

Purpose

From Brokenness
to Belonging...
One Step at a Time



WADE QUINTON



PURPOSE

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A Note Before We Begin

Let me try this again.

The first revised version I put together took my original story and tightened it up. It made the point. It was cleaner. It was more concise.

And it was missing something.

It was missing some Wade.

Because that's not how I tell my story. I don't tell stories like a textbook. I ramble. I chase rabbits. I make smart-ass comments. I tell you things that make me look stupid, because they're true. Sometimes I tell you something unbelievable and then basically say, "I know how this sounds, but I was there."

That's the book I meant to write.

So this version puts some of the fat back on the bone. The forty-five-foot fall matters. The cheap guitar matters. The software career matters. The music matters. The drugs matter. The marriages matter. The stupid decisions matter. The door matters.

Especially the door.

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Because if I strip out the details that make my story sound crazy, I'm not telling you my story anymore — I'm telling you a cleaned-up version that makes everybody more comfortable. I'm not interested in that. I want you to see the whole thing.

The kid. The rebel. The entrepreneur. The sailor. The father. The musician. The businessman. The drug addict. The alcoholic. The liar. The husband who screwed up. The guy who wanted to die. The atheist. The skeptic. The guy who finally opened the Bible because he wanted to prove it wrong.

And eventually, the guy who became convinced that Jesus is exactly who He said He is.

That's me.

This book isn't a testimony that I had a perfect life. It's a testimony that God didn't waste an imperfect one.

So read it like I'm sitting across the table from you, telling you the story. And if I get a little long-winded along the way — well, welcome to the rabbit hole.

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By definition, “purpose” is the reason something is done, created, or exists. I wrote this book to help anyone who doesn't know their purpose find it. Seek and ye shall find. (Matthew 7:7)

Do you know what your purpose is? What you were born to do in this world? The reason you're here? If you're even a little unsure, my prayer is that you'll keep reading and find some direction in these pages.

It's sad how many of us stumble through life — through all its wonder, its challenges, its deceptions — wondering what our purpose is, what the meaning of life is. Why are we here? Where did we come from? How did all this come to pass? Where do I fit into this complicated world?

Now add this: we've all been programmed, lied to, and deceived since the day we were born. It's no wonder so many of us end up hopeless and confused. That confusion was done on purpose — the purpose being to deceive, to keep people lost, in bondage, in fear, in depression. And sadly, it's working, isn't it?

Here's the age-old question everyone wants answered, without a doubt: are we just a speck of dust that randomly came into existence from a Big Bang? Or is there really a God

behind this creation? We'll dig into the Big Bang as I go, so you understand it's exactly that — a theory. The short version of the theory of evolution is that billions of years ago, a mixture of elements happened to connect at just the right moment in some perfect pea soup, and eventually that “evolved” into the person you see in the mirror every morning. I used to buy into that. I don't anymore — I don't believe it's anywhere close to the truth.

Add to that the fact that evolution gets programmed into us by our “education system,” which I've relabeled the indoctrination system. If that's your current belief, that's fine — I'm not here to tear down what you believe. I'm only here to offer some perspective and tell you my story, because I used to believe exactly what you might believe now, until I started digging for the truth myself. I wanted to know — without a doubt — so I went looking.

Looking back at who I used to be and how I used to see the world, it amazes me how few of us even realize we've been lied to. We just accept what we're told, because questioning it is the hard road and accepting it is the easy one. And it starts at home, with our parents. They were the authority, and we were just kids, so we did as we were told — partly because we had no choice, and partly because we wanted their approval, their love, their acceptance. We wanted to be just like them. At least until we figured out they were messed up too.

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We've been trained to be lazy thinkers. "Just take my word for it — I'm your parent, your doctor, your teacher, your professor, your scientist." The problem is, if we haven't done our own testing, our own research, if we haven't lived it and proven it out for ourselves, we don't actually know that we know. We just believe whatever we've been handed, and we call that belief "truth." Yes — I'm talking about our seriously messed-up educational system. Not only will you be indoctrinated with these theories, there will be a test on it, and if you don't pass, you fail. You don't graduate. You might get held back a year.

So why keep reading? Who am I to say anything about anything? What do I actually know? I know this: I have purpose. You have purpose. If you're not sure what yours is, I'm asking you to keep going. Do your own research along the way — don't take my word for any of it. Come to know the truth the way I came to know it: without a doubt.

My hope is that you take this in with an open heart and an open mind. I believe it will change you for the better, and that it will open your eyes to a truth that will set you free. (John 8:32) I'll be talking about God and the Bible throughout this book, because that's the foundation of my belief system now. Understand, though — for most of my life, I didn't believe the Bible was true at all. I think my story will uncover some things that have been hidden in plain sight. At the very least, it will give you a new angle to think from. I'm not trying to

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convert you. I think you'll land somewhere on your own, or you won't. I just ask that you stay open while you read, because I think you'll find it both entertaining and eye-opening. Do your own research on everything. Use your brain. Use your logic. Go looking for the truth.

Introduction

My friend, I don't know you, and you don't know me, but if you're reading this, I already feel connected to you. I believe we're spirit beings, wrapped in flesh that's slowly running out its clock. I'd like to share my story with you, because I believe it can bring some light into your own. And maybe someday you'll share your story with someone else, the same way I hope mine encourages you.

My goal isn't to convert you to my belief system — there's no way anyone could have the faith I have now without living through the exact things I've lived through, which is what I'm about to share with you. I call this book simply Purpose. It's written on purpose, to make the case that we all have one. We were created on purpose, with a purpose, for a purpose. I pray you find yours.

Yes, I'll be talking about God Almighty, the Holy Spirit, and Jesus Christ. That's not a requirement for you to keep reading. I was an atheist for most of my life — more than thirty of my fifty-plus years on this earth. I've only been a Christian for the last twenty, and just for the record, not always a very good one. Before that scares you off, understand that I was the worst of the worst. I'm still far from perfect. But as you'll see in the pages ahead, I believe there is a God over this world, and He changed me for the

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better. He wants to reveal Himself to you too — and show you that you were created on purpose.

CHAPTER ONE

My First Impression

I was born in Virginia into what most people would call an average American home, a little over fifty years ago now. A couple of years later, we moved to Broken Arrow, Oklahoma, a suburb of Tulsa, in what's now considered the heart of the Bible Belt.

As far back as I can remember, we went to church on a fairly regular basis. We were what I'd call the average Christian family, living the American dream. Small family of four — Dad, Mom, my older sister, and me. Dad worked his way up to deacon at church, and Mom sang in the choir in the early years. From the outside looking in, we looked like a completely normal American family. Both parents were working professionals, bringing in a decent middle-class income. My sister and I lived the life expected of kids in that era — school during the week, church on the weekends, and a lot of playing with the neighborhood kids. Nothing out of the ordinary.

Don't get me wrong — I said we came from “a good Christian family,” but understand, Christians are far from perfect. They're human, just like the rest of us, and that's the first misconception we need to clear up. Believing in Jesus never meant we were perfect, or that we didn't have to battle temptation. My parents were no exception to that rule. They

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had their share of challenges, like anyone raising kids inside a marriage. Again — one of the biggest deceptions people fall for about Christians, preachers, anyone in ministry, is that they're supposed to be flawless, sinless followers of Christ. That's just not true. The Bible itself says “all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). That's exactly why we need to be born again into perfection — though it's really only the spirit that gets redeemed. The trouble is, when we watch a Christian fail and fall short, it's human nature to default straight to calling them a hypocrite.

My dad worked for Philip Morris as a sales representative, and my mother worked as a legal secretary for a law firm in Tulsa. My sister and I went to Broken Arrow schools during the day and played outside with friends in the evening until we got called in for dinner.



Age 1 · Age 8 · Age 10

As kids, we rely on our parents to help us understand the world so we can grow into people who contribute something

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to it — and, with any luck, stay out of jail and out of the grave until it's our time. What makes that complicated is that we're relying on the raising our parents got from their parents. If that chain was corrupted somewhere — bad parenting, abuse, whatever it was — those traits usually carry straight through to the next generation.

It really is fairly simple once you understand your purpose and the truth, but there are forces working against us that want us to fail. I know how it sounds — like a conspiracy theory — but there truly are forces that want you living in fear, not knowing who you are or what you're capable of, because that's how they keep control. Once you understand that, you start to see you're standing in the middle of a battle between good and evil, whether you signed up for it or not.

It becomes more apparent that you need to be a warrior, because there's a battle going on for your soul and for your livelihood. The people running things need workers for their factories, not entrepreneurs who want to build something of their own. Let me be clear — there's nothing wrong with being a worker, showing up to a job, and being good at it. Zero shame in that, and I'm not trying to discourage anyone. Figure out what you're good at, what you enjoy doing, and if you can make a living doing it, more power to you. We need police officers, firefighters, and tradesmen and women of every kind. There's real value, peace, and comfort in that kind of life.

I've personally worked more jobs, at more levels, than I can count — some of them at the same time, as you'll see in this very book. My point is this: life is short, and eternity is a long time. Forever, to be exact. You can ignore that, you can choose not to believe it, but how does that solve anything? Even if you don't believe in God or the devil, you can probably agree there are good things in this world and there are bad things. Choosing to do the right thing always works out better than choosing to do the wrong one. I've learned that the hard way, more times than I'd like to admit. What's worse is when we start accepting bad things as if they're fine — or even good — when they're not.

It's human nature to seek approval, even when what we're doing is wrong. So where do our moral standards actually come from, and why do they keep shifting? I believe we get them from God, and I believe the reason they keep changing is because we've slowly taken God out of the equation.

The battle for your belief system started the second you took your first breath. Your own parents, though they meant well, lied to you — “for your own good,” of course. Do you remember the lies you were told as a kid? Have you ever stopped to wonder why your childhood started off with lies in the first place? Personally, I'd rather know the truth about everything. I don't care how old I am — it's just better to start with the truth.

You know the ones I mean. Santa Claus. The Tooth Fairy. The Easter Bunny. I'm sure you were introduced to all three as a kid, only to find out later they were “make-believe.” I believe that's part of the programming — so that later, when someone tells you about Jesus, you already have a category ready for Him: just another make-believe story. It's worked well. I was living proof of that for a long time, and my guess is you fall into that category too, or you wouldn't be reading this book.

I mean, seriously — who came up with this, and why? What's worse is it was all a setup to move you toward believing the next set of deceptions, like the Big Bang and evolution, so you'd “accept” the “fact” that you're nothing special. Just another atom in the pea soup that popped out of nothing. And last I checked, nothing comes from nothing, but I digress. It makes me wonder — was there a meeting somewhere where someone said, “I know, let's tell the kids Santa's coming tonight so they'll behave”? Only for them to find out later that Santa isn't who they said he was. It was your parents buying the presents — or the church, if your family was struggling — just to keep the story alive. Santa's just some guy paid to wear a suit at the mall so your mom can get a cute picture for the wall, or these days, for social media. When I see that now, I think, “oh, how cute — gotta love setting your kid up to be disappointed later.” I get it, though. I've got pictures of my own kids with Santa. And me. Remind me to tell you my “I almost killed Santa once” story later —

it's funny now, but it wasn't funny at the time, since I nearly put a bullet through the man's chest. Thank God that wasn't part of my purpose.

If Santa wasn't enough to chip away at your innocence, there's also the Easter Bunny and the Tooth Fairy, even if they don't get quite the same billing. Throw in Bigfoot, unicorns, and a trip to the moon, and you'll believe just about anything — or better yet, you'll believe only what you're told to believe. So with everyone lying to you about all these “fairy tales,” why would you believe the story of Jesus? Isn't that just one more? Except when Jesus spoke, He started most of His sentences with, “I tell you the truth.” And here's the funny thing — He was.

