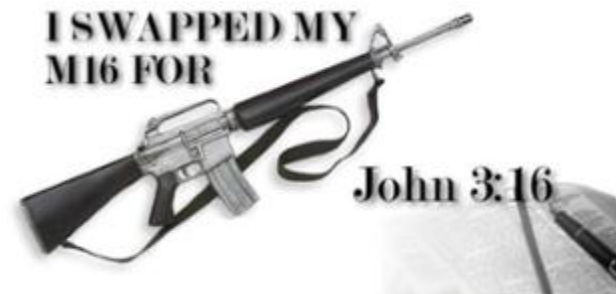


YOU CAN RUN; BUT YOU CAN'T HIDE!



My Testimony - The Year was 1974...

There was no doubt that Vietnam had caused a major change in my personality and overall bearing. I continued to refuse to believe that there was anything wrong with me. It wasn't me who had changed, it was all the Australian people who had changed for the worse. I was the innocent party in all this, so I thought. I

was headed for self-destruct and I didn't know it.

In the years after returning from Vietnam I had made a good friend with a guy called Nev. He wasn't a Vietnam Vet, but he had served in the army as a regular soldier. He and I got on really well. We had similar tastes and we both worked for MSS at our time of meeting. We were real scoundrels. We both loved a beer and weren't afraid of anything.

We were both married, had kids and the two family units got along fine. One day Nev dropped in and told me he was calling it quits in Sydney and heading to Queensland. He needed to get out of Sydney for his families sake, but more importantly to save his marriage. What was I to do? My best mate was doing a bunk. He was adamant and away they went.

My wife and I spiralled further into a rut. Our marriage was frail at best. Nothing was working for us, and I was progressively getting more anti-social. The demonstrations had taken its toll on me, and I was quite willing to call the marriage to an end.

It had been a couple of years since Nev had left. We had kept in contact, but my old drinking mate wasn't around so I had found some new ones. I had a drinking problem, along with anti-social behaviour characterised by anger and withdrawal. My marriage was at the point of no return. We had decided to do a renovation in the main bathroom. My wife and I were at constant loggerheads, and I took my rage out on the floor I was ripping up. I had a cold chisel and a hammer and I gave the floor some and a bit more too. In the midst of flying concrete, dust, profanities and rage there came a knock on the door. Kath answered it and it was Nev and his wife Helen. They had driven all through the night from Ipswich to come and get us and take us back to his place for a rest. Weird huh? Let me explain.

I put the tools down, went to the door and there was Nev – my old mate, full of smiles and as happy as Larry. I said, "Mate if I had known you were coming I would have stocked the fridge and had a bottle of JW on hand." Nev looked at me with a smile that caught my attention and said, "Dave I don't need alcohol to make me happy anymore, I have a different spirit that does the trick without the hangover." "You're kidding me Nev!" "You saying you have given up the booze?" "Yep, found peace in Queensland and we have been sent to take you back."

Now let me tell you, I would have been flattened by a feather at that point. Here was my mate, my buddy Nev telling me that he didn't need booze to be happy. Yeah right! So I invited them in and asked how they got to my place as there was no car parked in the driveway.

Here is their remarkable tale of adventure.

Nev and Helen had been picnicking on the banks of a river outside Ipswich. They had observed a church water baptism service on the banks of the river and were taken by it and the people there. There spoke to the pastor and the end result was that they decided that their life outside of Christ was failing. So, there and then, they gave their life to Jesus Christ and asked Him to be the Lord of their life. Nev said they change was immediate. He felt as he voiced the words of invitation that a fragrance come over him that gave him the feeling of cleanliness. For the first time in His life, he felt clean and free from the struggles of life. As Nev shared his conversion story, everything in me was saying, "That does it! As soon as you are finished, its out the door pal." I had seen some things in Vietnam that had convinced me that God was just a myth. A concept that had hoodwinked people for thousands of years. If there was a God, He certainly went AWOL in Vietnam big time.

Nev then told me how he came to be on my doorstep. He and Helen were praying, and he said that the Holy Spirit had spoken to him. Go to Liverpool; bring Dave and Kath and his children back to Brisbane. He was obedient to the Holy Spirit's voice and both He and Helen got in their car and drove through the night. As they approached Aspin their car broke down and they had to park it on the side of the road. They got a cab from Aspin to our home at Liverpool, (hence the absence of a car in the driveway). They said they were not going to let an old car get in the way of what God had told them to do, and they weren't going back to Queensland without us.

Nev worked on me while Helen worked on Kath about the trip north. At 2:00am the next morning we had our VW Beetle loaded up with the 3 kids and we set off for Brisbane. We drove through the night with a couple of fuel and rest stops, arriving at Nev's home at Ipswich mid morning. Were we bushed? You bet! The trip up was ok. Kath and I had decided not to fight on the way up and we didn't – to our credit

We all hit the sack for a good sleep and arose late afternoon in time for the evening meal. Most of the night was spent sharing on what had transpired since we last saw each other. I was still taken by the way Nev and Helen had come down to get us. It puzzled me and I couldn't comprehend it at all. Why would he and Helen do such a thing? They could have just rang us and asked how we were, but why down everything, leap in their car and drive all that way with a possibility of a firm rebuff at the other end? Today the phrase would be, "Go figure it out!"

