

Turning Point

After a fatal car accident I began to question myself, "Why was I alive, what is my purpose? I always proclaimed to be a Christian, but I hadn't a clue what real Christianity was or what following Christ was really all about.

Introduction

This book is really about my observation of my life, Christian growth and a Journey to the Renewing of my Mind. I went from deception to reception; from death to life, from the walking dead to the living. I was a walking dead man, an eternal soul heading for disaster only to be awoken by a horrific turning point which changed my direction down the narrow path of eternal life. The book cover is a representation of my transformation from a lifestyle of worldliness to a lifestyle of holiness. Not that I have already apprehended a flawless mature walk of holiness but, "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 3:14)

Book Cover

The Cover represents our growth process after conversion. We were like coal but have been regenerated into a precious stone, a diamond. God shapes us as we seek His heart. He fashions every facet to refract His Shekinah glory. As we draw near to God we will have a reverence for Him that will produce the attributes of obedience, faithfulness, humility, and truthfulness which leads us to walk in a holy lifestyle. This is the idea of mind renewing through Romans 12:1-2 while God sanctifies us through His Word and Ministers "For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ:" (Ephesians 4:12-13 KJV)

Biographical Sketch

My name is Gregory Dodge I was born to Robert and Jacquelyn Dodge. I grew up in southern Florida from the age of five. I grew up, what I thought was a normal childhood. Played sports from the time I was about seven T-ball grew into baseball, and little league football became varsity football and I eventually played soccer. I graduated from High school in 1981 and was interested in the Electricity / Electronic field. I joined the military at age 18 and served for six years. I was honorably discharged with five ribbons and two metals, one was the Good Conduct Medal and the other was the Armed Forces Expeditionary medal. I eventually was hired with G.S.S. Computer Maintenance and began to climb the ladder of success, (at least what I thought success might be at the time). I worked for them for 12 years. After working there for over eight years I was in a fatal car accident and was indicted several months later. I was on bond and appellant bond for almost four years. I continued to work for G.S.S. until I went to prison in July of 2002. I was released from prison on February 10, 2015. What went wrong? How about my innate sin nature.

Deep down inside I wanted to be accepted, but I did not think I was. So I tried to fit in with other guys around my neighborhood and eventually in the military. It seemed if I would drink with them we could all laugh and be accepted. I first found this out when I drank 5 beers

at the age of twelve with my cousins. That was not good I eventually threw up. You would think that would have been a good sign to stop, but it was not. It started off slow, drinking here and there. But after I joined the military it was on. Drinking every weekend eventually turned into every day after six years, but I could still slow down. I was still in control. Five years later after buying my first house a 3/2 with a pool, my girlfriend bet me I could not stop drinking for thirty days, and being competitive I said O.K. Well I did it, but it was right back on when day thirty one came around. She told me you were the biggest Expletive when you were not drinking. At that point, I knew I had a problem. I was 30 years old. I would go between drinking and maintenance drinking, maintenance drinking was drinking two beers a day to keep the edge off. Five years later and in my second house a 3/2 2 car garage on an acre and a third, I thought I made it, success. But, to the successful ideology of life. A house with a little white picket fence. Only my fence was a chain-link fence, but nevertheless, I thought it was success....

We are all in recovery of some sort, mostly from our sinful nature. My turning point was a horrific fatal car accident in which I ended up serving 12 years and nine months in prison.

The first thought I had right before the impact was my life will never be the same. I did not know how true that would be or where that thought would carry me. I began checking my thought processes. How about the 2's times table. 2 n 2 is 4 and 4 is 8 and so forth. But what I did not realize was my vocabulary was malfunctioning. I was in the hospital for two weeks before having to spend two more weeks at home due to a lacerated liver and a severe concussion.