Have you ever seen a child's face the moment they find out the truth about Santa? I have. It's heartbreaking. It's always some stranger, or worse, an older relative, who “slips” and says, “you don't still believe in Santa, do you?” And the parents scramble to patch the hope back together, but the damage is already done. Who came up with this? And more importantly — why?

Before I go any further, I want to say clearly: I hold nothing against my mother and father for what I'm about to tell you. I love them, and their spouses, unconditionally, and I've proven that I'd do anything in the world for any of them. I'm not blaming them for my own bad behavior either. I blame the evil forces working against all of us (Ephesians 6:12), the

indoctrination of the school system, some bad role models, and my own selfish ambition. Because back then, I was certain there wasn't a God — much less a Son of God named Jesus Christ, and there was no way there could be a Holy Spirit. In my mind, body, and soul, I was god. I said as much, many times, to Christians who tried to bring me to Christ. Complete blasphemy, and don't worry — I'll tell you those stories. I'm just laying the foundation so you can see that I've been changed, for sure, and something did it.

By the time I was twelve, my family had completely fallen apart. Mom and Dad slowly went from church-going Christians to full-blown hellions. They started drinking regularly, fighting all the time, and the “loving Christian family” we'd been was now a home caving in under the weight of the world. Alcohol led to other drugs, other drugs led to worse behavior, worse behavior led to more fighting, and it all ended in my parents' divorce — one more broken home in America. Sadly, that was common for a lot of marriages back then. These days people barely bother getting married at all, much less building it on a biblical foundation, but that's exactly the goal of the other side. They want you fat, sick, dumb, poor, and unhappy. Struggling just to get by, so they can either suck the life out of you, or hope you'll kill yourself, or someone else, so they can profit off you through the prison system, where they own you completely.

Honestly, it was my parents' divorce that convinced me there couldn't be a God — because if there was, He wouldn't have let it happen. I'm not blaming them for my own bad decisions, but their divorce was the start of my “there can't be a God” mindset. As you'll see later, God had a plan through all of it, exactly like He said He would (Romans 8:28). But as a twelve-year-old, I figured if there was a God running this world, He wouldn't have let this happen. “What God has joined together, let no man separate” (Mark 10:9). I had no idea how complicated this battle for the soul really was — how it works by tearing apart what a person believes.

It's not that my parents were terrible Christians. It's that I was sitting in the same church, hearing the same sermons, but with the heart and mind of a child. I believed what the preacher said, even if I couldn't understand it the way an adult would. I'd actually prayed the prayer of salvation and given my life to Christ as a kid — and here's the funny part, it didn't even happen at my own church. It was a neighbor kid's dad, a preacher at a different church, who witnessed to me one day while I was over playing. He told me about Jesus — I already knew who Jesus was, since we went to church fairly regularly — but the way he laid it out sounded like exactly what I needed, so I said, “yeah, I want that,” and I accepted Christ as my Lord and Savior without any real understanding of what that meant. I had no idea what battles were coming, or that there even was a battle, or how to fight it. I'd just signed up for a war I couldn't see.

What they don't tell you when you become a Christian is that the moment you do, you've joined a battle between good and evil, whether you know it or not. I understand now why you have to study the Word — because the second you cash that check, you've signed up for a fight in the spirit realm. You'd better know Ephesians 6:12 and put on the full armor of God, or you'll end up beaten down and broken. It doesn't have to go that way, because the battle's already been won — it's just being fought in a different realm now. Yes, it can spill into the flesh too, but it doesn't have to be a fight in the flesh. The good news is, once you understand the gifts that come with cashing that check, you're a warrior with the Word as your sword (Hebrews 4:12). But I was just a kid. I didn't know any of that, and I wasn't looking to fight — I already saw enough of that at home.

I was raised as a fighter, by a fighter. I'll never forget my first fight. I lost to some kid down the street and came home crying to my dad — I was maybe five years old. My dad wasn't having it. He showed me right then what to do and how to do it, and backed it up with, “if you don't whip him, I'm whipping you.” I'd already felt my father's temper, and that was the last thing on earth I wanted again. He dragged me down to the kid's house, knocked on the door, and told the boy's dad that I wanted a rematch. The man was confused — “my kid already beat up your kid once, and you want him to do it again?” But I was a trained fighter now, and I didn't have a choice but to win. The kid came back out, bigger, a

year older, already feeling good about himself from the first round. My dad grabbed me and said, “if you don't beat that kid to death, I'm kicking your ass all the way home.” Those were his exact words. I turned to the kid and said, “I'm sorry I have to do this,” and jumped up and kicked him in the jaw. That knocked him down, and I kept going until his dad was screaming and pulling me off him. My dad pulled me back and told the man, “if you'd like the same, I'll be happy to oblige.” We walked home with every kid on the street looking at me and my dad a little differently.

Fast-forward to age twelve, and by then I'd already watched my home life fall apart. My parents split, and we moved to Oklahoma City. More change I didn't want, and it went from bad to worse from where I was standing — and I didn't have a say in any of it. New schools, new friends, everything different, and in my opinion, all of it worse. I became an atheist because God didn't answer my prayer. My prayer was simple: that my parents would work it out and we'd be a family again. The same thing every kid in that situation wants. But since that didn't happen, I was angry at God, at the world, and at my parents.

At that point I figured Jesus was just another Santa Claus, another Easter Bunny, another Tooth Fairy. I chose to be an atheist right then, because I decided a God of love wouldn't let a family get destroyed like ours if He actually existed. By fifth grade, the school system only reinforced that disbelief,

with its own agenda to strip God completely out of the classroom. I looked it up once, and it struck me that it was June 17, 1963, when prayer in school was ruled unconstitutional in this country. That's my dad's birthday. And by that point in my life, I thought my dad was the devil. I know now it was just the forces of evil working through whatever vessel they could find — the same way God works through people, the devil knows the drill too, and he's good at his job.

The truth is, my parents failed my expectations, not God. My dad, at that time, was an abusive alcoholic and drug abuser, and my mother wasn't exactly a saint either — though she never really hurt me, even when she tried a couple of times, because by then I'd already been in enough fights to know I could've handled her if I wanted to. Of course I never wanted to, because she's my mother, and besides, she'd have told my dad, and he'd have stepped in even though he wasn't around much by that point. I'm happy to say both of them rededicated their lives to Jesus later on. Both of my parents are living miracles — I should probably write a whole book just about the two of them, so you could see the work the Lord did there. My dad has since gone home to be with the Lord, but getting him there was, honestly, hell. It's not that my parents were unusually bad Christians — they were dealing with the same challenges we all face, without knowing how to fight the unseen side of it. Like me, they became

warriors of Christ later in life, but when you sign up for that unseen battle, you're going to have trials.

I'm just glad we've all been restored, redeemed, renewed, and reborn. Thank you, Jesus. Personally, I feel like I've been to hell and back — and most people don't make it back from hell. It took me decades to understand it wasn't God doing the destroying. It was the devil and his minions, the very ones I didn't believe existed. Here's the thing about disbelief — when you don't believe in God, it's real easy to not believe in the devil either, and if you don't believe in God, the devil is happy to leave you alone, because he's already accomplished exactly what he wanted. Trust me, the second you give your life to Christ, the devil comes looking to get you back on his team, usually by convincing you that neither of them is real. That's exactly what he wants you to believe. The truth is, they're both as real as you are — they just operate in a different dimension.

It's hard to wrap your head around the idea of multiple dimensions. The best comparison I can offer is a two-dimensional drawing on a piece of paper compared to the actual three-dimensional building built from it. We're living in a multi-dimensional world, but our senses only let us catch a narrow slice of it. Think about the sounds above and below the range your ears can hear — a dog can hear frequencies you can't. Ultraviolet light is invisible until you shine a black light on it. Do your own research on this if you

want the full picture, but those examples make my point. There's a lot going on here — more than I can fit into the short version of my story — but stay with me while I try to shine some light on what I've learned, in what I call “The Matrix,” in the next chapter. I believe life is an eternal game, and there's a manual for it. I'm talking about the Bible.

Truth is, life is full of challenges, and divorce just plain sucks — there are some hard lessons buried in it. That's one I've learned well, and not just from watching other people fail. I've watched myself do it, over and over. I've been married and divorced three times, just to prove the point. The common thread in every one of those failures was me — drugs, alcohol, bad decisions, a bad self-image, and some narcissism thrown in for good measure. Not to mention selfishness, and not knowing who I was in Christ. We're called to love each other, and that's a hard thing to do when you hate yourself. I'm still a work in progress, even now, but I haven't given up hope. I know the Lord has used every ounce of my past stupidity to change me from the inside out. I pray I get married one last time, to a woman of God, until one of us — or both of us — meets the Lord, or we're caught up in the rapture (Mark 10:9). I'm starting to believe that rapture is coming sooner than most people think.

I don't blame my problems on my parents, as you'll see through this story. I take the blame — and the credit — for what was really a combination of deception, bad personal

choices, addiction, and selfishness that led me down a path of self-hatred and self-destruction, hoping the whole time to end up dead. Here's one lesson I learned the hard way: you are what you think, and your behavior will go out of its way to prove your beliefs right. If you think you're worthless, you'll act in ways that validate it. Once you see that you're actually priceless, you start doing things that build your worth instead of tearing it down.

From the outside, you'd have thought I had it made. I always had a good job, multiple income streams, good money, and I was almost always in some position of authority or management. I was a “successful entrepreneur and businessman” by the world's measuring stick. Beautiful wife, great kids, owned my home, had the nice toys — a Hummer, a boat, motorcycles — made six figures, ran a successful band. From the pictures I put out into the world, it looked like I was having a great time, because in a lot of ways, I was. I just hated myself on the inside, because I was an alcoholic and a drug abuser and I couldn't have told you exactly why.

I've been a regional country music singer-songwriter with a fair share of success on every level. Even back in my atheist days, when people chalked it up to “luck,” I always had a strong work ethic and made good money. I just never believed I was good enough on the inside, which is exactly why I worked so hard to be successful — and I was. In light of all that worldly success, the truth is, until fairly recently, I'd

never once been satisfied or at peace with myself. Sure, I had moments of “wow, this is great” and “I must be pretty awesome,” but most of what I thought about myself was negative, because I knew exactly what I was hiding from the world. Here's the irony — my bad self-image was the very thing driving me toward worldly success, and it was also the thing driving me toward self-destruction. In my own eyes, I was never good enough, no matter what I actually accomplished. It didn't matter what I made or did — I was still left with emptiness, anger, bitterness, and the feeling that I was worthless. So much so that I wanted to be dead.

Here's the first thing you have to understand: we all have problems. It's part of life. The difference is how we respond to them. We can ignore them until they blow up and deal with the wreckage afterward, or we can figure out what's actually driving our behavior and start making better choices before it gets that far. That's true whether you've accepted Christ or not — I just believe that with Christ, you have help you can't get any other way, through the Holy Spirit. Either way, it's better to face the problems head-on so you can find out how to actually live, instead of just surviving. “You will have troubles of all kinds” (James 1:2) — the manual says so itself. It would sure help if our parents had known how to hand us the tools to fight those battles before they arrived.

