

BROKEN

To

RISE

A LIFE CHANGED BY THE POWER OF GOD

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DEDICATION

To my faithful wife, Vonette Tully, and to my five loving sons, Benjamin, Samuel, Joseph, John, and Luke who have shared, in whole or in part, this journey with me. I love you deeply.

APPRECIATION

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PREFACE

It is with great humility and gratefulness that I share my personal testimony. I am certainly not proud of my past, nor do I desire any credit as some self-made man, for I have sufficiently messed up about as good as any person can. Rather, I share my life with you, so my God might receive all the glory for lives that not only have been touched and changed, but are being changed even as I write. So I want to make clear that I share the following with a great desire to see God praised, honored, and glorified. It is my desire that anyone who reads this book will realize there is no such thing as a “lost cause” with Christ.

God is a redeemer of broken lives and can heal yours, even if your past is full of failure. He takes broken lives, heals them, and puts them on a new path—a pathway to His fullness. Also, the Bible says in Revelation 12:11, “They overcame him [Satan] by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony...” Therefore, by writing this book, I propose to position myself to defeat Satan in my life.

This is my story. I want to invite you into my home, into my living room, to sit down in front of the fire in a comfortable chair and just listen to what my mighty God has done (and is doing) in my life.

—Doyle

INTRODUCTION

Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it.

—Matthew 7:13

A bitter cold snap hit two days before Thanksgiving, 1980—very unusual for this southern delta state, Louisiana. My wife and I were locking up our clothing store after our normal twelve-hour day when I received a phone call from a friend. Not the kind of friend you'd want to hang out with or trust with anything of value, but just a business friend. The voice on the other end gave our normal greetings, and then, in the code language only we understood, he requested a buy. I signaled to come by my home in about an hour. My wife went to do some shopping while I hurried home to accommodate his need—and to help fund mine.

When I arrived home, I stepped behind the house to a secret hiding place (which most of the time made me feel secure because of an unreasonable idea that no one could ever find it) and picked up a garbage bag. It was a large, lumpy, black bag weighing only

about ten pounds. I made my way carefully back to the front of the house, so as not to be seen by anyone. Once in the house, I warmed myself first and then began to separate the bag's contents—a large quantity of marijuana that had been shipped in from Hawaii. This was an incredible stash of the best holiday weed anyone could have landed in the drug world. This high-dollar sack of “get high” weed would bring some \$20,000 dollars, depending on how much patience I exercised. Of course, I only wanted a few small bags for my party friends and myself. I was purchasing the large quantities to fund my real need—the holiday party life, which cost thousands of dollars.

My business friend arrived soon and knocked on the door. He came in, sat down, and we talked about his family in one breath and the drugs he was looking for in the next. I proudly brought in the sack of choice marijuana for his selection process. He smelled it and quickly rolled up a joint to try it out. After some time of testing, he was blown away with its quality and agreed to purchase a small quantity. However, something seemed strange about him...he seemed nervous...a little on edge...I asked about it, but he blew it off and then left.

I did not know why, but I had a strange feeling about this deal. I had prided myself on my ability to keep one step ahead of the authorities, and I did not intend for this to change. I carefully bundled up several pounds for a delivery later that evening, while the balance, still a large quantity, I returned to my hiding place. Then I left to make a routine delivery. Everything went according to plan, and when I arrived back home very late, I went to bed.

The next day, Thanksgiving eve, found us so busy at the store that before we knew it, the day was over. This night was even colder, and as we drove home a weather front was moving in with a prediction of freezing rain and sleet. We quickly stopped by a small grocery store to pick up a few items and then went straight

home. The next morning, we planned to leave with my mother and travel to Florida for our first-time-ever family reunion.

We were very tired from the holiday rush and settled in to a warm fire and our favorite music. However, I could not get that drug deal out of my mind. It lingered like some bad taste that would not go away. I felt like something was wrong but could not put my finger on why I felt this way.

Out of some weird impulse, I retrieved the sack of marijuana and began to think in a what-if-someone-came-looking-for-drugs thought process. Where would they not look? I looked around outside and noticed our garbage can was sitting out front, ready to roll out to the street the next day. I thought if someone came looking, who would look for drugs in a garbage can in front of our house? I cannot say whether I was all there on this thought process—it's just what I thought! So, I proceeded out of our house with the black garbage bag, pulled the garbage sack out of the trash can, placed the drug one in first, and then followed it with our real garbage. As I put the lid on the garbage can, it began to sleet.

Little did I know that in a few hours, my life was going to make a radical turn—a turn I was not in any way prepared for, nor did I ever think would happen to me. It would be one of those turns that forever changes the landscape of your life and forces you to take stock in yourself—one that forces you to consider who you are, what you are, and begs the question, “Where am I going?”

Chapter 1

THE BEGINNING OF THE END

But if you will not do so, behold, you have sinned against the LORD, and be sure your sin will find you out.

—Numbers 32:23

I had a very happy childhood, growing up in the mid fifties and sixties in a small town on the northwestern coastline of California. I came from a wonderful family and heard about God at an early age. My mother made sure I attended church regularly—just about every time the door was opened. It was somewhat expected since we lived just one block from our local church. We would all go together on most Sunday mornings as a family, but just Mom and the kids went for the rest of our meeting times.

As I stepped out in life, I had big dreams—dreams of money, social status, business success, and retirement at thirty-five. I was definitely motivated by selfish desires and objectives. God was nowhere in the picture. Oh, I believed God was real; I just did not have any room for Him in my life. I remember traveling between cities one day and telling God to go ahead and run the world—but I would run my own life!