I began to question myself: Why am I alive, what is my purpose? I always proclaimed to be a Christian, but my idea of Christianity was not even developed. The most I would do is pray over a meal "if" I remembered that was not often. I also heard you were not supposed to get tattoos so I never did even though I spent six years in the military. I lived like the world. Claiming the cooperate ladder, working long hours and neglecting my immoral relationships. I became an alcoholic along the way; I was psychosomatically addicted, (just a fancy way to say I was addicted both bodily and psychologically). I thought I was a good guy. I would help my neighbors. I was a hard worker but neglected to see how my selfishness and my addiction was taking time and money away from the people who cared for me. That is what addiction does. It is a deceiver of sorts. It tells you "You can quit any time. You're in control. Just one won't hurt." Deception and lies that we will not face or focus on because the truth is we do not want to know we cannot quit or we are not in control. This is where I was, before the accident.

My personal injuries did not measure up to the person who died. I had some physical injuries, but the severe concussion I received would affect me the most. I went into severe depression. I called out to God to find my purpose. I said as soon as this headache goes away I will read the Bible. This was how my journey began. It was my turning point. The following six months I hit bottom and another bottom. I could not get any lower. Thoughts of suicide entered my mind. But I remembered what my stepdad said when he saw me at the hospital, "Don't do anything like this again your mom almost died." I also thought I might go to hell for committing suicide. There seemed to be no way out. All the doors were closed. I had to face whatever was coming my way. I just could not do it alone. There were no options to the left or the right. The only place I could look was up, God. I went to see a psychologist a few days after I was released from the hospital because I really did not know God. Those questions I had *why am I alive, what is my purpose and I always said I was a Christian but I have not been living like*

one? I now presented to God. God, what is my purpose? Why am I alive? I wish I were dead. My head hurt so bad I could not think. It was like I had no brain in my head. I began asking myself, *how do I even think? Where are my thoughts coming from?* This headache would last over eight months. I could not listen to the music I use to listen to but I found that classical music was stimulating even therapeutic.

Those first two months after I was home were very difficult. Sometimes I would just be sitting in a chair and I would get anxiety attacks. They were so bad that I could hardly sit still. My blood was racing and felt like there were armies battling in my veins. I wanted to just get up and run like Forrest Gump. I talked my way out of it, won't you get so tired that you will not want to run home and you will be so far away that it would not make any sense and your head hurts it will only get worse. This feeling will pass I convinced myself to stay put. It did but the anxiety spells would come and go for the next few months.

One day as I was driving to work I felt the presence of the person who died in the accident. It was like she wanted to be my angel, but I said, go be with you dad he needs you more. I also thought I was not worthy to receive any help. I was becoming more and more depressed. I thought, did this really just happen? Lord if this was real, give me a sign. Well, there was a billboard over the office building where I worked and they must have changed it after I left work the day before because now it said: "Touched by an Angel". It was a television series at the time but for me, it was a sign from God.

One day, after my head stopped hurting, I opened my Bible randomly. It fell open to the book of Isaiah. I thought this is where God must want me to begin. (You must know I had bought it some 17 years before and it looked like I never had opened it). I began to read until my head started hurting an hour later. This went on for some time. When I got to chapter 24 I began to wonder; how long is this book. I found out it was 66 chapters long and asked God why this one, it is the longest book in the Bible. Then I turned the volume up on the T.V., the narrator was talking about the Dead Sea Scrolls and that the book of Isaiah was the most complete book found in the (Coom-ran) Qumran cave. Well, that was enough for me to hear. Alright, God, I'll keep on reading. I turned the volume back down and then I continued reading until my head began hurting once more. This went on for two months.

I did finish the book and made my second New Year's resolution. I made a commitment to go to church every Sunday for the next year. That was the beginning of 1999. I started noticing Acreage Church signs going up around my neighborhood, so I decided to check it out. One Sunday before New Year's I went over to the high school where they were having their service. The first person I saw was a lady so I asked her what kind of church it was. She said it was a Baptist Church. I went to a Baptist Church when I was between the ages of eight and ten. It was a hellfire and brimstone preaching church so my reply was, "Is it a hellfire and brimstone preaching church?" She said, "Oh no, it is nice won't you come and see?" I said, "Yes."