Without dragging you through every detail of my upbringing and fifty-plus years on this earth, understand that I've seen

and lived through a lot — tragedy and miracles, curses and blessings. I went through public school like most everybody else, graduated high school, and joined the Navy straight out at eighteen. After the Navy, I went to a technology trade school for an Associate's degree in Computer Programming. I joined the Navy to become a Seabee — a Construction Mechanic — and I graduated first in my class. It was a great experience, mostly because I was somewhat sober for the first time in a while — I still drank and smoked two packs of Marlboro Reds a day, but at least I wasn't smoking weed and doing speed, LSD, and cocaine every single day like before. Good decision, and I'm glad I made it. If you're weighing the military, I'd highly recommend it — it's a great experience, and I learned things there I couldn't have learned any other way. Teamwork, for one. I'd always been a loner, but the Navy forced me to work as part of a team. I always ended up leading it anyway — that's just my nature. I take charge.

I've walked some interesting paths, to say the least, and I'm not telling you this to say “look how awesome I am.” I'm telling you so you understand I'm not just some idiot who's never lived. I've lived hard, and I've always applied myself, even in seasons when I hated myself and hated my life. I think part of what drove all of it was wanting my parents to be proud of me — especially my dad, since he had zero tolerance for ignorance. Not knowing wasn't an excuse in his house. You got it done, and you got it done right.

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At thirteen, I started a lawn mowing company and made great money for a thirteen-year-old — thirteen thousand dollars my first year in business. I had my own phone in my room because I was a businessman, and I made my own flyers by hand and ran them to the print shop myself.



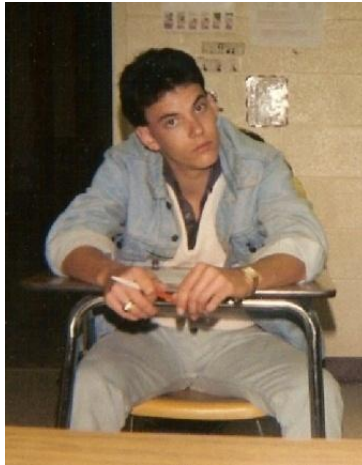
By fifteen, on top of mowing lawns, I was also one of the biggest drug dealers at Broken Arrow High School — marijuana, and whatever else I could get my hands on. LSD, ecstasy, mushrooms, cocaine. Yes, I was a roller — literally rolling joints and selling them. Decades later, ironically, I started a medical marijuana company, My Buddy Medicinals, built specifically around pre-roll sales. As an ordained minister, no less.

I remember days I'd clear two hundred dollars before first hour. Eventually I got caught, and I got kicked out of school for the back half of my junior year. I honestly thought my dad was going to beat me to death over it. I begged the principal to call the police instead of my father, because I figured I'd be safer in jail. Dad picked me up from school, livid. I was scared to death, sure he was about to cold-cock me right

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there in the parking lot. Instead, he reached into his pocket, pulled out a joint he already had rolled, lit it up as we were pulling out of the BA High School lot, took a hit, and handed it to me, saying, “I thought I taught you better than that.”

So I got sent to Tulsa County Alternative School to finish out my junior year, and wouldn't you know it — I made more money selling drugs there than I ever did at Broken Arrow, because every kid who'd gotten kicked out for drugs ended up in the same place. I know, I know — this was all part of my rebellion against the law, and part of why I had such a bad self-image. I was a drug dealer. And I was a good one.



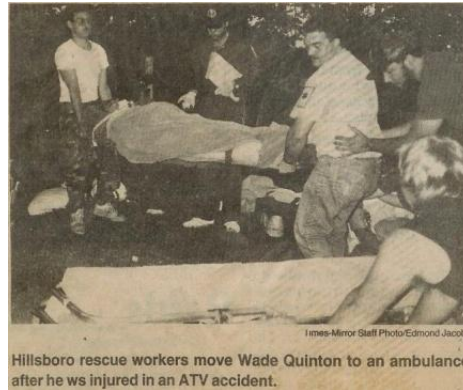
Free From Tyranny

Like I mentioned, after high school I wanted out from under my parents' roof and wanted to start working toward my own independence. The Navy was the best option I had, and it was a good choice. I quit selling drugs, did my active duty time as a Seabee mechanic, and then moved to Arizona as a reservist.

I was planning to marry my high school sweetheart, who'd come out to Arizona with me, but her father hated me — he didn't want his daughter marrying a rebel like me. In his eyes, I was still “the lawn boy,” and we were from two different worlds. He never seemed to register that this “lawn boy” had started his own business at thirteen and built it up well enough that his own father was able to quit his job and out-earn one of the top salesmen at his company. Her dad really turned on me once she got pregnant. We got into a yelling match after he made some idle threats about my life, and I understand it better now, being a father myself, but at the time I couldn't figure out why he was acting the way he was. It only made me look like more of the villain — exactly what he wanted. He convinced her we should separate, hoping we'd never find our way back to each other. I went to live with my mother in Virginia for a while, until the dust settled.

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Six months later, on the very day my son was born back in Arizona, I was drunk, out riding a four-wheeler, and smashed my face into a pole at thirty-five miles an hour. If I hadn't hit that pole, I would have driven straight off a thirty-foot cliff into a dry creek bed full of jagged rocks.



The good news is, that accident cleared the air. I was able to move back to Arizona, reunite with my family, and marry the mother of my first child — my high school sweetheart.



Prom 1987 · Navy 1988

Once I recovered from my jaw fiasco, I made it back to Arizona and started a hauling and tree service business with

my dad, and worked it until I was twenty-one. I was making great money, three or four days a week, trimming palm trees, mowing, landscaping, and hauling — all while staying on as an active reservist, going to Navy drill once a month in Phoenix.

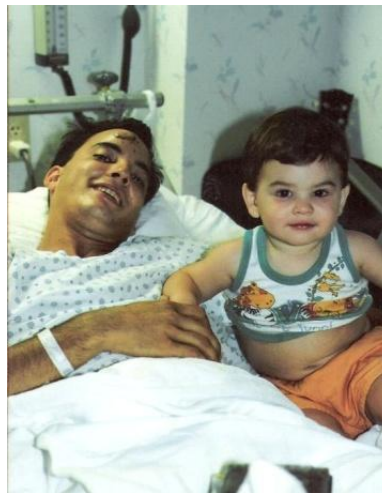
Then it's 1991, and Desert Storm erupts in the Middle East. My unit gets activated, and I'm told we're shipping out to the Gulf in two weeks. I'm twenty-one years old, a Navy Seabee, a warrior who loves nothing more than a good fight, and I break the “good news” to my family — I'm going to war. My mother flew in from Virginia to see me before I shipped out, since it was a war I might not come back from. At twenty-one, I felt invincible — death didn't even register as a real option, even after already smashing my own face into a pole. My thinking at the time was, if I died over there, my family would be taken care of, and what a way to go. My business was booming, and I had jobs booked right up through the Friday before I was set to ship out that Monday.

Friday comes, and I'm out on my very last job before the weekend, looking forward to some time with my family before I left. I'm trimming a forty-five-foot palm tree — the first of seven — and I'm in a hurry. It's a big palm, tall enough that it takes two harnesses clipped together to reach around the top. I trim the whole tree out, look down at my buddy, and ask if there's anything else that needs to come off. He says, “get that one right above your head and you're

good.” I lower my chainsaw, pull out the handsaw tethered to my wrist, reach up, and cut the last frond. The second I make the cut, I feel my harness straps go slack at my side. In a panic, I grab for the tree with both hands and come away with a fistful of loose palm material that breaks free in my grip. I'm in free fall.

The harness clip had failed, and I fell forty-five feet straight to the ground. It broke both my legs, shattered my ankle, and broke my pelvis in four places. My handsaw split my forehead wide open on the way down. I'm lying there, broken and bleeding, in more pain than I'd ever felt in my life.

I spent seventeen days in the hospital and was confined to a wheelchair for a year and a half because of how severe the breaks were. At least my family was already in town.



Obviously, I didn't ship out, and I'll never forget the call I had to make to my commanding officer to explain why I was AWOL. He was not happy, and neither was I. “WHERE

THE HELL ARE YOU, AND WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING?" I told him, "sir, I was in an accident on my very last job, and I'm still in the hospital." He barked a few more orders and a few more curse words and told me he was on his way. When he got to my room, he looked at me and said, "you know, Quinton, you could've just claimed crazy to get out of the Navy — you certainly qualify." I said, "funny." I genuinely wanted to go to war, for a whole list of reasons. Turns out I was already at war — just a spiritual one.

As you can imagine, this flipped my whole world upside down. I was out of a job, out of the Navy, and completely dependent on my wife and family. I had to sell off all my tree service equipment, my truck, my tools — whatever it took to pay the bills. Eventually I decided to move back to Oklahoma so I could go back to school, since I'm Cherokee and knew the tribe could help, especially since I was now disabled and wasn't going to be climbing palm trees again. We had yard sales on the weekends to unload the equipment, sold the truck and trailers, and filed for food stamps — got approved, and I hated every bit of accepting it. I'm usually the one handing things out, not taking them. But we were making it through, even though money was tight and times were hard.

Since I was home taking care of my son, my wife bought me a cheap guitar and a Mel Bay songbook full of George Strait chord charts. I already knew every George Strait song by heart, lyrics and all, and I taught myself to play so I could sing

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along. It gave me something to do, and it kept my son entertained while I couldn't work and we couldn't afford daycare, let alone a move.

Starting Over in Oklahoma

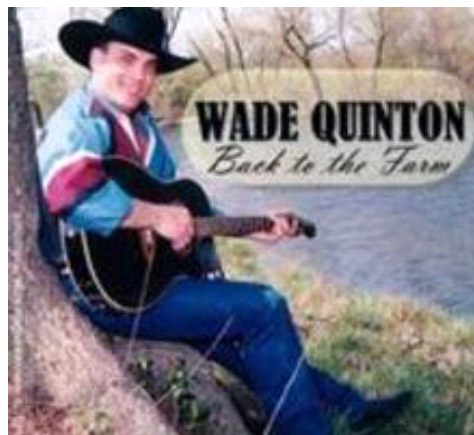
We were forced to sell everything and move back to Oklahoma, in with my dad, who'd also relocated back by then. I wasn't thrilled about moving in with him, but I didn't have another option. I was still recovering, and working out what came next, since tree service clearly wasn't in my future anymore. My wife went to work at a beauty supply company making decent money, and I enrolled in an accredited technical school to learn computer programming — a nine-month course toward an Associate's degree. When I graduated, I was still in a full leg cast.

After graduation, I started my first real career at a software company in Tulsa, working as a technical analyst supporting a proprietary maintenance management software product. It was a great job, and I liked what I was doing — technology was exploding at the time, and I felt like I was “solving the problems of the world, one problem at a time,” or at least that was my line. My guitar playing was coming along, and my singing along with it, so I started a band and began playing the local Tulsa country circuit on weekends — honky-tonks, special events, anywhere that would let us play, all while working Monday through Friday, eight to five, as a software analyst.

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I made some connections in the music scene and started laying down vocal tracks at a local studio, which landed me my first music management deal. Nothing big, but it got me thinking — hey, maybe I could actually do this for a living. I'd only been at the new job about nine months when I quit, packed up, and headed to Nashville to see if I could make it in the business. My wife told me to at least try it, and if it didn't work out, I could always come back to the software company — I'd told them I was only going for six months.

I'll just say this: six months in Nashville changed my life. I made some incredible connections, had the time of my life, and wrote and recorded some great songs with some of the best players in the business — George Strait's drummer, John Michael Montgomery's guitar player, and more, all listed on the CD label if you can ever track down a copy. My first release was called “Back to the Farm.”