In pursuit of these self-centered dreams, my brother and I partnered to open a clothing business in a small Louisiana town. Actually, it was only a seventies “jean shop” in the beginning, but it developed into a complete men’s and ladies’ clothing store. This business venture played right into my goals and ego. Overnight (it seemed) I achieved respect, status, and certainly cash flow (but not much real money). And I was on my way. I drove a Corvette and became the talk of the town.

I met my wife, Vonette, in this small town. She, too, had learned about God in Sunday school; however, she had also left all the teachings of Jesus behind and was looking for whatever life had to offer. We hit it off at first sight. I would not call it love at first sight on my part, but more of lust at first sight...Me for her, but for her? My car! Anyway, we began a relationship, and she quickly became involved with my pursuits, desires, and business direction. I added a ladies’ section to our store, and she managed it completely. We dated for a couple years and were finally married in August of 1978.

We quickly became very important figures in the social structure of this small town. We were successful, nice looking, and had money. We were great party people, and other people enjoyed our free spirits. Together, we set our sights on opening many more stores to achieve even more money and success. Little did we know we were on a course that would lead to disaster. There was an iceberg in our path, but we just kept going “full steam ahead”!

As we pursued our goals, they began to take a toll on us. We worked very hard in our business. We did everything. We worked some twelve hours a day, six days a week, and then on Sunday trying to catch up balancing our books. This was an impossible pace to maintain, so friends introduced us to some pills that would help us take on the challenge of our fast-paced life. We gladly accepted their suggestion and quickly became even better at accomplishing our goals.

It was not long until we purchased another store, and we thought we were on our way. However, we had a problem. We could not seem to sleep at night because of the pills we were using, so we took another type of pill to help us rest. We also began to use other drugs to support different aspects of our busy lifestyle. Marijuana certainly was one used to enhance our party life. Our drug use evolved slowly, progressing over time.

At this point, I really thought we had it all. We had status, respect, and many of the things important to us. We would travel to the Dallas apparel market to purchase clothing and accessories for our next season's business. We'd spend thousands of dollars with the dealers, and they'd reward us with lines of cocaine in the back rooms and invitations to parties where drugs, alcohol, food, and party people were all provided. We fell right into Satan's trap! We took the bait...hook, line, and sinker.

Within our own minds, we had built a great "cloud of justification" around our actions. We *needed* the drugs. First, we needed them to follow the markets' example by having drugs on hand to share with our best customers (the ones who spent large amounts of money with us). We also needed the drugs to always appear happy and full of energy. Finally, we needed the drugs to function...really, to exist! But understand, we never thought we were doing anything seriously wrong. We were not hurting anyone else. This was our life, and we deserved to choose what we wanted to do. It was our right! In fact, I remember telling my wife that if the authorities wanted to arrest us for a few bags of marijuana...well just let them come. Such arrogance!

Our drug involvement grew to a point that even with all the money we were earning, we just did not have enough to get the drugs we craved—the "best of the best." This required purchasing larger quantities, which required larger sums of money. I began to recruit friends to go in together, so we could all enjoy the best of the drugs. This turned into a way to pay for our drug needs.

Without fully thinking through what I was doing, I turned my need into a drug business. On Thanksgiving eve, 1980, our lives were shattered as all this false world of happiness, success, and security came crashing down on us.

A good friend had stopped by our home, and we played a game of backgammon while snorting lines of cocaine and smoking choice Hawaiian marijuana. Even though I should have been feeling pretty laid back, for some unknown reason I just could not get rid of this uneasy feeling in my gut...I felt weird...like my skin was crawling.... Then, there was this total silence. It felt like time had stood still. Even the air did not move.

Quickly, moving by instinct, I gathered up all the drugs in my living room and walked directly to my bathroom. Then, suddenly, narcotics agents broke through our front and back doors, looking for what they thought would be a very large quantity of drugs. I immediately flushed as much as I could before they made it to my bathroom.

Vonette, my friend, and I were forced down on the couch and held at gun point. At this moment, my life flashed before me, almost like some kind of “out of body experience.” I could see myself when I was young. My life paraded before me in living color. It was a happy childhood, my parents were very loving, and I possessed a hope for a bright future. What had gone wrong? What was I going to do now? How would I get out of this?

I could see outside through a window, and I was amazed at the large numbers of men involved with this bust. Then I saw what I thought would be the sure nail in my coffin—a drug dog! They were walking him around the house in a complete sweep of the outside premises. Fear gripped me! They were searching near our outside trash can.

Everything moved in slow motion...step by step...closer and closer.... I tried not to stare, afraid I would give it away, but how would they miss it with a dog! The dog got to the trash can and

sniffed it. The officer opened the lid, and the dog jumped up to the top and sniffed several times. Then the most amazing thing happened—they put the top back on and continued their search! I could not believe it. The dog did not catch the scent! Somehow, the sleet and garbage combined to throw off the dog's smell. I could not believe it!

At this point, we were shown a search warrant that allowed them to completely search our home. The result of that search yielded two bags of marijuana, five Quaalude pills, and a trace of cocaine. As we sat on the couch reflecting on what was happening, Vonette looked at me and said she felt like God was trying to tell us something, but I responded by blaming God for where we were. I certainly did not want anything to do with Him. We were arrested that night for possession of marijuana with intent to distribute, possession of Quaalude pills, and possession of cocaine. We were taken to the parish jail facility where we immediately posted bond.

It was not long until our world collapsed around us. We began to lose everything. All our so-called friends fled like rabbits to their holes. People would not continue shopping with the “druggies” of the town, and mothers would not allow their children to come and purchase their clothes from us anymore. In what seemed to be one night, but was really the course of years, our lives were crumbling around us. No respect, no status, no friends, nowhere to turn. At this point, we turned from illegal drugs to the legal drug of alcohol. We began to drink heavily, bottle after bottle, trying to numb the circumstances we faced—a possible fifteen years in prison!