Nev and Helen both kept up the God bit. Would they ever shut up? After a few days I was getting quite tired of it all and considering seriously getting in the car and driving back to Sydney, leaving my wife and kids to work out how to get home the best way they knew. On the fourth day in Ipswich, Helen and Nev had asked Kath to go to the Catholic Church at Bardon in Brisbane for their Friday night charismatic service. I objected being hauled along to the meeting, but I was convinced otherwise. We set off from Ipswich and I drove the VW with all four of us in it. The kids were being looked after by Nev's children, so we were free to cruise over to the church. About halfway along the freeway I stopped the car and threatened to get out and walk off with the keys. I told them that the best they could hope for was push the car over to the side of the road and rot. The reason for the blow-up was this. From the moment we left Nev's place he spruiked on about Jesus and how He had changed His life for the better and how I should accept

Him as my Lord and Saviour. Well the more he talked the more I got angry until I had had enough and stopped the car. Nev saw that I wasn't kidding around and said that he would get in the back seat and not talk to me about Jesus again. I was mildly happy with that and agreed. Nev jumped in the back seat and Helen took up the front seat. As soon as we got going again, Nev started up in the back seat talking about Jesus. I gave him a few expletives and he promptly replied, "I'm not talking to you, I'm talking to your wife." What could I say. He had got me and I had no come back. Helen never spoke for the rest of the journey, whilst Kath and Nev babbled on about Jesus.

When we arrived at the church in Bardon the car park was pretty full. On entering the church I was shocked to see it at near capacity of 500 people. There was a real buzz in the air with people greeting and hugging each other. Everyone was as happy as a bar full of drunks. However, none of those there were happy from alcohol. The atmosphere freaked me out a bit and I felt like bolting out the door.

The meeting started with a band playing rather up-tempo songs. Strange for a church I thought. Then again, what would I know. There was a nun sitting next to me on my left and one in front of me who both smiled at me every time our eyes met. Smile, smile, smile – it was driving me crazy. As the meeting progressed they smiled even more. When the time came to greet each other, these two nuns made a bee-line for me. "You've got to be kidding me!" I couldn't escape as we were in the middle of the row. I smiled back, told a few lies about how great I was and what a joy it was to be there. The meeting continued after some resemblance of order was obtained. A guy stood up and moved to a microphone near the altar and began to speak.

"There are two people here tonight and God wants to ask you three questions." "OK I thought. Now the inmates from the asylum have taken over." He continued on, "God wants to ask you three questions and your answer to each has a direct bearing on what the future holds for you." "Let me out of here please!" I whispered to myself.

"The first question God wants to ask you is this, 'Who am I to you?'"

As he finished asking the question I thought, "Who cares a hoot. God doesn't exist. I know He doesn't because I have been in Vietnam and there is no God. Besides I'm going mad even thinking an answer."

"The second question God wants to ask you is, 'What am I to you?'"

Again my brain began to consider the question and I found myself thinking the answer. "Nothing. You weren't there to help me in Vietnam."

When these first two questions were asked, the two nuns turned to me and smiled all the more. "What were they up to? Why were they so intent on looking at me? Wish they would put a sock in it and give me a break."

"The third question God wants to ask you is this. 'What are you to Me?'"

Without thinking I suddenly blurted, "A bloody nuisance!" It was quite audible so that everyone around me could hear. The nuns turned again and smiled at me. I felt so embarrassed that I began

looking at the floor to see if it was timber and how big the cracks were. Nev and Helen chuckled and Kath looked at me as if I was about to usher in another war.

The moment I blurted out, “A bloody nuisance,” I experienced a feeling that I can only describe as being cleaned out on the inside. As I sat there, I was totally aware of only one thing happening to me. It was as if someone had put a hose for a vacuum cleaner in my ear. All I could hear was a sucking sound and the real feeling of rubbish and baggage being replaced with a sweet fragrance. I had no recollection of the rest of the meeting other than a gentleman asking, “If anyone here wants to know more about who Jesus is, please meet with us in the room to the right rear of the sanctuary in ten minutes.” When I heard that, I was up and off over the pews. I was told later that I leaped over the alter rail and took an uninvited short-cut across the altar itself. I can’t remember what went on that room or what was said. The only thing I do know is that I came to the church cursing God and left praising Him and thanking Him for turning my life around. I asked Nev if I could borrow a Bible because I wanted to read it from cover to cover. Nev and Helen, not to mention my wife, were amazed at the transformation in me.

People told me that what I had experienced was a God moment, and real conversion. I remember having this thirst for God and a passion to see others experience the reality of meeting Jesus. I guess I must have been a right pain in those early days, but it was going to set me up for a walk with God that even today still leaves me amazed.

So here I was in 1974 a brand new Christian, praying for those who months earlier I wanted to belt. The thing that I found out was that this whole Queensland exercise was a very carefully executed plan by God to take a me, a person who was totally at risk of destroying himself and all those around me, to a place where He could intervene and change my life for the better. I had everything to gain and absolutely nothing to lose. When God calls your day of salvation out, that’s it, He goes after you. When He does, just say 'YES.' You'll be the better for it!

If God can do that for me, He can do it for you!