The Saturday before going to church I prayed to God, "Lord please let somebody I know sit next to me." Well, I went to church that Sunday. I had lived in West Palm Beach for just over a year. I did not know too many people besides my coworkers and my neighbors, who did not go to church or they did not go to that church. I went into the cafeteria area where they were holding service and sat in about the third row. People started coming in and a lady sat next to me on one side as the church filled up. After service, I thought well God I guess that prayer was not answered. I also found out that the lady I talked with when I enquired about the hellfire and

brimstone preaching, just happened to be the preacher's wife. I was feeling pretty indifferent to say the least.

I did keep my New Year's resolution and went to every service that year except for two. I missed one because of a hurricane and the other was because I went out of town when my Grandmother passed away. Over the next year, I began to read the New Testament and along the way, I accepted Jesus as my Lord and Saviour. I was so scared to do anything so I ended up spending my weekends in my recliner. I would read the Bible until I fell asleep or got hungry. (Which was not often, because when I am depressed I do not eat). Oh, and I also found out the lady who sat next to me that day was my neighbor some 20 years before. God does answer prayer. By the way, I'm still going to church today.

During that first year, I joined a men's Bible study group and went every Wednesday morning before work. I volunteered for a youth camp weekend and helped set up the church for services. I also went to my first Promise Keepers weekend event. The theme was from Joshua 24:15, "**For me and my house, we will serve the LORD**" (KJV). I ended up going to four Promise Keeper events from 1999-2002. I was even going to church picnics. I did not know that you could have fun without drinking. I was deceived by my addiction and worldly notions.

I began losing interest in my field of work. I was having trouble first of all remembering how I even repaired computers because of the severe concussion, and secondly, I began to realize the world was not what it appeared to be. It was a vampire! Trying to suck the life out of you with the lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. T.V. commercials, movies, peers, fads and the like were all after your money, time and talents. It was a ploy to keep your focus off of God, His truth and the real meaning of life. I read the New Testament that first year and somewhere along the way, I was converted. I had an increase in faith when I realized that all the apostles died and they did not have to, that is if what they were preaching was not true. After all who would die for a lie? All they would have to do is recant and they could have lived.

In the next three years, I grew in God's word. I had read the New Testament seven times before going to prison and the Old Testament a least once all the way through. I had several encounters with God and the Holy Spirit I felt the dialogue with Him. I would feel His presence while speaking to others about His word or when speaking about personal testimonies. I began thinking about going to a Bible college, but before I could I ended up in prison.

In prison, I began to look for colleges but it seems as if it were not possible. I certainly did not want 15 years of dead time just to get out with an empty hole of time and a waste of life. I did not want to become the Card Master or the Domino Doctor. I did what I could by inviting others to church. Taking Bible correspondence courses e.g. Mt. Zion and Rock of Ages. I became involved in a subculture within the prison culture and mentality. People looked at me differently, especially after my sneakers were stolen and the guards told me to mark them so they would not get stolen again. I came up with what I thought was a brilliant idea. On each front side of my shoe, I wrote Rom 3:23, Rom 6:23, Rom 5:8, and Rom 10:9, 10. This either attracted people or distanced them from me. I was either explaining the Romans Road to salvation or explaining why my shoes were marked with scripture. I ended up doing it to 3 or 4 pairs of sneakers while I was in prison.

After 27 months at the O-Unit (a work camp with about 500 men in Starke, Florida), I was transferred to Sumter C.I. I heard there was a course being taught by Dr. Gary Williams and

you could get college credits. Once I got there I found out Gary had a quadruple by-pass. I was questioning God Again Why, God, Why am I here? Why? Why? Why? I wanted college credits. Soon some of the other Christian brothers noticed my study habits and one of them referred me to a college now known as Kairos University. I applied in October 2005 and was accepted.

Once again I became a part of the Christian subculture only this time at a main institution with 1800 incarcerated men. Some Long stories:

- Tom Ash / Dr. Gary Williams
- Communion message
- D.O.C. jobs
- Fasting / third-yard ministry
- Work camp activities
- The last 27 months

This I will try and be brief with. First of all the course, I wanted to take for college credits was now being taught by Tom Ash. I took those courses for seven years. 2005–2012. I became well acquainted with Dr. Ash and I am now going to his church, New Song in Lady Lake, Florida.