For the years that followed, I lived in what I now think of as autopilot mode — bouncing back and forth between the software company I'd left and my dream of being a country

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music artist. Seven years flew by, and a lot happened, good and bad. I kept climbing the ladder at the company, getting promoted, making decent money to support my family while playing music on the weekends.

I was fortunate enough to meet some great musicians and play some great rooms with them along the way.



Strait Country · High Strung



Wild Horse

We played rooms like Cain's Ballroom and Tumbleweed's along the way. Looking back at all of it now, it feels like a dream — because it was one, I was just living it in real time. By this point in my life, I was a full-blown, raging alcoholic. I

smoked weed every day, and I'd been introduced to methamphetamine. Not only was I hooked, I was back to selling, because dealing meant I could use for free — though the cost of using was never just financial.

Ten years in, I'm a seasoned professional musician in a great band playing every major venue within driving distance of Tulsa. At the same time, I'm a professional software analyst, trainer, and installer. Selling drugs, playing music, selling my own music, and having what looked from the outside like the time of my life. I remember lying to my wife about staying up all night, and the small changes that come with becoming an addict. What's crazy is that I was excelling at work — making great money, plus extra from gigs, merchandise, and dealing. From the outside, everything was going my way. On the inside, it was turmoil and destruction.

I was living the dream, and living a lie, the entire time — which is exactly why I hated myself. I hid my addiction as best I could, but it kept getting worse. How my first wife, or any of my wives for that matter, put up with me as long as they did, I'll never know.

In 1997, my second child came into the world — my precious baby girl. Honestly, at the time, I didn't want another kid, and I definitely didn't think I wanted a girl. I had my boy, and I figured girls would just be more trouble. Then she was born, and I was standing right there to watch the miracle happen, and she stole my heart the second I cut the cord. She still

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holds a piece of my heart today that no other woman ever will, and I'm so proud of the woman she became, in spite of who her father was. I love my son just as fiercely, and I'm proud of him too — he's a rock star in his own right, a genuinely talented artist across several formats, and a lot like his father, minus the beatings and the drug problems.



From the outside, you'd have seen a happy family — two hardworking, successful parents with hobbies they loved, who clearly adored their kids. The truth was that the male role model of that family, me, was so wrapped up in chasing fame and fortune, telling myself it was all so I could provide better for my family, that I never dealt with the hurt I was still dragging around from my own childhood. I was trying to fill a void in my soul that nothing in this world was ever going to fill, and the music and bar scene didn't help, since I was already riding an emotional roller coaster. It was fun and exciting, sure, right up until it made you sick from all the partying and the sleepless nights. My kids were the only reason I kept holding on. Somewhere in my spirit, I believed I'd eventually break free from the bondage I'd let myself walk

into — even while a familiar voice kept telling me otherwise. That voice was my dad's, yelling at me as a kid: “are you worth a damn today?” Funny enough, my boss at the software company used to say almost the same thing. I hated hearing it, but it worked — it drove me to work harder for their approval.

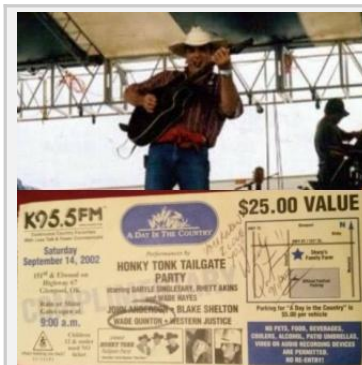
As an entertainer, when the crowd loved what you were doing, they showed it by sending drinks up to the stage, and I always felt obligated to drink whatever showed up. Multiply that by twenty a night, every weekend, add meth to the mix, and you've got a recipe for disaster. I got into plenty of bar fights as “the entertainment” — there was always somebody convinced I'd been sleeping with their wife or girlfriend, or looking at them wrong, and more often than not, I was actually innocent at the time. I believe they “spoke it into existence,” as they say — “the tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit” (Proverbs 18:21).

My wife couldn't keep up with me, because she had no idea I was doing meth. Late nights, drunk and wired, women throwing themselves at you after a night of love songs — it gets easier to fall to temptation the more times you do it. That doesn't make it right or justifiable. Bad decisions lead to bad behavior (1 Corinthians 15:33): “do not be misled — bad company corrupts good character.” And I was surrounded by both. Time caught up with me, the way it always does,

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because the truth always finds its way to the surface. I got caught, both for my infidelity and for my addiction. I came home from a gig one night to find everything I owned sitting on the front porch. I wrote a song about it — a total lie, but it sounded good — called “I’d Never Cheat on You.” Go listen to it on [YouTube.com/WadeQuinton](https://www.youtube.com/WadeQuinton) if you want. We got divorced, and I went spiraling down the rabbit hole of self-destruction.

I partnered with an investor who believed in my music and wanted to help launch me as an artist. We started a production company, bought a Silver Eagle bus, and hit the road playing big venues for big crowds, opening for a run of major artists.



I opened for Blake Shelton, Gretchen Wilson, the Bellamy Brothers, Charlie Daniels — the list goes on, so I'll spare you the rest, but the biggest crowd I ever played was over eighty-five thousand people at Day in the Country in 2001. It was incredible — except for the part where I hated myself, because I was a drug addict destroying everything I loved and feeling like a failure, even while I was racking up successes in music, at my day job, and, sadly, in drugs.

I was still playing weekends with a local band around Tulsa, working as a sales guy and later Director of Operations at the same software company. Still a drug addict, still doing meth, still playing bars and events whenever I could. One day, everything changed. I was divorced. I was a major alcoholic. I was a meth addict. I was a drug dealer. I was getting into fights — broke my hand twice, had to have pins put in after beating on some poor six-foot-five guy who never had a chance. I just wanted the pain to stop, and I didn't want to be the reason for anyone else's pain ever again. I wanted to be dead.

I was trying to fill the void in my soul with everything the world had to offer — sex, drinking, drugs, “living the dream” that was actually a nightmare. I landed in jail a couple of times, mostly over unpaid tickets I never bothered showing up in court for. It's all public record — look up an OSCN search on my name and you'll find plenty of confirmation that Wade Quinton didn't have much respect for the law. A

true rebel child, on a mission of self-destruction. I eventually lost my license and kept right on driving anyway. I should've gone to jail a lot more than I did, but by the grace of the very God I refused to believe in, I kept getting let go when I absolutely shouldn't have. Thank God nobody ever searched my vehicle — there were times I had enough meth, guns, and open containers on me to still be locked up today.

One day, I decided something had to change. I asked my boss for a meeting and told him I was a drug addict and needed to quit so I could get sober. He was floored — I was the top guy at the company at the time — and he didn't want to lose me, but he understood. I took some time off, and six months later he called, knowing I'd still need money to pay my bills, and asked if I'd want to come back on contract. I wasn't clean yet, but I took the offer, because I needed the job and the money. He trusted me, because even as a drug addict, I wasn't your average one — I was a high-functioning addict who could solve problems most people couldn't. I was working with the engineering team, building out a quality assurance program to make sure what we shipped was as close to defect-free as humanly possible.

One day, one of the programmers in the office handed me a cassette tape and said, “the Lord told me to give this to you.” I was an atheist, angry at the world, and I knew it had taken him some guts to walk up to me, since he knew exactly where I stood on Jesus, God, and the Holy Spirit. I said, “whatever,

dude — God said give this tape to Wade?” He said, “no, that's not how it happened, but God told me to give this to you.” I took the tape, looked at the name written on it — Willie George — and thought, sounds like a country singer. I tossed it in my car and forgot about it.

At that point in my life, I hated myself so much it wasn't funny. I was picking fights every time I played music, just looking for a reason. I was suicidal, wanting to kill myself, but scared to actually do it, because deep down I knew I'd end up in hell — the Bible says “the law is written on our hearts” (Romans 2:15). Every time I decided today's the day, sitting there with my 9mm in my hand, drinking, doing meth, working up the nerve to pull the trigger — the phone would ring. Every single time. My mom. My kids. My ex-wife. My dad. I don't think that was a coincidence. I think that was God, showing up again. I never answered, because I was crying too hard to talk to anyone, and I'd end up drinking myself to sleep in tears — but at least I was still alive. Life just kept rolling forward, the same misery on repeat.

One day, driving home from work, I heard the Lord — yes, the one I didn't believe in — tell me, “hey, you should listen to that Willie George tape.” So I put it in the car stereo and listened to the sermon my coworker swore the Lord told him to hand me. It floored me. Brought me to tears, because it was everything I didn't want to hear about the God and the devil I didn't believe in.

That same night, I decided to head to my dealer's house for another eight-ball, already having picked up a bottle of Crown Royal and one of Jose Cuervo. It was a Friday, and for once I wasn't playing that weekend — first weekend off in months, and it was time to party. When I got there, I told her about the tape and showed it to her. She saw the name Willie George and said, “oh my God, that's my pastor.” I said, “what?” Turned out she'd gone to his church, Church on the Move in Broken Arrow, for years, before drugs pulled her away from it. Great church, by the way — if you ever get the chance, go, because the Holy Spirit moves in that place. We put in our order for more drugs and sat around using what we already had, and I noticed a book on her nightstand called *Meth = Sorcery*, by Steve Box. If you're struggling with meth, I'd genuinely recommend it — short read, maybe seventy pages. I picked it up, already tweaked out, and it only added fuel to the fire in my head. We kept drinking and using straight through the weekend, until Sunday morning rolled around.

That weekend, I heard the Lord say to me, “hey, genius — you who knows everything about everything — why don't you analyze my Bible the way you analyze everything else, and prove it wrong, so you can keep on sinning without worrying about it being true?” I heard it in my spirit, not audibly, but the words came through clear as anything. And I thought, that's a great idea. I'm going to do exactly that. I got excited about the whole project — finally, a chance to disprove the

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Bible and be right, once and for all, and never have to worry about hell again. Bonus: I'd know it well enough to use it against every Christian who kept trying to save me.

We hadn't slept all weekend by the time this idea hit me, and I wanted to start right away. I told her the plan, and honestly, she already thought I was crazy, so this wasn't much of a stretch for her. I said, "let's go to church — I want to see this preacher and start tearing the Bible apart." I went home, showered, put on a suit, we loaded up her kids, and drove to Church on the Move in Tulsa. Yes — we'd been doing drugs with kids in the next room all weekend. Sad, sad, sad. This was going to be the first time I'd set foot in a church in decades. I was still on serious drugs, visibly strung out, breath reeking of alcohol and weed.



There's far more to this story than I can fit in this book, but the short version is that I went to that church every Sunday and Wednesday after that, fully intending to prove the Bible

was just one more made-up fairy tale, right alongside Santa Claus.

Around the same time, a Christian employee at the production company I'd started gave me a brand-new Bible and told me, "the Lord told me to buy this for you." I accepted it, still looking forward to disproving it. It's a great NIV Study Bible I still use daily — the gift date written inside is 02/25/2002. Nine months of serious Bible study later, church twice a week, and no shortage of unexplainable things happening in my life, and I landed on a conclusion I never saw coming: the Bible is not a made-up story. It's the truth (Romans 10:17) — "consequently, faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." I decided I'd better give my life to Christ. Again. For the first time, really. I was thirty-two years old by then, a meth addict since twenty-six.

