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that I "saw" my mind being pulled like a rubber band. I felt the tension as it neared its breaking point. I felt it begging for relief. Then I felt it snap. For two days after, I could not understand what words meant. Once I recovered, I went right back for more.

My mother had always considered me a "good boy." But my new lifestyle tore a deep, bleeding gash in our relationship. We were no longer mother and son. I was the mouse, lying and deceiving as though my life depended on it. She was the cat, always trying to catch me. We became bitter enemies.

Then one night at UMass Lowell, I saw a friend from high school, Gabe, sitting by himself. Somehow or other I knew he was a Christian. At that time I considered all Christians frauds, hypocrites who only believed in God on Sundays. But there was something different about Gabe: a light, a peace I'd never seen in anyone before. I'd always had a great respect for him. I joined him and we began to talk. Somehow, we got on the topic of God, and he invited me to a weekly Bible discussion on campus.

"Why not?" I said generously, "I'm open-minded." But I didn't go. The first week, I forgot. The second week, I was the sickest I had been in years. The third week, I was still sick, but I was in D.C. partying with my best friend – go figure. Finally, after nearly a month, I followed through on my promise. Afterward, he invited me to sit down and study the Bible with him and a friend. "Why not?" I thought, "I'm open-minded."

Reading the Bible changed me. God transformed me. The process took place over winter break of my freshman year. I remember talking to a friend when I came back.

"What happened to you?" he asked, stunned, "You're a completely different person."

And I was. No more sneaking around and lying to my mother. No more walking around listless in a haze of drugs. No more waking up in the morning not knowing what I had done the night before. It was as if I had been carrying a backpack that was bursting with stones for my whole life and finally I could dump them all out and move along – free.

It felt great to wake up without a hangover. It felt great to wait with eager anticipation to get breakfast with my father every weekend. It felt great to do the dishes for my mother – and even better to actually miss her when I left home again to resume college.

But even more than all that, it felt great to know that I never had to be alone.

I remember one scripture vividly: "'For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the Lord, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart'" — Jeremiah 29.11-13.

Despite all my sins, despite all my filth, despite all the times I had cursed his name, God had never stopped loving me. He had always had a plan for my life, and he let me in on it when he spoke through the mouth of a lunatic, saying, "You will boast in the power of the Lord."

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• UPCOMING EVENTS

Shine! European Arts Gathering
Bracknell, Berkshire England
May 2-3, 2015

Festival de las Americas 2015
Los Angeles, CA, USA
May 22-24, 2015

2015 Southeast Conference
Greenvilla, South Carolina, USA
September 4-6, 2015

ICOC Delegates Meeting
Montego Bay, Jamaica
October 13-16, 2015

Steps of Jesus & the Apostles
Israel, Greece, Turkey, Italy
October 17-31, 2015

North American Discipleship Summit
St. Louis, Missouri, USA
July 7-10, 2016

CONNECTING DISCIPLES IN CHURCHES AROUND THE WORLD

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Sons of Thunder: A Prophecy Fulfilled

Jeremy Minsk, Boston, MA



"Boanerges," they called us, "sons of thunder." There we stood among a flurry of religious voices, amidst a throng of men deluded into thinking they could tell the future. Unfamiliar hands reached out from the circle of flesh and rested on our shoulders, trying to impart their fervor to us. "You," they told us, "will trust in the Lord." My brother and I – atheists – waited for it to end. "You," they insisted, "will boast in the power of the Lord." They called this prophesying. I called it a bunch of lunatics ranting.

I grew up in a religious home. Every Sunday I sat patiently in the pews, trying my best to be quiet, doodling on the weekly announcements, struggling to stay awake and remember something the preacher said so that when my mother quizzed me afterwards I wouldn't feel ashamed for not paying attention.

But strife tore our family apart. My parents began to fight. My brother and I would go outside to escape the yelling, only to find that the whole neighborhood could hear them screaming at each other.

When my father left after the separation, I stopped going to church. I was angry at my father, and I was angry at God. "You shall reap what you sow," my father had boasted one night. But what did he have to show for it? A broken marriage, a failed career, a perilous relationship with his kids. If God truly existed, I thought, why didn't it show in the way my parents lived their lives? All I heard from heaven was silence. I decided that the absence of an answer meant the absence of a God, so I turned my back on Him.

As high school ended, I prepared to enter college. Not that I studied hard and hit the books. Instead, I began to live the college lifestyle early: I drank, I smoked, I caused trouble. One night I spent thirty minutes sitting in the cold, steel darkness of a paddy wagon before the police officer opened the door and warned us in a voice as cold as the steel we were sitting on, "Don't ever come back."

Nothing changed when I went to college. During Thanksgiving break of my first semester, I spent an entire weekend smoking weed. At one point I was so stoned

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