did. His name was Ramos AKA “Gordo” which meant “big” in Spanish. He was once my cell mate back at the other jail. The best one I had out of the 22 different cell mates I had lived with in the past 9 months. I had ended up losing him as a cell mate when he fought back with another inmate that tried to extort him and had to go to “The Hole” (solitary confinement).

Gordo smiled. “All I left with my cell mate was half a bag of coffee. I think my cell mate thought I was going to leave him with all my commissary.”

I half chuckled.” What did you do with those black Nikes you bought?”

I watched as he gently rolled up the cuffs of his pant legs to keep them from soaking up the filthy grime on the floor. I was certain that the floor we were sitting on hadn't been cleaned in over a

year. Probably 5 or 6 years for the toilet covered in brown streak marks.

“They let me take them with to this prison. I have them along with my personal stuff. I'm glad to be out of that other jail aren't you?”

I didn't know how to react to the question. Jail was jail.”Yeah I guess so. I'm sure my celly back there is freaking out wondering who they are going to have him bunk with next. All I left him with was some envelopes. More than likely he will sell them for an eight ball of coffee.”

It was Gordo's first time in jail and I felt that he was going to do pretty well with it. He had explained to me earlier that his lawyer had set up a deal where he could plea out and only do eight years instead of the 15 years they were trying to throw at him. He wasn't from the U.S but frequented the states enough times until he finally got caught up in a big drug bust. It was a lifestyle that he had grown up with and it had made him a lot of money. A lot of money that he would now get to spend on lawyer fees and over priced commissary. Gordo's hobbies in prison were eating and sleeping. That's pretty much all he did all day long. You couldn't ask for a better cell mate and he even went out of his way to say excuse me when a fart would occasionally slip out. He maxed out his commissary each month and usually gave most of it away. He had to slow down a little bit when the inmates started to take advantage of his kindness. Gordo was a humble man but often the inmates underestimated him and took the liberty of stealing from him right out from under his nose. That's when Gordo would “throw down” or “pop off“ as the inmates like to call it. I even got the privilege of taking a good look at his home made shank made of plastic. Gordo was half bald and had quite the potbelly on him but with the way he carried himself I imagined that he did alright with the ladies. Although society would deem him a thug one would hardly think so after watching the way he treated other people. He was kind towards everyone and showed respect to even the small fish in jail. Gordo was the type of guy that would never cut in line or be seen shouting like a fool. He was determined to do his time the way it should be done. Having consideration for others.

I watched closely as he tugged on a loose string at the bottom of his green jumper. I could tell an interesting question was coming because he started to look around for ear hustlers.

“ You think they might let you go home today?” He finally asked.

They say misery loves company so I tried not to act too thrilled around these other Federal inmates that could be facing 10-life. I had once been in their shoes and really hated the small timers that came through the system and acted all giddy all the time. They were dubbed a mockery to the system.

“ I don't know what to think Gordo. My public pretender really didn't say. I've been locked up 9 months now and my guidelines call for 3-9 months. I've already gone all the way on this one. You'd think after all this I should definitely be entitled to my last pay check.”

Gordo just smiled that clever smile of his. I think he had a pretty good hunch that I was going home today. It made no sense why the Feds were sweating a minor disruption at work.

“Man.....they really got you good. Stole money from you AND put you in jail. That's gangsta!”

I didn't dismiss the idea that maybe the flagging company I had worked for were gangsters. How they were above the law I really didn't know.

I stared at an army of ants fighting over a bread crumb."A radio too. My uncle had given me that radio."

Gordo looked up with assurance in his eyes."You'll be alright. You can always find another job."

"Thanks for the encouragement. Do you think you'll do alright today?"

"I already signed a deal for 8 years with my lawyer and the prosecutor agreed. I'm pretty sure the judge will go along with it."

I knew how these court cases usually panned out because I'd seen and heard so many."Yeah if the prosecutor agreed then you have nothing to worry about. Just remember what I told you about Federal prison. It's not nearly as bad as this county crap. They have a bigger budget so there will be more things for you to do." I said speaking from experience.

Our conversation was suddenly curtailed by the loud jingling sound of a humongous key being shoved into our cell door lock. The door swung open and a tall man covered in Marine tattoos looked at us as if we were nobodies. The man dressed in blue looked at me and pointed his key at me.

"Steidler get ready, your on deck!"

Chapter Seven

It all seemed so surreal. Everything was the same as it was years ago except for one thing. Me. I wasn't the same. I was no longer afraid of these people and I knew that there would be no tears shed today. I once described jail as a roller coaster. It looks daunting and scary at first but once you've done it you find yourself doing it over and over again until the point where it almost seems fun. One thing I noticed about the court room was it was very clean. That only led me to believe that it didn't get used much. And that of course could only mean one thing. Federal crimes don't happen that often. *So why would the Feds pick up a case so silly as an X- employee gluing himself to a chair?* I didn't know. But God knew.

Not entirely everything was the same as it had been 7 years ago. It didn't feel like today was my show. I noticed that the attorney seemed to be paying most attention to my mother. Perhaps they had questions like *what kind of record was her son trying to make? Why hadn't he gone big and brought more to the table? Was this entire case a ruse just to tickle them?* Only God would know the real reason why.

