



J's Story

My name is J and I am 55 years old. I was born in Motherwell and raised in Paisley. My father was a Spanish Gypsy who joined the navy. He jumped ship and met and married my mother, a Scot. They lived liked travellers in a trailer. I was one of 5 children. My dad spoke little English. I was wild and ran the gangs. We didn't get on too well. Lots of fighting. It was rough and you had to prove yourself. I ran with some of the worst. My parents owned a lorry and drove long distances. Taking it in turns. Sometimes we went with them. Sometimes we didn't. I was too stoned for education. Hash was just a way of life and drink. Nothing hard though. I did go once when the girls were in trouble. I sorted it for them. I remember Mr Chalk. He was at the Pentecostal church. My mum would sometimes take me. I think she liked religion. I had no time for God but I liked Mr Chalk. He would listen to me

When I was 8 my mum and dad went with my brother Raymond on a trip. They didn't come back. They were killed and my Nan told me boxing day. Sheet steel in the back shifted through the cab. It was bad. I went to the hills with my dog Samson. I got called a lot of names because I was dark. Gypsy colour like my dad. I went to my uncle William.. I was glad it wasn't my other uncle he did things. It was the first time I prayed to God not to go to him. My uncle though said I was wild and couldn't do anything with me. I thought I had signed to live with him but they were my army papers. I was 15.

I did 3 tours of northern Ireland. The worst was Shanklin road. It got bad when we took out snipers. We cleared the building and then saw they were kids. I knew then I was bad. It got worse. One village thing was really bad. We dealt with it our own way but that wasn't the army way. We were out of control. My wife cheated and I found it when I got home. I hit him and he went through a window. I thought she loved me. I served time in a military prison and then tried everything to get out of the army. I had it. Me and the lads got out of control. The unit was disbanded, there was a dishonourable discharge and divorce papers all at the same time.

So I went to the hills. Several of us. It was really remote. 6 years living off the land. Outer Hebrides. Army training. We had all been through similar things. I really loved that time. Then one day something told me to get off the hills and come back into civilisation. Sometimes I think that that was the worst thing I did because I became involved with drugs and alcohol again. This time it was the hard stuff. I travelled from one place to another and was on the road for 15 years. I never stayed anywhere long just had to keep moving. I would always find out a church and sometimes people listened and at other times they were cold and hard and I had to move on because of the way I smelt or looked. I kept sitting in chapels and talked with priests and asked God if he was there would he come in but nothing happened. I don't think anybody could tell me how to get in. Anyhow I couldn't believe that I could be forgiven for what I had done.

Encounter 17th - 21st August 2009

For more details visit www.hope-church.org.uk/encounter



J's Story

And then one day I met someone and they reached out to me. They were giving out food and chocolate muffins ! I was pretty wild and stoned out of my head. I kept turning up pissed and wild on drugs but crying out for help. Everyone thought I was pretty crazy. I was thin. I smelt, had a very wild beard and had been on the road for a long time. They came to find me one night and reached over the wall where I was sleeping. She said to me that the only person that could really help was Jesus Christ. She asked if she could pray for me and I let her. I didn't think He would do anything because he never had before and I couldn't believe he would want to help someone like me. I went to see her at a clinic for homeless people a couple of weeks later. They said she was alright. We got talking over 6 weeks and then I asked her what is it like being a Christian? What was it like being on the inside. She said it was wonderful and why didn't I come and see for my self and I got invited to church. I didn't think I could go because I was a tramp.

When I got there it was ok. She sat with me and people were ok. I didn't understand much but I was allowed a coffee and I was able to come and go out for a fag. So I went again and then one day she said to me you don't need the alcohol. They prayed for me and it was like I was on fire. They said it was God healing me or something. Then one morning the following week on the 2nd of April I woke up and a voice said to me you don't need that. I was lying in a hedge with the lads and I thought it was one of them. I asked *** if it was him it was so loud but it wasn't. I put down the bottle of sherry and walked away from it. I knew I wanted to come off the alcohol. So I walked and walked. It was a 30mile walk to pilsden and I had a weekend there. I sat all night in the chapel detoxing. I had several fits. It was so hard but all the time I knew I didn't want to go back. The second time I walked back I sat in the chapel all night and prayed. I knew it was over and I was free from alcohol. It took me another 3 months to walk free of drugs.

I kept going to church. I went to everything. People were so kind and kept wanting to help me. Then one day Gary and Pauline met me for a coffee and explained about becoming a Christian. I really wanted to know. 2 weeks later I asked Jesus into my heart. I couldn't stop myself I wanted it. I was baptised and then went to Encounter

Encounter was brilliant. We laughed and laughed all week. Me, Gary, Pauline and Dan. We got on so well. There was no fighting not like on the streets and that was cool. I listened to other people there. People like me and then I realised that other people had had a hard time too and I didn't feel so sorry for myself. I realised there that I could have a new life. God came in and healed some bad memories. A man bought me a prediction from God about names I had been called in my life and that they were no longer true. I cried lots and it helped. They don't matter any more. I didn't think anybody would ever want me again or that I could be any use any more. Not after what I had done. I didn't think God could forgive me or use me or want me or have a plan. But He did! Encounter told me that. I had secretly been wanting a real family all my life. He gave me the best one there. I didn't want to leave but I am now in my small group and my church. I have friends that someone like me shouldn't have. I still want to go on the road....its what I know best...civilisation is hard.

Encounter 17th - 21st August 2009

For more details visit www.hope-church.org.uk/encounter



J's Story

I think God wants me to tell the guys on the streets about Him. I got a new prayer language at encounter called tongues. Sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't. But I pray all the time and ask him to do in the guys what he has done in me. I help now on the soup run and I go out myself in the mornings. I have respect. Not the respect of violence but because of what God has done. Come off alcohol and drugs with no help. They all want to know how and I tell them. I tell them about Weymouth family church and some want to come. I have done alpha and God has given me a vision of a red building. I think he wants a night shelter. The church is helping me. I can't wait for Encounter next year. I want my friends to come so they can have what I have. Two or Three are interested and have started coming to church. God can move mountains. God can take everything away. But you have to believe Him.

Encounter 17th - 21st August 2009

For more details visit www.hope-church.org.uk/encounter