



FEBRUARY 2024



*The Faith Based Solution to the
Addiction Epidemic*



I WAS IN A DARK PLACE WITH NO LIGHT IN SIGHT

My name is Sean and I am 31 years old. Growing up was normal-ish, at least until the age of 10. At that point, I was placed on ADHD medication. I didn't have a man in my life and the medication numbed my emotions. Bitterness, unforgiveness and rejection filled me.

When I went to college, I stopped taking the ADHD medication. I realized I didn't know who I really was, so I set out to find my identity. What I found was the wrong peers. I explored all earthy desires as I dove head first into all that my flesh desired. I gave Satan a foothold by not dealing with the bitterness, unforgiveness and rejection. Thinking I was in charge, I allowed things to get really dark. I began using alcohol, which progressed to marijuana, cocaine, pills, heroin and fentanyl. I was in a dark place with no light in sight and I overdosed.

Sitting at rock bottom, I'd love to say that I immediately gave my life to Christ, but I didn't. Actually, what happened was I continued to "try" to get high, but I couldn't no matter what I tried. God was working and I couldn't see it. Through my Heavenly Father's outstretched hands, I received grace and was shown mercy by being able to come into Men's Challenge of the Smokies. On March 12, 2023, I gave my life to God. He has been showing me how to be still and trust in Him...to be small and exalt Him. He has also shown me that forgiveness and releasing others can end suffering. I was baptized on June 27.

I am thankful for those who have seen the good in me when I couldn't. I'm thankful for the unconditional love from family and unfailing love from my Heavenly Father.

One of my favorite verses is Proverbs 27:19. "As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man". What that means to me is just like my reflection is seen in water, my heart will be seen by others.





We are happy to present to you Michael and Amy Stephens, our new Executive Director and Administrative Assistant. They will start February 12th. Mike Barres will continue to be on staff in a new long term, part time position called Executive Pastor (semi-retired). Pastor Mike will begin extensive training with Pastor Stephens. Betty will be retiring. We are very thankful for all she has done for us. We are very excited about the future of Men's Challenge of the Smokies as we continue to see men's lives transformed through salvation in Jesus Christ and discipleship in His Word.



My name is Dustin. I am a native of Macon County. My childhood was great growing up. I was adopted at the age of two and was an only child. A minister and his wife adopted me and took on the role of parenthood to a two year old toddler over night. My childhood consisted of church 3 times a week, plus special events. From an early age, I was held to a high standard to set an example for other youth.



My addictions didn't start until high school when I started drinking at parties. After years of heavy drinking, I was introduced to meth. After using meth, I lost everything that I cared about. I lost my license, job, home, wife, kids and was left homeless on the streets.

I knew I needed help, but my pride prevented me from asking. I was arrested and went to prison. While in prison, I surrendered my life to Jesus. I cried out to him for comfort and help. Weeks before my prison release date, I was offered the opportunity to go to Men's Challenge of the Smokies by my family and I instantly agreed. While here, I have seen many lives restored. I'm not sure what God has in store for my life, but I'm sure its better than anything I can think of. I'm thankful for family and churches that never stopped praying and mothers that never give up.

John 15:26, 27—I will send you the Spirit of truth. He will come to you from the Father and will testify all about me. And you must also testify about me...



Congratulations to George and Alden on their graduation this past month. Our next graduation will be Feb. 17, 2024, at 10:00am.

TO MAKE A DONATION:

P.O. BOX 2157, Franklin, NC 28744 /OR GIVE ONLINE at our website: www.livinghopeway.com

FOR MORE INFO, CONTACT US AT: 828-524-2157/Thrift Store: 828-586-9966

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