Communion message, I thought I was volunteering to pass out the elements for communion until one of the seasoned attendees came up to me, the newbie, and said, “Do you know what you volunteered for?” I told him yea, to pass out the bread or juice, right? He explained to me it was a sermon on communion. I was shocked considering I had not studied for such a discourse before. I thought I better get studying. It actually turned out well. This was a Monday night service with Anthony Cersosimos. Who would allow me to teach/preach during his services and eventual at the work camp at Sunday service. He also was one of my references when I got my license in 2010.

D.O.C. jobs, at Sumter C.I. I started off in G.E.D. as a tutor in the English class. I wanted to help in the math class because I thought I was better equipped in math. But God. The English class actually helped me a lot but I did not see it that way at first until I joined a fast. After six months I was asked to be the Chapel’s librarian. I served there six months before being transferred to the work camp next door. Both jobs helped me in my college courses. Think of it as a Bible college student’s dream job. A job full of reverences from A to Z for all the subject matter you may need for any course of study that a Bible college could throw at you.

Fasting third yard. Third yard happened during the summer months while daylight permitted. There was a group of Christians that would go out under the “hut”, a pavilion, and listen to a teacher/preacher. It is amazing the amount of Biblical knowledge and skills one can receive while in prison. At one point he called us out to fast. To say the least, it was a long fast. I prayed for three areas of my life. I also became grateful for being in the English class as a G.E.D. aide because it reiterated the essay format and helped me establish an organized report habit for my correspondence courses. Close to the end of my fast, we met out on the recreation field in a huge circle. The leader came up to me and said things that I did not tell anyone like, how I was grateful for having the job I was at. After he was done praying for me I had to take a knee. I could not stand up as the Holy Spirit was working in me. This was not the first time I felt His presence but certainly one of the strongest times.

At the work camp.

There seemed to be more ministries coming in at the work camp. I was involved in all of them. I would invite others to come and would be there for anyone who had questions or needed help.

- Monday night, helped the Uptons in their ministry with Prison Fellowship by: Teaching and supporting them in setting up for Bible studies and fellowship.
- Tuesday Tom Ash would come in and teach at a college level
- Wednesday, Dr. Wyatte would come in and teach the Bible Under Deep Discussion, B.U.D.D.
- Thursday, would either be Christian movies or the L.I.F.E.R.S. meeting where I took courses or facilitated them.
- Friday, the Andersons came in and I would help set up for them.
- Saturday day, I was involved in a Peer teaching and Bible study.
- Saturday night, was the designated L.I.F.E.R.S. meeting Where I took courses and facilitated them.
- Sunday, was Sunday Worship service. Where I was involved in a rotating teaching/preaching ministry when Pastor Cersosimo was there.
- From 2009 to 2010 I was involved in the music ministry as a requirement for licensing.

From 2007 to 2012 I was involved in the L.I.F.E.R.S. program (Learning to Improve the Future by Exercising Responsible Strategies). A self-help program started by men who had life sentences. They were tired of seeing others who kept coming back to prison like they were going through a revolving door. The classes included but were not limited to the following:

- AA
- Facilitator Training classes
- Life skills class
- Parenting class
- Anger management class
- D.I.R.E.C.T. Phase 1 class
- D.I.R.E.C.T. Phase 2 class

I eventually began facilitating the Life Skills class in 2008. Mike Good was the President at that time and was in the same ministries on Sundays and Friday nights. By the end of that year, I was also facilitating Anger Management Classes. I had to take the class before I could facilitate them. In 2009. It was time to elect a new structure and Mike Good had built a great program. I was elected president that year. It was a two-year term. I continued taking classes and facilitating the Life Skills, Budgeting, Anger Management and eventual facilitated D.I.R.E.C.T. Phase 1 class, until October 2012. Due to D.O.C. red tape we were almost closed down a few times, but it is still going from what I understand.