We all took our seats as we waited for the judge to enter the courtroom. I sneaked a few furtive glances at my prosecutor but did my best to remain calm. It felt so good to be able to wear pants and a dress shirt. What I was wearing was the exact same clothes I had on when they had arrested me 9 months ago. My white cargo pants I was all but swimming in and my pink dress shirt now smelled like stinky armpit. I noticed my mother sitting in the back all alone wearing a dress that looked like it might have been in style back in the 50's. My prosecutor also was wearing a dress but hers was more in style and I didn't notice a bun in the oven like there was the day she first prosecuted me. It was getting very quiet in the courtroom. They stopped questioning mother and now all eyes were on me.

I suddenly felt the urge to entertain my overseers. I started off by steepling my fingers and relaxing just a bit. Just 2 years ago I had borrowed the book *Reading Body Language* from my local library and had learned quite a few things. The book had even mentioned to notice which direction a person's foot is pointing when you are standing with a group of people talking. Evidently whoever the foot is pointed at is supposed to show the mind set of that person. I looked over once more at my prosecutor to see if she was entertained by my steepling show. According to the book she was intrigued because I watched her stroking her hair which was what women did when they showed interest. But it could just be my imagination. Our gesture contest was interrupted by that old familiar voice.

“All rise!” Came a voice from out of nowhere.

I had to stand up slowly and keep my legs spread apart to keep my pants from falling down. I was almost 35 pounds lighter than when I had first come in. It wasn't all fat I had lost. I knew I had lost a lot of muscle as well. My head was shaved but there was stubble on my face. The prisons no longer allow us to use razors when we shave and the hair clippers we used did a horrible job. I still couldn't believe the prison had a right to charge us \$13.00 for a haircut when all we could earn was a dollar a day. Many of the indigent inmates would cut their own hair with the shaving clippers and take a day in solitary confinement rather than part with the \$13.00. It made sense but I always parted with the \$13.00 instead of breaking the prison rules.

The Federal judge stormed into the courtroom at a record speed. I could tell that this was going to be over fast by the look on his face. I had a hunch I could be going home today and didn't see the point in dragging this out. They had already sucked more than enough time out of me for my Rosa Parks stunt at the Flagging company.

“Please be seated.” Were the first words out of the judge.

He had aged quite a bit over the years. His hair looked more like salt and less like pepper. The black robe he was wearing was too big to be able to tell if he had gained any weight. The black framed glasses were very much the same. He no longer looked just like my pastor back home. I often

wondered why after 9 months I never heard anything from my pastor back home but I had guessed that maybe he assumed I was comfortable in my second home and saw no need for a visit. It made me wonder sometimes if the situation would be the same if I was a really attractive girl. It remained quiet in the courtroom as the honorable judge read over my rap sheet. I prayed that after today the pile would no longer get any bigger. I wasn't getting any younger and didn't relish the idea of spending any more of my life sleeping on that piece of steel.

A few grunts from the judge. He kept his right hand on the tip of his glasses as he read over some of the doctored material. I deduced that maybe he was counting exclamation points to amuse himself. "Has Mr. Steidler been paying on his fine?" He asked getting straight to the point.

A burly black man dressed up in suit and tie rose up from the middle of the courtroom. I had never seen my probation officer dressed up like this before. "We have met satisfactory your Honor. Mr. Steidler is paid in full."

Always the money, I thought to myself, *these guys are thinking about which new swimming pool to buy while us convicts are staring at \$14.00 paychecks after standing in long pants and heavy work boots in the hot sun.* My attorney leaned over to whisper into my ear. "Didn't you say that you think that your uncle can get you a job?"

I tried to whisper back but got choked up on my words. I tried once again and the words finally came out. "I think so but he lives in Maryland. Am I allowed to live in Maryland?"

My question got ignored and my attorney sprung up from his chair and took the floor. I crossed my fingers and hoped that he wouldn't get all wound up when he spoke. During my preliminary hearing I could hear him yelling behind closed doors and my last attorney had warned me that this Federal judge liked dealing with nice people. My attorney droned on for a while about nothing of major importance but I did notice the judge's ears perk up when it got mentioned I had gone to school for my CDL. No trucking company had ever given me a chance and I ended up procuring work for a shady flagging company that often gave me paychecks for less than a hundred dollars. Altogether my company had browbeat me on my paychecks 6 times. An exact \$403.00 shortage on my very first paycheck but I managed to live through the beatings for 15 months before I finally snapped. The company already had a history of employees getting a little out of hand but because the media had dubbed me a terrorist in 2005, I was automatically deemed a threat. (I had threatened nobody. Nor had I used any profane language other than the word "prick".)

The court proceedings went on and I began to day dream like I usually do. I couldn't help but think about Acts 16:25-26

Acts 16:25-26 KJV

And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them. And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed.