Now I was a Christian, changed for eternity, and I was still a drug addict. I still hated myself, and I still wanted to be dead. I kept studying the Bible — I needed my mind and spirit renewed, but I was still bent up and broken. One night I had a half-gram of some seriously powerful meth, and I just wanted it to end, one way or the other. Either the addiction had to go, or I did, and honestly I'd have taken either outcome. I knew enough Scripture by then to know what to ask for, so I got my Bible out, pulled a handful of God's own promises, and told Him, "Lord, your Word says I can ask for anything in Jesus' name and it'll be done" (John 14:14) — and

a few others just like it. I lifted that half-gram up and said, “Lord, I want you to bless my dope. Bless this, and let it either heal me or kill me, because I can't keep living as an addict, and I can't flush it either.”

And He answered that prayer. I did every bit of it. There was enough in that bag to stop my heart, or at least keep me up for days — instead, it knocked me flat, like I'd taken a handful of sleeping pills. I had some genuinely demonic interactions that night that people would love to write off as drugs and hallucinations, but I know better — the demons knew they were about to lose their grip on me, and they weren't happy about it. I went to bed and slept like a baby for three days straight. I woke up done. Completely done. I didn't even want it anymore. What's wild is that the morning I finally woke up, there was a knock at the door — one of my buddies from the production company, wanting to borrow my glass pipe. I told him to get off my porch and never come back. He thought I'd lost my mind, though he already knew I was crazy. No withdrawals, nothing — and I'd been about as hardcore as an addict gets. I never once ran out of drugs the whole time I was using; I always had enough to share, and honestly, I hate that about this season of my life, because I helped create a lot of other addicts along the way. I know they made their own choices, but I was their role model, and misery loves company. I was free from meth for the next thirteen years.

I still drank like a fish and smoked weed, but that had been normal to me since I was twelve. The good news was I was clean from meth, so I took some time off and worked as a ranch hand for a while, living rent-free on the property. I was still playing music — it was my outlet — but I'd cut it down to drinking and weed. I met my second wife tending bar, and we got married. She was a good Christian woman who helped pull me back toward good. After about a year on the ranch, I went back to the software company, and they hired me back and promoted me to manager, while I kept doing installations and training for our clients on some genuinely complex software. I traveled coast to coast during the week and played music on weekends. We made it to church on the occasional Sunday, when I could manage it. I was nowhere close to acting like a Christian, but the Lord was working on me anyway. I felt the pull to keep studying the Word, even as I drifted further from it. I was a tithing Sunday sinner, living in forgiveness while needing more of it, sinking a little deeper each year, further from the very God who'd saved me from myself.

I was learning lessons I didn't even recognize as lessons at the time. I got too comfortable, and slowly drifted from what I believed was my calling. I fell to temptation more than once — being a country artist in bars full of drunk women, and being an alcoholic and addict myself, made it easy to justify. I fell back into meth after thirteen years clean, believing the lie that I could handle it now, that I could get so much done.

That's the lie meth always tells you, and it sucks you right back in — just say no. I ended up divorced again. Number two, and now I really felt like a failure.

Then I met my third wife, who thought I was the man of her dreams. Young, beautiful, a heart of gold, far from perfect, but despite a sixteen-year age gap, we tied the knot. Marriage number three.

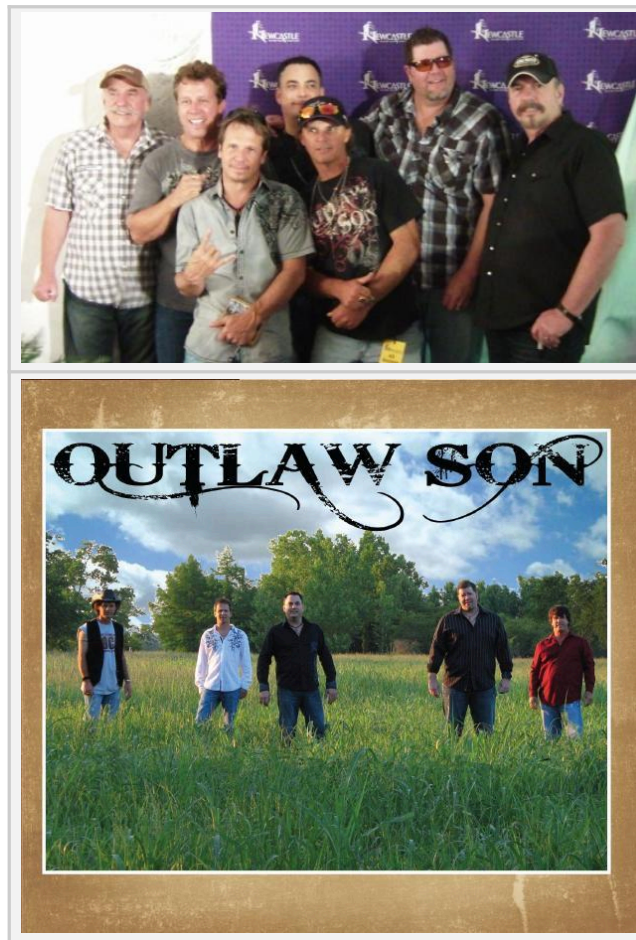


With Gretchen Wilson, after opening her show in New Kirk, Oklahoma

By this point I'd put in about fifteen years at the software company, if you added up every stretch — I'd quit a handful of times chasing music, or chasing drugs, or just being an idiot trying to escape reality. I kept climbing anyway, and eventually moved into sales, jumping from sixty thousand a year to two hundred thousand plus. I loved sales, because I knew that software inside and out, and being an entertainer only made my presentations land that much harder. I closed some major deals — you could call it luck, I call it blessed. I bought a house, had thousands of dollars in the bank, and became the top salesman for the next five years. I was still playing music on weekends and special occasions and having

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a blast. Young wife, good money, great gigs with musicians who made me feel like a rock star.



Life was good. I was having fun again, but on the inside I was right back to miserable — still hating myself, still never feeling good enough. Ridiculous, when you think about it, since by the world's standards I was living the dream. But inside, I was still being hunted by my past and by my current addictions. I ended up divorced again.

In every marriage I had, I destroyed it on purpose. I know how that sounds, but it's the truth. I never believed I deserved a wife that beautiful, that wonderful — I knew,

without a doubt, they could do better than me, and if I wasn't in the picture, they could upgrade and actually be happy.

That's what meth and alcohol do when you mix them with a bad self-image — they manufacture failure. I've learned the hard way that it doesn't matter what anyone else thinks of me. It only matters what I think of me.

I battled meth on and off through all of this — a few good years clean, then I'd stumble onto an old stash, or hit a low point, and fall right back in. It sucked that I couldn't just put it down and walk away for good, even after everything it had already cost me. It's pure evil, and there's really no other word for it. It's the perfect alchemy for cursing everything and everyone you love. If there's one thing I'd change looking back, it's learning to see myself through a different lens sooner — one that doesn't fixate on the past, but leans toward the hope of what's ahead. Alcohol and drugs only feed a bad self-image and numb the pain, but it's a cycle, and it has to be broken. Only you can decide to change you.

Fast-forward to today. I've been sober a little over two years now — got clean on April 1st, 2019, which isn't all that long ago in the grand scheme. I'll get into the details in another book, *Mind Blowing Experiences*, because there's a lot there that made me who I am today — proof to me that God isn't just real, He's present, and He wants an actual relationship with you. I didn't believe that for the longest time either, but I can say without a doubt that the Lord used every bit of hell I

walked through to bring me to seeking Him and His truth. I never would have guessed I'd be writing a book about any of this — reliving it on the page has been its own kind of painful. I'm still not perfect. I fight all kinds of torment daily. But I'm sober. I should say I don't do meth anymore, and I honestly don't see myself ever going back, even when it shows up again and again as a temptation. It amazes me how team evil always seems to find some poor soul to send my way, right on cue. I had a buddy call me not long ago, almost bragging about falling again. The Lord gave me exactly what to say to him, and I told him he's getting a copy of this book the second it's finished.

I quit drinking about two years ago too — roughly six months after I quit meth, and I genuinely wish I'd written the date down. I've had a drink here and there since, but when I say I quit drinking, I mean I don't buy a box of wine a night anymore, or a fifth of Crown and drink the whole thing. I can't even picture doing that now — it'd be painful just to try. I try to make better decisions these days, knowing what I know now. After almost twenty years, I finally decided to leave the software job for good, because I honestly believe the stress and the pressure to perform made meth that much more attractive. I'm not blaming the job for my addiction — that was my own bad decisions, my own ignorance, my own self-absorption — but the music, the long hours, the constant travel didn't make it any easier to say no. Alcohol was what I used to fall asleep, or to numb the pain, physical and

emotional both. What's wild is that now that I'm sober from both, and I've cleaned up my diet, physically and spiritually, I've never felt better. My self-worth is back to solid gold.

Please don't let this next part change your opinion of me — I've already laid out plenty of facts that make it clear I'm not perfect. I still smoke marijuana on occasion, and now that it's legal in Oklahoma, I actually own a processing company in the industry. I can't say it enough: the Lord uses me in my imperfect state for His glory. He always brings me back in fully sober, fasting, and filled with His Spirit through Christ. I've seen jaw-dropping miracles with my own eyes — from healing the sick to watching a dead woman come back to life. Yes, read that again. Raising the dead will drop you to your knees in tears. I've included a short piece of that story in the Mind Blowing Experiences chapter later in this book, just to give you a taste — the full story is a book of its own.

When it comes to marijuana, illegal drugs, or even prescription medication, my honest suggestion is to seek healing naturally first, wherever that's possible. I'm not telling you to use anything — honestly, best case, you never experience any of it in the first place. I'm also not telling you to flush your prescriptions, but I've watched people wean off them entirely as they got healthier. What I am saying is, pursue change through nutrition, physically and spiritually, because that's the foundation for real health and restoration.

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I still play in bars now and then, and I do the occasional acoustic show, just me and my guitar, mostly to keep my hands and my voice in shape. I sit in on jams around town, and every so often a band will call me up to front a show or sing backup. More than a few musicians I respect have told me the sober version of Wade Quanton sounds ten times better than the old one. I keep myself busy with other streams of income, some volunteer work, and these days I'm what I call an Imperfect Preacher. I don't make a dime doing it, but it pays me back in a currency you can only earn by giving your time and yourself away — unselfishly, so that someone else can get their hands on the same gift I was given. Jesus Christ (Acts 20:35).

I'm a warrior of Christ, fighting the good fight and sharing the good news wherever I go. Join the battle. Fight for what's good. You'll love the spoils of a war already won through Jesus Christ — the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6).

The Matrix

It doesn't matter if you've seen the movie or not — I'm going to explain this the best way I know how. And I'll go ahead and agree with you up front: “yes, this sounds like a crazy man talking about make-believe conspiracy theories.” Good news is, by the end of this, we'll get to the truth. To understand what I call “The Matrix,” you first need a few basic concepts, so let me ramble for a minute.

Look around at everything surrounding you. It's easy to see we live in a complicated world — planes, trains, cars, we can fly to the moon. Can we agree there are things in this world that neither one of us will ever fully understand? I know more than I ever wanted to know, honestly, mostly because I chase the truth in everything, but I don't know it all — I just know a lot, because I'm relentlessly curious. Add in a few years of staying up for days at a time as an addict, and I've been down more than a few rabbit holes. Some of what I found, I wish I hadn't — pure evil, sickening stuff. I'm an analyst by nature. I want to know that I know, without a doubt. I don't take anything at face value.

Think back for a second to what I mentioned earlier — Santa Claus, the Easter Bunny, the Tooth Fairy. Just those three make the point, though there are hundreds of examples of “make-believe built on a sliver of truth.” In every one of

those cases, there's a real kernel buried underneath. Dig into the legend of Santa Claus, and you'll find there really was a man who gave gifts to children — a legend that started in Patara, Turkey. Look it up. Of course, legends expand, and that one grew into the version of Christmas we know today, celebrated in something like a hundred and sixty nations around the world.