I also took a 100 hour Family Integrity Course, a Goal setting course and a Reconciliation Course.

During this time I also mentored a few men and encouraged many. There are a few that really came to mind one of whom I was teaching about being aware of his thought life. After about six months he was transferred and he gave me a Malachi 4:6 necklace from a Malachi Dad course he had taken.

My last 27 months were coming up fast. Soon I would have to pick a pre-work release center to go to. I worked down in Pompano, Florida and already knew I could get a job with a computer sales company as I use to deal with them for years and knew the owner quite well. Another benefit was it was within walking distance of the work release center. There was another choice and that was in Kissimmee, Florida where everyone who went there from the work camp said it was a sweet place to be. One day as I was talking to Tom Ash and told him my plans and he threw in a God Wrench, (sort of a monkey wrench but in a godly way). He asked, "Why don't you go to Orlando?" All I could think of is I heard it was in "the hood". How could I get a job there? So I asked, "Why?" He told me about the Westwood church that was close by. I asked, "What about a job?" He said next week there is a meeting so he would not be at the work camp for Bible study and he would check with Pastor Dan who was the Pastor at Westwood, and he told me to pray about it.

The next week when I was doing my morning prayers and devotionals I added a prayer, Lord where should I go to work release. It was like an immediate answer Orlando. I was not use to getting such an immediate answer so I said God what about Pompano I can get a job with no problem and Kissimmee is sweet. It was to no avail the impression I received and the word Orlando was in my mind. This happened every morning for a week with the same back and forth conversation.

The next Tuesday morning I was surprised when I was called to classification. When I arrived the classification officer asked me where I wanted to go for pre-work release. Well, I was flabbergasted. Tom does not come back until next week how do I know if I could get a job or not? I know I can get one in Pompano and Kissimmee is sweet. So I said through my teeth Orlando... Within a month I think I was gone to Orlando.

I was transferred to the Bridges of America in November of 2012. Once in Orlando, I wrote Pastor Dan and it seemed as if he arrived the next day. How did you know I was here did Tom tell you I asked him? He said I got your letter. I guess I was not used to the mail system outside of "the wire". We began meeting every week for over a year until I went to work release and was able to go to the Westwood church.

I soon became the Chaplain's Secretary and was involved in facilitating some of the classes the Bridge was giving (similar to the ones above with the L.I.F.E.R.S. program), and Purpose driven life, Bible Studies and the 180 Day Bridge Builder program. After I took Facilitator class I was leading the Bridge Builder classes when Tim Whitehead was not able to come. Tim was my sponsor and outside volunteer for Bridge Builders. I also took Authentic Manhood and Celebrate Recovery both were six-month courses. On top of the 380 Hour, Substance abuse Program Modules the pre-work release program mandated which include:

- Family Development

- Victim Awareness
- Anger Management
- Criminal Thinking
- Addiction Education
- Budgeting
- Employment Re-entry

I believe over the years I have grown from a babe in Christ asking “Why? Why? Why?” to sin pointing, then doctrine pointing, to Kingdom work and now in a position for spiritual fatherhood. The Westwood Church helped me with getting my doctorate thesis ready and turned in, I received my Doctorate in March of 2014.

I am currently living with my parents in The Villages, Florida. I am going to the New Song Church where Pastor Tom Ash preaches. I also am going to Celebrate Recovery. I started writing devotionals for the New Song Church at ChurchatNewSong.com click on see Greg’s Blog.

My activities from February 2015 until the present have been many.

- Published the book “Journey to the Renewing of the Mind” **ISBN-10:** 0692977600
ISBN-13: 978-0692977606
- Married in June 2016
- Completed Four Units of Clinical Pastoral Education March 2017 - March 2019 (20 weeks each)
- Ordained in September 2018 (3-year process)

In Christ,

Greg Dodge Th. D.

<http://www.GodsSight.org/book.html>

[Http://MindRenewing.org](http://MindRenewing.org)