As the courtroom drama continued I tried my best to pay attention. I didn't sing out loud praises

to God but I did do my fair share of daydreaming. I wanted out of jail but I couldn't help but wonder what God had in store for me after I got released. It would be immature of me to start singing praises right in the middle of a court proceeding but I couldn't help but think of my cellmate Danny. I would definitely have to give kudos to a guy like Danny because busting out some Biblical tunes right in the middle of a courtroom proceeding would be right up his alley. Danny loved attention and although he had screwed up a million times in life he always made a habit to keep God in his conversations when he came to jail. The nurses loved him and even the guards were amused with all of his stories of what led him to jail “ *Which girl is it this time?*” They would ask as he would come on the block.

The Biblical story continues with Paul and Silas mostly because they do not leave once God knocks the prison walls down. It says in verse 27 that the guard draws out his sword and gets ready to kill himself because he assumes that his prisoners will escape. In verse 28 Paul says to the guard “ *Do thyself no harm: for we are all here.*” What is so inspiring about this Biblical story is that the incident leads to a salvation. In verse 30 the guard finally asks Paul and Silas “ *Sirs, what must I do to be saved?*”

It was great that such a wild Biblical story could lead to a salvation. I couldn't help but wonder how God felt about the number of people I had led to Christ. Zero. So many lost souls behind bars and now I was about to leave prison as nothing more than a ghost. “ *A Ghost*” Is what the chief psychiatrist at Dauphin County Prison had described me as. I kept to myself and spent most of my time staring at the walls daydreaming about story ideas. Although I'm 6 ft.3 inches tall I lived like such a recluse that inmates would accidentally bump into me when coming around corners and such. Or they would be walking backwards and not even realize I was there.

The Federal Judge lowered his glasses to get a better look at me. Perhaps to him I looked like more than a ghost. At least today anyways.

“ Mr.Steidler we want to see you continue on with your psychiatric treatment do I make myself clear?”

I straightened up in my chair.”Yes your Honor.”

I watched my probation officer stand up and look at the prosecutor for approval. She nodded and the big man spoke.” Your Honor the prosecutor and I both agree that Mr.Steidler should be released today as long as he is compliant with his treatment. We would like him to undergo a month of inpatient care which we will be paying for just to make sure he's okay.”

The Judge looked deep into my soul with those quizzical eyes of his. I was getting a bit nervous. “ Does this sound good to you Mr.Steidler?”

“Yes your Honor.”

“Is it agreed that I won't ever be seeing you again?”

It was my only cocksure moment of the day.” That's right your Honor, you will never see me again.” I said with certainty exuding from my voice.

The sound of the gavel falling was like sweet music to my ears. I was a free man! I was free to go out into the world and tell people about Jesus!

Chapter Eight

In just 3 months after my release I couldn't believe what I was staring at. I read over the question on the application once more just to make sure that I wasn't hallucinating.

Have you ever been convicted of a crime excluding misdemeanors and felonies?

Really? Did I just read "Excluding"? Weren't all crimes either one or the other? What kind of moron put together this application?

A big smile jumped on my face as I proudly checked off "No". I was very much sure that every crime that I had been convicted of was either a misdemeanor or a felony and I could really use this job. I needed to pay off the substantial fines that the county was nailing me with and I knew this job could help me a lot. If I could get this job I could even go back to a wonderful life with chicken wings.

A few weeks later the good Lord looked out for me and I got the job. Before I started work I was told to go back to the truck driving school and take a refresher course which I would be paying for out of my own pocket. I would get reimbursed half of the money after 9 months with the company and the other half if I made it 18 months. I am proud to say that I made it 9 months with the company before they terminated me. One of the other drivers surmised that I would only last two weeks so God knows that I am a big success story! Now that I don't have to wake up at 3am every morning and sit in a truck all day I can tell people about Jesus via my books!

Colossians 3:23-24 (KJV)

And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.

I do firmly believe that God no longer wanted me to drive truck for a reason. The routes were getting difficult and my employer wasn't to happy about the tire tracks that I inadvertently left in an attorney's yard. Now that the job was gone I knew this was a good time to focus on my writings and do

it heartily as unto the Lord. As it mentions at the end of the verse I no longer serve the trucking company, I serve the Lord Christ.

God has blessed this country in so many ways and I feel he has a special plan for each and every one of us. We are all meant to be beacons for Christ and spread the good news about God's love. Because of my mental illness it was hard for me to strike a conversation with strangers. I often found myself in a poopy pants mood because I was always being taunted by the voices in my head. Sometimes good Christian people would invite me to their churches and we would be seated in the front row. Satan's voices would be telling me jokes while the pastor would try to preach. I would eventually lose control to the point where I'd burst out laughing. I would get mad at myself and promise myself that I was never coming back again. Sometimes God would look out for me and the Pastor would soon tell a joke so I could let out the rest of my giggles. When that joke finally came the rest of the congregation was laughing at what the pastor had just said while I was still laughing about a joke that came from Satan.

Sitting in the front row of church can be a positive thing. You will be able to pay attention better to the sermon but keep in mind the congregation sitting behind you will also be able to pay attention to you! It will be easier for the church to notice that whisper or note passing that so many people do in the services these days. I didn't enjoy the last time that I had sat in the front row of my brother's church for a baby dedication for my nephew. I can still remember what the pastor said to me when he saw me sitting in the front row. *"Hey Blake it's good to see you sitting all the way up here in the front did you get saved?"* Was verbatim his words. Really? Was he implying that only the saved people sat in the front? I thought I had already told people I gave my life to Christ 5/5/2007. Why would he joke about my faith? After 3 years with that church God finally called me to attend another church. I couldn't wait to try out a church that I learned about in the newspaper that was just starting up. The new church had a really cool name. Freedom Path. And I was on a quest to freedom!