So what is Christmas actually about? If you're a Christian, that's easy — it's the birth of Jesus, Lord and Savior, King of Kings, Son of God, Son of Man, born in Bethlehem. But not everyone's a Christian. I was an atheist for most of my life, and back then my take was that it was just a tradition rooted in paganism, repackaged to make us spend money and distract us from whatever the real story was. I used to believe Santa was just a pipe dream designed to chip away at a child's belief system — bleak, I know, but I believed it, and you couldn't have convinced me there was a God, let alone a Son named Jesus.

If you're Jewish, Christmas isn't really part of the picture — it's a different tradition, built on the same foundation of recognizing a higher power and giving gifts, and I respect that tradition and the people who hold it. Hanukkah runs eight days, and I recognize the Jewish people as God's chosen people. Do you see my point? Christmas is a perfect example of the Matrix, precisely because of how differently people understand it depending on where they're standing.

Here's another angle. Think about the human body and its limitations — the eye, for instance. Complex, right? Now add light to the equation. We know from crime scene investigation that a black light will reveal evidence invisible to the naked eye — the substance is there the whole time, we just can't see it without the right kind of light. So there are things in this world that exist whether or not we can see them with our own eyes. Can we agree on that? If not, let me introduce you to something called wind. Ever seen it? Ever seen what it can do? I'm currently missing half the roof off my barn as I write this, thanks to an Oklahoma windstorm. I never saw the wind itself, but I sure saw what it did to metal that was nailed down.

One more example, and I'll make my point. Take the human ear, and compare it to a dog's ear. Ever blown a dog whistle? Did it make a sound? Barely — sounds like air through a straw. But watch your dog when you blow it, and you'll see they hear it just fine, which is exactly why it works for training. My point is that this body, this flesh wrapped around your eternal soul, acts like a filter on the world we live in. There are things all around us — in this Matrix — that we can't hear, taste, smell, feel, or read, but they're there. Think about your phone. What's it connected to? Your car radio? Invisible waves you can't see, smell, or touch, and yet your phone rings, and you talk, with no physical wire running to the tower. Once you understand the foundation of the reality

you're actually living in — the why, and the purpose behind it — you'll find a peace you've never had before.

Here are the questions worth asking if you want to get to the truth about the Matrix. We're living inside what I'd call a kind of virtual reality — perception is everything. If you think you can, you can. If you think you can't, you can't. It's biblical (Proverbs 23:7). So why are there so many competing stories about God? To cause confusion and doubt. Why would anyone want to flood the world with lies and false information? Same answer — to cause confusion and doubt. So how do you find the real truth? Seek, and you will find (Matthew 7:7).

The good news is, the truth always — always — comes to the surface eventually. It can hide in plain sight, just like evidence at a crime scene, but shine the right light on it, and it reveals itself every time. That's just a property of light, of truth, of perspective. Now that you understand you're living in a physical world layered with sound, light, wavelengths, and a whole lot more that we can't directly perceive without the right tools, understand this: God is the unseen force holding all of it together for His glory. You can't “see Him” directly, but like the wind, He's a force you can feel the effects of. You can actually see Him through everything He's created, exactly like He said you could (Romans 1:20).

Good vs. Evil

Now that we've got a better handle on what I call the Matrix, let's move to the most important piece of it — the two most powerful forces operating inside it: good versus evil. Another broad stroke here, but stay with me. It's the simple complexity of opposing forces, and you've heard the pattern before: up versus down, left versus right, push versus pull, yin versus yang. I could keep listing examples, but you get the point — you're not an idiot.

Good versus evil sits above everything. Yes — everything. There's no middle ground, and that idea is one more lie we've been fed. It's either working for the good of everyone involved, or somewhere, someone is losing something. It comes down to win-win or win-lose, depending on the choices made. A win-win might look like this: you've got a riding mower and want to make some extra cash, and I hate mowing my own lawn after years of doing it professionally. You mow my lawn for fifty bucks. I win, because my lawn gets mowed without me lifting a finger. You win, because it took you thirty minutes and you walked away fifty dollars richer.

Win-lose is a much bigger slice of the pie in this world. Look at a casino. It looks promising, right up until you count the millions they pull in from everyone who didn't hit the jackpot

when they pulled the lever. The casino wins, the lever-puller loses. Sure, sometimes the player wins — but even then, somebody, somewhere, lost. Welcome to Good vs. Evil 101.

Before we even get to the question of whether God exists, we have to ask ourselves whether we believe there are forces governing good and evil in the first place. And if we agree there are, how do we measure them? What's the scale? Let's think about it through something simpler — left versus right. How do you know left is left? Because you were taught that as a child. What if whoever taught you lied, and left is actually right? Or down? Or up? “Well, I just know” — no, you don't. You were taught it.

With left and right, it's easy to see why we settled on a shared standard — so we could communicate and get more done together. Education, in that sense, is a good thing, because it lets us work as a whole. But there's an opposing force actively working to hold certain knowledge back, because it understands that if society suddenly decided left was now right, you could confuse an entire population right into its own destruction. That's evil — confusion for confusion's sake is not a good thing, even if, sure, confusing a lion chasing you might buy you a few seconds. You get my point: education for the sake of communication is good, and we should pursue it — but only if it's built on the truth.

My point is that there's a program running inside the current societal Matrix that uses educational indoctrination to shape

the intellect and opinions of the masses, using fear, lies, and manipulation to sow confusion. I could give you a hundred examples, but if you need a reminder, think back to Christmas, Easter, the Tooth Fairy. Why does anyone bother making these things up? Why lie to people at all? Why hide information? The plan is to create enough confusion that the world eventually destroys itself — to steal, kill, and destroy everything you were meant to have in this life. If you don't believe you're a created being, made in the image of God Almighty, you're far easier to control through programming, repetition, and lies. I know how it sounds — like science fiction. That's exactly what they want, because if you knew the real, actual truth about everything, you'd be dangerous to their agenda. They want you in slavery, period. Do what you're told, don't ask questions, and everything will supposedly be fine — just keep your head down, work your job, take your minimum wage, and don't rock the boat.

All I'm asking is this, and I'm only asking because I can't be the one to change you — only you and God can do that, and God won't force it unless you ask Him to. Question everything. Seek the truth in everything. Stop taking what you see, hear, or read at face value. Use the brain God gave you and the logic you already have. Turn off the news, get off the noise, and stand up for truth and win-win, and don't settle for anything less. Why am I asking this of you? Because I genuinely can't change you — only you can. I've decided, in my own little corner of the world, to change myself into the

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best version of me I can be, which in turn changes the world around me, one person at a time, starting with the only person I actually have control over. You're welcome. And thank you, because I hope you decide to do the same. Even if you never believe in God or Jesus, you can still choose the win-win, and choose to be the best version of yourself.

We've All Been Deceived

Here's the good news: a lot of us are waking up to the truth, and sharing it so others can open their eyes too (Revelation 12:9). At the very least, start questioning the information you're taking in — yes, including everything you're reading right now. I'm either lying to you or telling you the truth; there's no in-between. For the record, I'm telling you the truth, but you should come to your own conclusions through your own research. Asking “why” is the starting point for finding truth in anything, because we want to know whether what we've been handed is actually correct, or whether we've been deceived. And I'm telling you — you have been.

So why would anyone want to deceive anyone about anything? Glad you asked. The Bible tells us we're born into a sinful nature (Genesis 6:5). Like I said, I was the worst of the worst, living in my own sin, hoping to die because I hated myself. That's exactly what the other side wants. In the story of Job, the devil wasn't given permission to kill Job — so instead he destroyed everything Job loved, hoping Job would turn on God and take his own life. We're not just born with a sinful nature; we're surrounded by other sinners too, and their lack of faith rubs off on us. We set expectations of each other, and if people don't know what those expectations are, they'll

fail us, every time — and it stings even worse when they knew, and failed us anyway.

On top of all that, the deception starts as indoctrination from birth. It's not just the few examples I've listed — there's an entire legion of spiritual forces working around the clock to deceive you. They've had plenty of success. But here's what I love about God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and the truth (Luke 12:2–3): every secret eventually gets uncovered, the truth eventually comes forward, and every action gets its due.

That's one more reason to always tell the truth. If the other side can convince you God isn't real, you can't receive the promises He's already made you. If they can make you feel worthless, defeated, and without purpose, they've done their job — and they're good at it, because they've been working the spirit realm since before the earth existed. The plan is simple: keep you from believing in God, keep you from receiving His promises, keep you from ever opening the book that tells you all of this. The Bible is a living work, filled with the Holy Spirit, telling the truth about Christ and the Father, the God of Israel. I know — “it's just a made-up story to steal your money” is the best line I've ever heard, and it's exactly what they want you to believe. The truth is, if you give toward God's kingdom without needing recognition for it, God blesses that (Malachi 3:11). I've watched it happen, over and over.

So if all of this is true, the next question is obvious: why are there so many religions and so many different gods? The Bible actually answers that, though I'll give you the short version, and again — don't take my word for it, look it up yourself. Start at the beginning. When God handed down the Ten Commandments, the first one on the list was, “thou shalt have no other gods before me” (Exodus 20:2). Notice the tell right there — He's saying, “I'm God, the God of all gods,” with a deliberate lowercase g for everyone else, and a capital G reserved for Himself. He's also telling you that He should be your focus above everything else in creation, because nothing else compares. In short, you can chase all the other gods you want, get influenced by all the spirits you want, but if your focus stays on God, and God alone, none of it matters, because His own words carry the promise. It's really that simple — the challenge is that we've been deceived long enough to believe the Bible is just one more make-believe story. Trust me, I believed with everything in me that there was no possible way there could be a God of this world, let alone one who loved me enough to send His only Son to die for my sins. No way. And if Jesus really is who He said He is, why does God allow all this evil to exist? Let's dig into that next.

Why Does God Allow Evil?

Glad you asked. The answer is simple: God wants you to choose Him of your own free will. The only way you can actually choose Him is if you're given a real choice. You get to decide — God, or not.

God loves us enough to want us to love Him back, because He loved us first. Even when you reject everything He is, He still loves you. I'll keep this short, but it's a deep question that takes some understanding of biblical principles to really land. Think of it like a game — a virtual reality game, but far more complex than anything I've ever played, and I've played my share, even the rough ones. The big difference in this game, the one I call the Matrix, is that you only get two lives. One is eternal. The other is the one you're living right now, in the flesh.

One of my favorite verses, hands down, is Romans 8:28. Look it up. Read the whole chapter, and honestly, read the whole book. “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose.” All things. God said it — all things. He allows free will because He loves us. We have to choose to seek the truth, and once we find it, choose to recognize it and act on it. There's another option too — don't

believe the truth, believe the lies. There's no shortage of those, but the truth will set you free.

God made you a creator, in His own image. With that gift comes real responsibility. You can create good things, or bad things, or you can just let your gifts sit unused and waste the life you've been given. Here's the thing to understand about evil: it exists to destroy everything good. Evil takes what's good and twists it into a distorted, opposite version of itself. The clearest example is sex — it's a gift from God, a genuine miracle, and it's how you got here, how I got here, how everyone got here. If you're reading this, you came from somewhere between your mother's legs, or a C-section. You get the point. Without sex, there's no reproduction, and without reproduction, we don't exist as a species. God designed sex between a man and a woman for the purpose of procreation. You can certainly have sex outside that design, but it won't make babies — that's just not how God built it. In essence, taking something God made for good and pointing it somewhere that leads to nothing but desolation isn't good.