Chapter Nine

Freedom Path was a church a bit smaller than what I had expected. It was a small building being rented out behind a really big Mennonite church. Although the congregation didn't consist of more than maybe 20 people it was a step up from where the pastor had been used to preaching from. His home.

The rent was being paid for by another church until Freedom Path could get on it's feet. What made the church so nice was that the service didn't start until 11am so you didn't feel pressured to get to bed early the night before. I still remember what it was like on the first day of visiting. The pastor wanted to say hello to me after the service. He was a big man. It felt as though I had once seen this man before.

“Hello I'm pastor Jim. What's your name?”

“Blake” I replied softly.

“Blake? The name doesn't ring a bell but you look familiar. Where do I know you from?”

I felt a sharp pang of trepidation in my stomach. The pieces were coming together. I was pretty sure I also had seen this man before. Unfortunately it was under different circumstances. Jail. Was this the man that had held my shoulder while talking in tongues? Was that why God had this pastor talk to me in tongues that day so I would remember? Was Pastor Jim involved in a prison ministry?

The other members in the church were ear hustling. I was at a loss of words. I really didn't want to scare off these people with my past. Lancaster County is full of red blooded republicans that celebrated when Manheim township refused to allow the state to build a halfway house in their town. They described the refusal as a “victory”. Two weeks later the newspaper published an article about a loving couple outside of Lancaster County doing their best to keep a halfway house afloat and down to their last 89 cents. God bless their souls. Too bad they couldn't get any help from the well-heeled people of Manheim Township. They were too busy celebrating their victory.

I shrugged my shoulders.” I dunno, I'm not sure where we bumped into each other. I liked the service though.”

Pastor Jim smiled.” That's great! Are you coming back next week?”

“Sure!” I said excitedly. I was happy I could become a part of this church. Pastor Jim was a down to earth guy and his jokes were actually funny unlike my last pastor that tried to charm the members with goofy “*Dilbert*” humor. It was a lot easier for me to assimilate the messages with this pastor, and I felt that's what God wanted.

My next Sunday at Freedom Path was a little bit different. After the service the pastor advised us all to stick around and share with each other stories of our salvation. The church was small and didn't have pews. Instead we all sat at round tables so that we could see one another. Among our group was the pastor's wife. She had told us that she had been saved since the age of 7 and had for the most part lived a scrupulous life. When it was my turn I tried my best to be succinct. I never had any intentions of letting these people figure out I had spent most of my 20's in the big house.

It was my turn. I told them the truth but had no intentions of including jail into any part of my conversation.”Well, I can't remember the exact age I was when I got saved but I remember the exact date,” I said trying to think back.

A blond haired woman that worked with handicapped kids looked at me quizzically.”And what date was that?”

“May 5th, 2007 the day is always easy for me to remember because I just think of Cinco De Mayo. That's some sort of Spanish holiday.”

“And how did you get saved?” Asked the pastor's wife.

“Well I met a short little Spanish guy named Richard. He was covered in tattoos and had experienced much adversity. His mother had passed away and he didn't have much going on but he still had good things to say about God. I draw closer to my faith when I meet people that don't have much reason to give God the glory but still do it anyway.”

Blond haired lady looked at me.” So you were living at a different place?”

I felt my face redden. *What was she insinuating? Jail? Had I mentioned Jail? Had these people already googled my name or tried to look me up on facebook?* I was already getting paranoid.

“Yeah, I suppose I was living somewhere else back then.” I looked at my watch, “Excuse me ladies it's getting way past my lunch time I have to go.”

I tossed my styrofoam empty coffee cup into the trash and walked out to my car. I liked this church a lot, the messages were good, but who's idea was it to do the mandated social meetings after the service? Did they encourage these kinds of things in the olden Biblical days?

I didn't know many Bible verses that gave God's input concerning socials after church. I did know that when God was sitting with his 12 disciples that there was a lot of conversation going on. Jesus was always noted as being sociable and often used parables in his stories. I thought about these things as I nosed out of the parking lot and made my way home. I began to ponder just what exactly it was that I wanted from this church. Or had going to church become nothing more than just a habit? I listed the things in my head that I wanted from Freedom Path in order of importance.

1. Making the number one focus on God.
2. No deacons rubbernecking during the offering.
3. No politics being discussed in the Lord's house
4. A funny joke every 20 minutes to keep my attention would be nice.

As I drove my little car home I couldn't help but recall what the attendance was like at my brother's church that I had attended for 3 years. Sometimes the church got so full that I had to park all the way down at the end of the street. There were even times when I had to sit a little too close to someone because the pews got so full and I ended up out of my comfort zone. I couldn't help but ask myself what made my brother's church so successful? What had the pastor done all those years to keep the people coming back? What was his secret ingredient? After playing back in my mind a million different services it finally dawned on me what it was that made the sermons so successful. God! Each and every sermon focused primarily on God and I couldn't recall a single sermon where the pastor had ever had the entire message revolve around politics. So why had I stopped attending my brother's church? I knew the real reason why. A grudge. I was still upset that after 3 years with the church nobody had ever tried to set me up with a lady friend. I didn't consider myself a bad looking guy. I didn't drink or smoke and I always had a set of wheels so what gives? Didn't anybody in the church have a nice sister my age or a cousin that was single?

I haven't found it anywhere in the Bible but there is an old saying that says "God only helps them that help themselves" There sure is a lot of truth to that, especially when it comes to looking for employment. My last three jobs I had found were all found on my own. When God wants us to have something he will motivate us to go out and get it. We should be going to church because that's what God expects from us. God knows how many hairs are on our head so I guess when we get to church there is no need to be looking around and doing head counts. Freedom Path was an extremely small church with no girls my age but that shouldn't keep me from going. It clearly says in Luke 8:11 that the seed is the word of God. My new church may only have a few members but it only takes a small seed for something big to grow! Pastor Jim was a good preacher and as long as he continued to teach us the word of God I knew that there were plenty of people out there hungry for the word of God. They would eventually want to meet Pastor Jim!

Chapter Ten

Matthew 11:28-30 (KJV)

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

The trucking gig was becoming a thing of the past. I was so frustrated when they fired me that I left almost \$1000.00 worth of GPS equipment for the next sucker that came along. The 9 months of driving box trucks didn't count towards any experience for my CDL because the trucks were non-CDL. I knew that God would make me a mighty fine truck driver one day but my termination was a clear sign that he wanted me to finish up my story telling others about him! As it clearly states in verse 28 *Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*

By mid July I realized that I had written a good 20 pages about God. I wanted to write a 500 page book about our Lord and savior but for the time being I was glad that I had come up with more than 2 pages! I tried studying my Bible a little bit more and found myself focusing on the King James Version. I guess because of my Baptist upbringing I didn't exactly trust the other versions and didn't want to lead anybody down the wrong path! I could still see in the back of my mind a gospel tract I had once found at my parents church and could clearly recall the bold lettering on the front cover. **NIV**

VERSION PERVERSE! Was the front cover. I wasn't sure what the word "perverse" meant but it sure didn't sound like a nice word.

Later I checked the free online dictionary about the word "perverse" and it said this *Directed away from what is right or good; 2 Obstinately persisting in an error or fault; wrongly self-willed or stubborn.*

My curiosity was piqued by the gospel tract but I never took the time to do the research to figure out just what perverse teachings were in the NIV Bible. It had always seemed to me that the newer versions of the Bible seemed to keep us on good track for God. I have never been to Bible College but I'm sure if I went they could teach me all of those kinds of things. I once had flagged with a nice gentleman that had attended a good Bible college but deviated from Christianity because he said that Christian Theology was just a bunch of Hooey. I didn't know what caused his deviation but I still regret till this day that I never tried to bring him back to his faith. I guess I too would be a little upset if my parents spent all kinds of money to send me to a good Christian College and later in life I was stuck standing outside holding a big goofy red flag. God always has a reason for the things that he lets happen in our lives and he doesn't always promise that things will be easy. The book of Job talks a lot about God allowing Satan to bestow hard times upon him to test his faith. The second test that God allowed always seemed to be the toughest one of all. Jeopardizing his health.

Job 2:4-7 (KJV)

And Satan answered the Lord, and said, Skin for Skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life. But put forth thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, (Satan talking) and he will curse thee to thy face. And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold, he is in thine; but save his life. So went Satan forth from the presence of the Lord, and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown.

It is quite evident that Job was a strong Christian. Such a strong believer in God that God had enough faith in him to allow the devil to test him and torment him. Even his health. I have always believed that things can be replaced in life but God has our utmost attention when we start to have problems with our health. God allowed the devil to inflict pain upon Job but he clearly states that Satan was not allowed to take Job's life. The story of Job is an inspiration to all of us especially when we have to undergo the tough times. Even some of the strongest Christians we see in the community can't help but let a curse word slip out when we encounter pain. Maybe a softball whamming us in the back of the head. Maybe a miss of the hammer when we nail our finger instead of the nail we were aiming for. Job was such a strong Christian that he would have been able to control his language and endure the pain. God wants us to be like Job.

The biggest obstacles that I had to face growing up were the patterns of other people's ignorance towards me. Over the years I was becoming more and more delirious and continually found myself questioning other people's motives. Perhaps God was causing a lot of these Freudian slips that people in the community constantly bestowed upon me. Maybe my text messages I'd sent never got read, maybe my coffee was served to me in a small cup when I payed for a medium, Maybe even my fines I payed never even managed to be credited properly. I was noticing a lot of things in life and it was inducing a heavy paranoia.