Understand — I'm not judging you or condemning you for the choices you've made in your own life, because as I said, God can use all of it for His glory. You have purpose. God loves you, and He wants you to choose Jesus. Gay, straight, atheist, agnostic, Jewish, Muslim, whatever label fits you right now — be yourself, it's your life, and you do what makes you

happy. I'm not saying I approve of every sin out there — I'm saying I'm a sinner just like you. The only difference is that I've accepted Jesus as truth, and He's changed me for His glory.

Babies, and birth, are a God-given miracle. The opposite of that miracle is abortion. Again, God gives you the choice — good or evil, keep the baby or don't. Evil can act on either side and create a bad situation, but good always wins in the end, and given a choice, it's always better to choose the good. Choose good over evil, and life over death, every time.

Team Evil's plan against you is pretty consistent: get you to not believe in God, get you to not believe in evil either, feed you lies, confuse what you believe, make you feel insignificant, and keep you living in fear. Understanding the forces working against you — and their plan to steal your joy and leave you hopeless and frustrated — is half the battle.

Absence of the Father

When I talk about the father, I'm not just talking about your biological father. I'm talking about the Father in heaven — the One who loves you unconditionally, more than your earthly father could ever wish to. The forces of evil and everything working with them want you to hate both fathers. They want you blaming everything on your biological father and on Father God, hoping you'll turn away from both, stop listening to either one, and in doing so, destroy yourself. They know that when someone doesn't feel loved by their father — either one — it plants the seed for rebellion against everything good. That's exactly why one of the greatest commandments is, “honor your mother and father” (Exodus 20:12). I believe there's a lot more to this than meets the eye — enough that I wrote an entire book on the subject, called *Absence of the Father*, coming shortly after this one.

Everyone wants to point fingers and place blame instead of sitting with the truth and weighing the facts. We've gotten lazy and naive. It's easier to just go along with the crowd than to argue about who's right. I've made the decision, personally, to seek the truth in everything, and I take pride in telling it, even when it costs me something. The Holy Spirit lets me know what's true and what isn't, because Jesus lives in me and knows all things — I'm connected to the source. That's why I

sometimes know more than I'd like to, because the Lord shows me things when I ask, and every so often, I wish I hadn't.

Let's talk for a second about sayings like “the truth hurts” and “it rings true.” Some people call it a gut feeling, or checking your spirit. These are just man-made phrases pointing at something that's actually biblical. When you've got the Holy Spirit, Jesus, and a direct line to the Father of creation, you're connected to the source of everything — but that requires actually knowing God's Word, inside and out, because the devil knows it too, and he twists it just enough to make his lies sound true.

Men, we need to stand up and start being men again. I know your parents were sinners, and I know they made choices that shaped your outcome, but you can still overcome whatever that outcome was. You just have to choose to. If there's a problem in your family, I don't care what it is, somewhere along the line, some man made a selfish choice instead of doing the right thing when he had the chance. I take full responsibility for every bad decision I've ever made. I should have said no, every time. I should have walked away, and I didn't, and there are always consequences for that. I chose the wrong thing because it felt good in the moment, and the end result was shame, guilt, and the slow destruction of my family and my own self-worth.

Even those of you who had a father like mine — my own “absence of the father” was really about the fact that my dad carried issues with alcohol, and abuse handed down from his own father. In biblical terms, that's a generational curse. My dad was strict, and he was, and is, a loving father, but during my most impressionable years, his example taught me how to be an alcoholic, a drug abuser, and a violent man. Sadly, I learned that lesson well. Today, my father, like me, has changed completely. He doesn't drink, smoke, yell, hit, or curse — he still has his moments, we all do — but team evil is good at this game, and God, through Jesus Christ, changed us both into better men. It's a miracle, and an answered prayer, to watch that change in my father and in myself. I haven't pointed a gun at my own head in decades. Thank you, Jesus.

Happiness is a Choice

Knowing everything I've told you so far, I'm either telling you the truth or I'm lying — it's up to you to decide which, because I can't make you believe anything. You have to choose to believe, or choose not to. Happiness works the same way. You have to choose to be happy, regardless of what's going on around you. I've had more tragedy in my own life, and caused more pain in the lives of others, than I like to admit. It's almost funny now, in hindsight — because now that I know what I know, I can see God was there through every bit of it. All of it happened on purpose, exactly like He said it would.

Remember the story from earlier, about falling out of that palm tree and breaking both my legs? A tragic, life-altering event. Should have killed me, honestly, but the Lord had a plan to take what the devil meant to destroy me with and use it instead for His glory, through restoration. Looking back, everything worked out the way it needed to — but that's a hard thing to see when you're lying in a hospital bed with both legs broken and your pelvis broken in four places.

James 1:2 says, “consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance.” It took me most of my life to actually understand that verse. Here's

the beauty that came out of that one tragedy. The bad: I broke both my legs and my pelvis. I lost my business. I got a medical discharge from the Navy. The good: I got to spend time with my newborn son. I got to go back to school. I landed a great job. I learned to play guitar. And I never had to go to war.

At the time, I didn't blame God for any of it, because at the time, I wasn't thinking about God at all — I'd already committed myself to disbelief, to what I now think of as the faith of the Evolutionist. The Big Bang Theory — great sitcom, terrible foundation for a worldview, and a lie, whether you choose to believe that or not. Looking back at what I know now, it amazes me that I put that much faith into a theory that was, by its own admission, “written by men,” the same accusation people throw at the Bible. The difference, of course, is that the Bible is actual truth, inspired by the Holy Spirit, and not a pile of make-believe. Studying it is the only way to find that out for yourself. I know it sounds crazy — stay with me anyway. I'll show you how I know, and how you can know too, if you're willing. Or, just like with the Big Bang, you can read this and land wherever you land. I'll just say this much: the only reason I'm writing this book is because the God I used to curse, and refused to believe in, told me to write it. Yes, I hear voices in my head. I'll have to write a whole other book about that one someday — note to self: write a book called *The Voices in My Head*.

Preach the Good News

God tells us in Mark 16:15, “go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.” In Matthew 22:39, He says, “love your neighbor as yourself.” Let me translate that into Wade 101: “I love you enough that I want you to know what I know about what God says about you.” He says the same about me. I've told you all of that to tell you this — happiness is a choice. You have to choose to be happy, and it starts with doing what's right, even when nobody's watching. God sees it. You see it. The devil sees it. And the truth convicts you either way, so why not skip the frustration and start with the truth and a good choice?

Think about it — if you're always choosing to do the right thing, you carry no guilt and no shame for the wrong ones. Sure, the other side will still attack you, still call you a liar, but there's real peace in knowing you have nothing to be ashamed of, and nothing to feel condemned about. They can say whatever they want about you — you and God both know the truth. Who do you actually need to impress besides Him? Why care what anyone thinks, especially when they're basing it on a lie? You know the truth, and like I said, the truth always reveals itself. Good always wins.

Have you ever asked God to reveal Himself to you? What would you actually do if He does exist, and He genuinely

wants to show you that? I mean it — what if? Would you even want to know? I'll give you a secret that won't stay a secret much longer, because I'm about to tell you. It's right at the beginning of the book of John. John 1:1: “in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” In Wade 101, that's why it's called the Living Word of God. Study the Gospels honestly, and you'll land on the same conclusion I did — historical, prophetic, proven, tried, tested. The way, the truth, the life. Don't take my word for it. Open the book anywhere — any page, any time — and ask God to open your eyes to His truth as you read it. Get a Bible app and let your phone read it to you while you follow along. Romans 10:17: “consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ.” I'm not making any of this up.

Cash the Check of Salvation

Ask the Lord you don't believe in to reveal His truth and His glory to you. Ask Him into your heart, and ask Him to show you the truth as you read His Word. You'll know the time and the place when it comes. Find somewhere quiet, without distractions, open your Bible or your Bible app, and invite Him in. If you're ready right now, here's a place to start (Matthew 6:13). After that, start a relationship with Jesus by praying something like this, out loud:

Father God, I want to receive the gifts and promises you have for me through your Son Jesus. Forgive me for my unbelief, reveal the truth of your Word, your Son Jesus, and give me the gift of the Holy Spirit. Reveal yourself to me in all things, and let me hear from you. Guide my steps, protect me, bless me, come into my heart, and help me find the purpose you have for me. I ask these things in Jesus' name. I thank you, Jesus, for your forgiveness, and for your sacrifice for my soul. Amen.

If you prayed that, keep going in His Word, because that's the only way to actually win this battle. Put on the armor of God (Ephesians 6:12), every day. Best check I've ever cashed — and to think I carried it around, unopened, for all those years, and He still cashed it for me when I finally did.

Good news is, He's still got money in the bank, and He's cashing checks every single day. If you prayed that prayer and

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you're ready to cash your own, write your name on the "pay to the order of" line of the check below. Put the date you signed it next to "eternity." Print it out, frame it, or just keep it here in the book.

Jesus Christ - Son of God
1 Salvation Way
3rd Heaven, Truth 00003

0777

Eternity _____
Date _____

Pay to the
Order of _____ \$ 3:16

John 3:16 00/100 - For God So Loved the World He Gave His Only Son _____ Dollars

For Salvation from Sin _____ *Jesus Christ - Messiah* MP

⑆ 000001234⑆ 00000000000⑆ 0777

Congratulations, and welcome to the family. Don't be stingy with what you've been given. Bless everyone you meet with this same knowledge, and let them know they've got a blank check of their own waiting, with their name on the "pay to the order of" line. Be blessed, and share the wealth.

Seek the Truth

Here's my point, in short: you've been lied to and deceived so long, and so thoroughly, that whoever set out to accomplish that goal has largely succeeded. They don't want you to believe God created you. Consider the difference between the two perspectives for a second.

The world's perspective — team evil, the devil and his demons: the Bible is just another made-up story, like Santa Claus or the Tooth Fairy. You're a speck of dust that happened to show up by accident, and this is about as good as it's going to get. Live, die, and try to do some good along the way, because we've got man-made laws to keep everyone in line. You're not special, and there's no such thing as God.

The biblical perspective: the Bible is the truth. You were created by a loving Creator who wants you to choose what's right, because it's genuinely best for everyone. You were made special, made specifically, made wonderfully, with access to the greatest power in all of creation. You're an eternal being, and this life is only a temporary stay inside flesh. You have purpose — seek it, and you'll find it. Knock, and the door will open. Ask, and you'll receive (Matthew 7:7). The choice is yours.

I'm asking you to seek the truth in everything, and not settle for less. Tell the truth, always — it's what sets you free from guilt and shame. Read the truth for yourself. The Bible says of itself, and I'll translate again: “read me, and I'll come alive in your life to reveal the truth in all things.” But you actually have to open it and read it. I can tell you all day what it says, but it's not the same as reading it for yourself. If reading isn't your thing, download a Bible app and let it read to you out loud. Follow along, and really listen. Ask the God of the Bible to reveal His truth, and Himself, to you. Ask Him to show you what He wants you to understand in whatever verse you're reading. Ask Jesus into your heart.

Here's a fair warning, and I don't say this to scare you, just to prepare you — the other side will try everything in its power to keep you from asking Jesus into your heart, and it'll try to torment you right up to the edge of turning back. Make sure you're in the right place and the right frame of mind, because it's hard to hide the fact that God Himself just showed up and proved He's real. When He does, it'll bring you to your knees. Literally. Every mind-blowing experience I've ever had left me speechless, in tears, completely undone — because my mind really was blown, sometimes for days afterward. I'll walk through a few of those in the Mind Blowing Experiences chapter, just enough to give you the idea. There's a whole separate book coming just on those, because there are too many, with too much detail, to fit here.