I never discussed my past while I was trucking those 9 months but something big had happened in Boston that ended up putting me back in the media spotlight. It had been 8 years since I had touched any explosives and yet even after the Boston Bombing attack the media still felt compelled to write about me in the paper when Lancaster Newspaper wanted to discuss bombings in the past. How a homemade firecracker literally the size of my thumb could be dubbed a WMD was beyond my comprehension but it didn't stop the media from having a circus with me. When I saw the article in the paper I was very nervous about going to work the next day. I had never hurt anyone in life but did I really have to worry about media exposure every time some eccentric person planted a bomb? My case never involved politics it was something between me and a plastic surgeon. A plastic surgeon that was later forced to give up his license.

I may have to undergo more Freudian slips from people in the community but God wants me to be like Job and continue to move on. I am coming very close to completing my probation time with the Feds and then all I have to do is wait two more years and I will be allowed to legally change my name. God will continue to give me the strength I will need to deal with the paranoia I face when I worry about any potential dates looking me up on FaceBook or running my name through a search engine. It was hard to fathom sometimes how the media had the right to distort conjured up stories about my body parts and even my mental health. I thought a lot of it violated my HIPPA rights but I was smart enough not to bother asking for assistance from an attorney. I still remember reading Christian joke books in jail and being able to glean some animosity towards Lawyers. *What do you call 2000 lawyers buried under the sea? A good start!* The Christian joke book had said. Did Christians not like attorneys? Was it maybe because attorneys were not always honest? Only God knows for sure.

Success story. Everybody in this world loves to hear the success stories. I am just a shy humble man fighting my own demons but even I like to hear about the success stories. Maybe somebody battling cancer. Maybe a small business suddenly beginning to thrive. A child in a wheel chair hitting a home run. An overweight person losing 200 pounds. All these great accomplishments that man has achieved has come from God. Even as I write this book about what God can do for us I realize that even I may be a success story to somebody. I don't know how far I will get with this book but I am still trying my best to glorify God and give him all the credit. I know with my mental condition I may lose track when I write. The topics may deviate, my audience may get confused. But it's all in the will of God. I have always been a firm believer that *practice makes perfect* so maybe after I complete this story God will give me the strength to write another book about him! One of the greatest verses to keep in mind in times of fear and stress is in the book of Psalm.

Psalm 23:1-6 (KJV)

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

We can't go wrong if we continue a walk with Christ. It clearly states in the last verse that goodness and mercy will follow us all the days of our lives and we will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever!

Chapter Eleven

By the time I reached the 11th chapter of this story I knew that I was going to need God's help with finishing it. I wondered if my audience would understand that I have gone further with this story than I would have ever imagined. I do always finish everything that I set out to do but people don't understand that finishing my endeavors can sometimes take years. Even though I was writing this story for God I would still get writer's block. It has only been 19 days since I lost my job due to too many whoopsie doodles with the box truck. I know that right now as I type this story God is up above looking down on me. I feel at this moment he wants me to at least get a few more pages done because there are so many lost souls out there that need to be saved.

I am only one man here on this Earth to inform others the good news about God but I keep in mind that not everyone has the gift to be able to write. The Bible is a very large book but keep in mind it is actually 66 books all thrown together and not written by just one man. Research proves that the King James Version is the oldest version up until man created other versions to help us better understand the word of God. Sometimes when I think of church I ask myself this simple question. What is the negative outcome of coming to the Lord's place? We hear over and over again on the news that when the economy really begins to worsen that people cling to either guns or religion. Guns or religion? Do they go hand and hand? A gun can get you a quick ticket to jail but where can you go wrong with God? Does your church leave you with a \$60.00 bar tab and a really bad hangover? Of course not! God wants us in church so we can be safe from harm and glorify him. Many doctors and psychiatrists admit that spiritual healing can be very helpful to many patients. So then why doesn't everybody come to church?

Hebrews 10:25 (NIV)

Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another- and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

Halfway through the verse it mentions about some already in the habit of going to church. Generally “habits” are deemed as negative but if we can get ourselves into the habit of going to church we can grow in the Lord and help serve others. As I write this story I am excited because I know that God is using me as a tool to witness to others. I can hardly wait to pass out copies of this story because I know that I will do my best to Glorify God to the best of my ability in this book. Maybe there is someone out there that is lost. Maybe they are feeling that “ Empty Hole” in there lives and they just can't seem to find happiness.

Maybe you have everything anyone could ever ask for but do you have the love of God? Can others see Jesus in you? Are there things that you can do that will allow others to see the love of Jesus inside of you? Just speaking for myself I know that I struggle with that. My handicaps are not ostensible so I often feel that my facial expressions get misconstrued. But God has a plan for me! And he's using me right now to witness to you!

The Bible does often mention stories about poor health and sickness and one of the most interesting stories is the one about God healing a man with leprosy. Leprosy is a nasty skin disease that they were getting in Biblical times. It causes skin sores, nerve damage, and muscle weakness that gets worse over time. In the book of Matthew there is a story about God healing a man with leprosy and making him clean.

Matthew 8:1-4 (KJV)

When he was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him. And, behold, there came a leper and worshipped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. And Jesus put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, *I will; be thou clean.* And immediately his leprosy was cleansed. And Jesus saith unto him, *See thou tell no man; but go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.*

God has performed so many miracles that it got to the point that he had to keep it low key. As it mentions in the verses above *See thou tell no man.* When we go to church we don't always see all the *hidden blessings.* For years I had been going to church and offering very few *hidden blessings* of my own to the church. Some people don't fully understand all the time and effort that goes into the church that doesn't always get recognized. Sometimes the choir has to practice for hours. The woman that always gets stuck doing the nursery probably doesn't care to hear screaming babies all day. The girl that sang the solo in front of the congregation may have been practicing for hours the night before when she could be out bowling with her friends. Ever ask yourself who does all the mowing on the church property? We all have something we can do to pitch in for the church. What have you done?

Chapter Twelve

The very first book that I ever read and fully assimilated was a book titled "I'm Gonna Bury You" by a christian author named Gene Neill. I read the book when I was just 23 years old and in Federal custody awaiting sentencing. I specifically chose the book not just because it was a true story by a christian

author but because the book was only 210 pages long and it was the shortest book I could find in prison. All throughout high school I had always been a big daydreamer and cheated on all my book reports. I would make up stories about what I thought the book was about and would hope that my English teacher never read the book. As far as I can remember most of the time it worked. After I finished reading “I’m Gonna Bury You” I was so proud of myself that I wrote a letter to tell my mother. Months later I challenged myself even more and soon found myself reading 400 page books. Months later I gave it a shot of trying to write books of my own.

I have not heard of a lot of success stories about prisoners writing books and having much luck with it. What did astonish me was that a lot of them had a skill with writing children's books. Children's books? I couldn't help but ask myself why? After meeting so many different inmates throughout my life it started to make sense why some of them had a skill with writing children's books. Because a lot of them had the mindset of a child! A quick tour of almost just about any prison would surely lead people to portray a great majority of inmates as overgrown children. Perhaps their parents didn't do *time outs* when they were growing up so they opted to take them as adults. Who really knows?

As I write this book I realize that however far I get with it is all up to the will of God. The reason I have titled this book “Never Meant To Sell” is because I am already dubious about how large of an audience it will reach. I have three published books already that have not sold any more than 10 copies. I have spent thousands in publishing costs but yielded almost next to nothing. My very first novel has done so little that it has even been removed from my publisher's website. But I ask myself this question. Does any of it glorify God? Would my work make my Grandparents proud? Was it material suitable for the church? Of course not. God was punishing me for not using my skills to glorify him. Even as I write this book I have to ask God for help because I know that there is a good chance that the subjects in this story will bounce around. But God has control!

Encouragement is a gift that God has blessed everyone with. We all have the power to encourage others just as I encourage you to read your Bible. Many smart people in this world understand the importance of encouragement and utilize it as much as they can. I have been running a lot of 5k runs this year and I noticed that I tend to do better with the encouragement of others. Encouragement can also help business people be successful. I once sat in on a pyramid scheme meeting and the topic was about teamwork. A big poster spelled out T-E-A-M which then spelled out “Together Everyone Achieves More.”

1 Thessalonians 5:11 (KJV)

Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.

This verse is very succinct but also very important. It is a known fact that people like to gravitate towards positive energy and can be very useful in the working environment. Sometimes I feel that the Philadelphia Eagles can't seem to win a Super Bowl because they have such negative fans. It takes effort to encourage others but keep in mind that's what God wants from us. Perhaps maybe you have a coworker that isn't quite up to speed with everyone else. Why not take a chance at encouraging him or her? You will be surprised at how that person's production will rise. Even the government that is supposed to know everything realizes that you can get more work out of a mule with a sugar cube than you can by beating it with a stick. Usually when you think of a specific person or even a specific group

of people there is always a first word that pops into mind. When I think of the Amish the first word that pops into mind is “work”. That word pops into mind because I always see them working hard. I used to love walking the dog in the new developments under construction because I always knew what group of people were building it long before I was in range to even get a good look at them. **Whack! Bang! Boom!** I used to hear as I would round a corner to a new house being built. The houses always seemed to go up faster when a group of Amish was building them. The next week I would watch a normal group of contractors trying to build a house and it was always very quiet! The only noise that could be heard was the sound of a butt being scratched.

When I think of a nice married lady that faithfully attends my brother's church a different first word always pops into mind. Encouragement! She had spent most of her life encouraging others including her children. With all 4 of her kids being very successful it is easy to understand the power of encouraging others. It takes effort for us to encourage others but I believe we will be rewarded in heaven.

So what first word pops into mind when others think about you?

Proverbs 3:5-6 (KJV)

Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

The Bible clearly states that if we trust in the Lord with all our heart that he will help us. Isn't it a good feeling to know that we can also receive encouragement from God? God knows when we are feeling down and he also knows when we are in danger. I have done some dangerous things in life but God has sent his guardian angels to protect me. I never did let my boss know just how many times I had been flicked off by disheveled motorists on the road when I was driving truck. God's Angels had protected me! Sometimes when I would receive a paycheck I would also joke in my mind if maybe my company also had a paycheck for my guardian angels. I knew they wouldn't have a sense of humor like that so I often kept my comments to myself. I am just blessed that after completing trucking school that God gave me an opportunity to at least try even if it didn't work out. Now God has blessed me with the opportunity to witness to others via my books. I am under the encouragement of God! Will you please go out and encourage someone today?