Lessons I've Learned

I'm north of fifty now, and I've learned a lot of hard lessons along the way. Here are a few of the big ones.

Don't believe everything you see or read, unless it's in the Bible, and you've read it yourself.

The truth will always reveal itself, so you might as well start there. Truth equals no guilt, no shame. It will actually set you free (John 8:32).

If you have to hide it, or keep it a secret from everyone, you probably shouldn't be doing it. Why would you want to live a lie?

Once you accept Christ as truth, you'll be changed for the better — but you have to stay in the Word. Go to church. Find people who can help you learn what you need to know.

If you don't know, ask, and the Lord will tell you. Just make sure you actually want to know, and that you've considered every possibility.

The battlefield of this whole war is between your ears, in your heart and your mind. There will be trials. How you make it through them with joy comes down to how well you understand God's Word. Study it. Sit with it.

Mind Blowing Experiences

There's so much to tell here that, like I said, I'm eventually going to write an entire book covering every detail of this and the other mind-blowing experiences I've lived through. I know these are hard to believe — they're miraculous, and honestly, unexplainable. Sure, you could call them coincidence and try to logic your way out of them. Go ahead and try, and then use your brain to actually reason through what I'm about to tell you.

MBE-01: My first mind-blowing experience happened when I was seventeen, still an atheist, a senior at Broken Arrow High School. I had my lawn business going, an after-school job as a dietary aide at Franciscan Villa in Broken Arrow, and I sold drugs wherever I happened to be — school, work, deliveries, pickups, you name it. You already know a little of this from the first chapter. I was a committed evolutionist with an answer for everything, and I'd landed a job, of all places, at a convent and assisted living facility as a dietary aide after school. God placed me there, and here's how I know it.

Everyone else I worked with at Franciscan Villa was either a nun, a priest, or a student at Rhema Bible School — every single one of them studying to become an evangelical preacher or missionary. Could be a coincidence. It's not. I worked there about a year, and in that time I probably had a

thousand conversations about God and my own disbelief. What better training ground for those students than trying to convert Wade Quinton — self-proclaimed genius, certified pothead, atheist, dealing drugs out of the back of a convent.

One day, a coworker came up to me and said, “hey Wade, I know this sounds weird, but the Lord told me to tell you...” I cut her off, throwing my hands in the air, loud and obnoxious: “THE LORD ALMIGHTY SAID TELL WADE THIS?” She didn't flinch — good soul that she was — and kept going. “He said He wants to reveal Himself to you.” I laughed even louder and said, “LORD, REVEAL YOURSELF TO ME!” hands raised toward the ceiling. She said, “no, not like that — you'll know the time and the place, and if you ask Him to reveal Himself, He will.” I was high, like always, and I chuckled and told her, “whatever, sure, I'll do that.” Then I went back to work and didn't think about it again.

Days and weeks passed, and I wasn't thinking about God at all. But God was already at work. I had cash — plenty of it, from dealing — which is really why I kept a couple of legitimate jobs, as cover, though I also just liked working and making money. At the time I owned a '71 Chevy truck, hopped up, an '95 XR350L, a '79 Yamaha 750 cruiser, and a couple other street-legal bikes. One day, every single vehicle I owned went out of service at the exact same time, for completely unrelated reasons. Blew the engine in the truck.

Flat tire on one bike. Expired tag on the other. I had no ride to school or work.

First day without wheels, I asked my parents for a ride — couldn't happen, for whatever reason. Called every friend I had — nobody could come get me either. So I rode the bus to school, which I hated doing, because I needed an ounce of weed and a stack of joints on me to sell, and I didn't want to reek of it on public transit. I rode it anyway, smelling like weed and heavy cologne, because I had to get to school — that's where the real money was. I'd miss work before I'd miss school, though I rarely missed either, being a fairly motivated seller. I sold everything I had that day and tried to get a ride home from a friend — no luck, so it was back on the bus.

I got home around three-thirty and realized I hadn't brought my house keys, since I hadn't driven myself to school. Locked out, with both my parents still hours away from getting home. It's hot, I'm hungry, tired, frustrated, and all I want is to get inside and roll a joint, since I'd sold everything I had at school that day. I'm pretty good at getting into locked doors and windows when I need to, so I circled the whole house looking for a way in. Windows double-paned and locked. Doors secure. No tools on me to work anything open.

I ended up at the front door — solid oak, three and a half feet wide, handle lock and a deadbolt. All I had on me was my driver's license, so I tried popping the bottom lock, hoping the deadbolt wasn't thrown, though it usually was. I

kicked the door a couple of times just to see if it would give. I was furious — fuming, honestly, veins popping, close to tears out of pure frustration. I sat down on the front step, and I heard my coworker's voice in my head: “ask the Lord to reveal Himself to you — you'll know the time.” I laughed a little and thought, whatever. Went right back to feeling sorry for myself, and heard it again, same words. Laughed again, but I stood up anyway and started yelling at the top of my lungs, “IF THERE'S A GOD OF THIS WORLD — THE ONE CHERYL SAID WANTS TO REVEAL HIMSELF TO ME — THEN OPEN THAT DOOR!” I said all of it looking up at the sky, then pointing straight at the door.

I waited a second or two. The door didn't budge. So I said, out loud, matter-of-fact and angry, “that's what I thought — there's no God.” And right then, I felt a nudge — a spiritual one — telling me, go check the door. I walked over, reached for the handle to see if it would turn. The instant my fingertips touched the knob — BAM. The door swung open.

I dropped to my knees, crying like a little kid. God revealed Himself to me. That was one of my first mind-blowing experiences, and it wrecked me completely. I went to my room, rolled a joint, smoked it, and cried myself to sleep. Woke up the next morning like it never happened. I stayed an atheist for another twenty years after that. I never told Cheryl that the Lord actually showed up, exactly like she said He

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would. I pray, one day, she finds this book and knows it was her seed — planted all the way back then.

Here's a short list of a few more mind-blowing experiences I'll cover in full detail in that other book. And yes — they're every bit as mind-blowing as they sound.

A girl wakes up from a coma.

A young boy is miraculously healed, and leaves the doctors scratching their heads.

A demon is cast out, and epilepsy is healed.

The dead, raised.

And many, many more.

Conclusion

Now that you've read the book — have you figured out your purpose? If not, read it again, and ask God to reveal His purpose for your life. In short, if you've accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, you need to share that with the world. Get into the Word. Share this book with someone. Write your own story. Use your gifts — you have them, even if you don't know what they are yet. Ask, and you'll receive.

I pray that by now, you're part of the family of believers. I pray you stay in the Word, and that you keep seeking the truth in everything, always. Know that you're loved, and that you have purpose.

Be blessed.

The Invitation

Okay, my friend. This is where I stop trying to be polite about it.

I've spent the pages before this telling you what happened to me, what I believed, what I didn't believe, the stupid things I've done, the miracles I've experienced, and what I believe now.

So let me tell you what I think you should do with all of it.

I don't care if you're an atheist.

I don't care if you're agnostic.

I don't care if you're Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, spiritual, religious, completely nonreligious, or just plain confused.

I don't care if you've been hurt by Christians.

I don't care if you've been hurt by the church.

I don't care if you've never opened a Bible in your life.

And I don't care if you've read the Bible ten times.

I'm still going to tell you what I believe.

I believe Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior.

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I believe the Bible is the Word of God.

I believe you were created on purpose, with purpose, and for a purpose.

And I believe the most important thing you can do is find out for yourself whether what I'm telling you is true.

So here's my advice.

First: READ THE BIBLE.

Actually read it.

Don't just listen to somebody tell you what it says.

Don't let some atheist tell you what Christians believe without reading it yourself.

Don't let some Christian tell you what the Bible says without reading it yourself either.

Open the damn book.

If you're not much of a reader, use a Bible app and let your phone read it to you.

Start with John.

Then read Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

Ask questions.

Challenge it.

Argue with it.

Study it.

I did.

I started out trying to prove it wrong.

I was an atheist. I wanted ammunition against Christians.

Instead, after months of studying it, I became convinced it was true.

That changed my entire life.

Second: ACCEPT JESUS CHRIST AS YOUR LORD AND SAVIOR.

I'm not telling you to clean yourself up first.

I tried that.

It doesn't work.

You don't become worthy and then come to Jesus.

You come to Jesus because you know you need Him.

I was a drug addict.

I was an alcoholic.

I was a liar.

I was a cheater.

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I was angry.

I hurt people.

I destroyed relationships.

I had money, a career, music, success, and a completely screwed-up soul.

And Jesus still wanted me.

If He wanted me, I believe He wants you.

If you're ready, talk to Him.

You don't need fancy words.

Tell Him the truth.

Tell Him you're sorry.

Tell Him you don't understand.

Tell Him you want to know if He's real.

Ask Him to reveal Himself.

Ask Him to forgive you.

Ask Him to lead you.

Ask Him to change you.

If you are ready now, pray something like this:

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Father God, I want to know the truth. I believe Your Son Jesus Christ is Lord. Forgive me for my sins and my unbelief. Reveal Yourself to me. Reveal the truth of Your Word to me. Give me the Holy Spirit. Guide my steps, protect me, change me, and help me become the person You created me to be. Help me find the purpose You have for my life. I give my life to You. I ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

Third: STOP WASTING TIME.

I'm serious.

Stop wasting your life.

Stop waiting until you're perfect.

Stop waiting until everything makes sense.

Stop waiting for tomorrow.

You don't know how much tomorrow you have.

This is why I keep talking about the check.

For years I carried around what I now believe was the greatest uncashed check in existence.

The check had everything I needed.

Forgiveness.

Grace.

Purpose.

Restoration.

Eternal life.

I had the check.

I just hadn't cashed it.

Then I did.

Best check I've ever cashed.

So I'm going to say it the way I would say it sitting across the table from you:

CASH THE DAMN CHECK.

Yes, I said damn.

Because sometimes truth needs some damn emphasis.

If you don't believe me, fine.

But investigate it.

If you think I'm crazy, fine.

Read the Bible and find out.

If you think Jesus was just another religious figure, fine.

Read what He actually said.

If you think God isn't real, then ask Him to prove Himself to you.

PURPOSE

That's what I did.

I asked.

And my life has never been the same.

You have purpose.

You were created on purpose.

Your past may explain you, but it does not have to define you.

Your addiction doesn't get the final word.

Your divorce doesn't get the final word.

Your abuse doesn't get the final word.

Your failures don't get the final word.

The person who hurt you doesn't get the final word.

The person you became while you were hurting doesn't get the final word.

Jesus gets the final word.

And if you're willing to let Him, He can start rebuilding what you thought was beyond repair.

That's what He did with me.

I'm not finished.

Don't misunderstand that.

PURPOSE

I'm still a work in progress.

But I'm not the man I used to be.

And that's the point.

You don't have to be finished to have purpose.

Start where you are.

Tell the truth.

Take responsibility for your part.

Ask God for help.

Take the next right step.

Then take another.

And when you begin to understand what God has done for you, don't keep it to yourself.

Go find somebody else who thinks they're too far gone.

Tell them there is hope.

Tell them they have purpose.

Tell them the story isn't over.

Because restored people want to restore people.

That's what I want my life to be about.

Not proving that Wade Quinton was a great man.

Not proving that I never screwed up.

Not proving that I'm perfect.

I want my life to prove something much more important:

He did it with me.

He can do it with you.

Now go cash the check.

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