Chapter Thirteen

God has a purpose for each and every one of our lives. In God's eyes the man riding along on the back of the trash truck is just as important as the deputy warden. He loves each and every one of us and is very pleased when we shine for him. I have nobody to help me write this story but that's mostly because God wants it this way. Spending Christmas in jail in a cell by myself was not the only time I had gotten the opportunity to feel God's presence. At the age of 24 I had a near death experience in which I was severely dehydrated. I was so dehydrated that they told me I was literally one hour away from death. To this day I have always referred to this near death experience as "Blue" because that's really all I remember seeing.

In August of 2005 I woke up in a Federal Medical Center in North Carolina and literally thought I was on a space ship. My entire body had turned orange except for all the purple bruises under my shoulders. There was 2 weeks of my life that I couldn't remember and somehow I had ended up in Butner North Carolina. My heels hurt so bad I had to keep them propped up on the bed because they were so badly bruised. My strength was so weak I could not talk full sentences to the doctors asking me questions. I watched a nurse remove a catheter tube with my urine in it that looked as dark as apple cider. A bald headed guy was standing over me and taking notes. His glasses looked like a million bucks. I was too weak to really think or focus. I mostly was just curious how I had landed on this space ship.

"Do you know who I am?" Asked the bald guy in the big white smock.

I blinked a few times. I used all my strength to reply."No. Where am I?"

"I'm Dr.Herbal. I'm the chief psychiatrist. You're at a Federal Medical Center in Butner North Carolina. Do you realize you were just one hour away from death?"

I was still confused."Why?"

Dr.Herbal still appeared fascinated by everything going on."You are severely dehydrated. My staff chewed out the Marshals for the condition they brought you here in. I wrote up a good report for you."

I managed to use what little strength I had to smile a little bit."Got a public pretender doc. You know how these things work. Wont be a lawsuit."

The doctor crossed his arms."Okay very well then. They're gonna bring you lots of drinks throughout the day. Make sure you drink up okay?"

I nodded my head and watched him exit the room. It seemed that just yesterday was July 31st and I remember being in solitary confinement in Philadelphia. How did I end up in a medical center two states below? They told me that today was August 15th. What happened during those two weeks? Why did this place feel like a big giant space ship? And what about my body? Why did it look like it had been through World War 3? Why did I look like a carrot?

I ended up spending 60 days at the F.M.C in Butner NC before Dr.Herbal finally deemed me competent enough to stand trial so they could send me back to the prison in Philly. My first two weeks was spent on the 5th floor in a hospital bed until I could gain some strength. I had lost so much strength from my dehydration that I had no control over my bowels. I was only 24 years old and never thought I'd see the day where I'd be getting my diaper changed. I had a television in my room but I was so whacked out that every channel scared the living daylight out of me. All the channels except for one. The religious channel. As much as I liked television I clearly remember to this day that every channel scared me except for the one with the man standing in a suit and preaching the Bible. My dehydration had knocked me off my rocker in such a way that I even did a super long prayer followed along by a strange fork dancing ritual before I would even eat my food. It's been 8 years since then but I still remember to this day watching the perplexed look on the nurses faces as they watched my prayer ritual.

“Blue” has changed my life dramatically. To this day I still drink water a lot even if I am not thirsty simply because of the paranoia of not knowing if it will be once again taken away. The reason they had to give me a wheel chair once I left the 5th floor was because my heels were still badly bruised that I could not stand on them. They were badly bruised because evidently when I was still in solitary confinement back in Philly I was beating my heels against the steel cell door trying to get the guards attention with hopes they would bring me some water. When my 60 day study was up and I returned back to Philly for sentencing an inmate gave me the scoop as to what had happened to me and a guard described me as acting “Loopy”. Later one of my fellow inmates admitted that he witnessed me drinking out of a toilet and claims he heard me screaming from next door that my hand had gotten stuck in the toilet bowl. I do not remember these events as I mentioned earlier before I can't recall details of my life from 7/31/2005 thru 8/15/2005. Only God knows the exact details of everything that went on in my life during that time. I am just glad that I didn't kill anybody because I honestly wouldn't have remembered. One of the bigger Correctional Officers claimed he had it out with me when they had taken me to Butner. I don't recall any of it but it did explain all the bruises on my body that I noticed when I woke up.(He claims he gave it to me pretty good).

Before I left Butner to return back to Philly Dr.Herbal wished me luck and prescribed risperdal for my psychiatric symptoms. I do well with the medication and it is one of the fewer psychiatric meds that doesn't come with dry mouth as a side effect. Over the years I have had the dosage changed but I have always been afraid to stop the medication completely.”Blue” has left a big impact on my life and it has always been a constant reminder of just how quickly we can come to death. *You were just one hour away from death* the doctor had told me, but God had spared my life so I can write this story and witness to you. Maybe I'll see the day when I can get my symptoms under control and God may allow me to be an assistant pastor. An assistant pastor that might get the giggles every now and then but that's all in God's will. For the time being it has been a blessing to relay God's love for you in this story.

Always remember that God has a special plan for you!
God bless you!

THE END

