



Salvation Stories

SALVATION IS A "BEFORE AND AFTER" EVENT!

My name is Judd Vaughn I am 46 years old.

This is my life and the testimony of the power and of the love of Jesus who restores and redeems all who would come to Him. I grew up in Lehigh acres, a small town in South Florida.

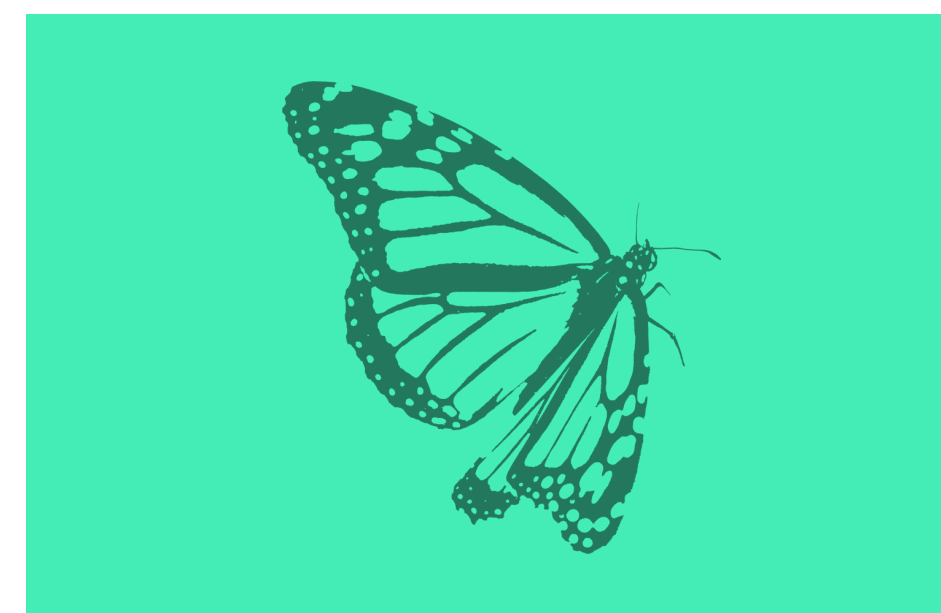
I was born in Pennsylvania but we moved down south when I was very young, 4 years old I think. It was a very small town back in the early 80s. I had lots of friends growing up, played Little League and Pop Warner football and mowed the grass on Saturdays.

Family Life seemed pretty normal to me at that age. We attended church every Easter and Christmas but we were not a family who in all honesty walked with the Lord. I had an older sister, Toni. I guess you could say we got along OK for brother and sister. Honestly I don't remember our relationship very much that far back. When I was around 10 years old some events were about to take place that would drastically alter the course of my life. My sister who was 14 at the time began to develop unhealthy relationships, partying occurred frequently with loud rebellious music and lots of mayhem. Tragically drugs and alcohol soon followed as my sister's addictions and behavior became more erratic and unstable. She ran away from home and afterwards my parents put her into a treatment center.

The things that I was exposed to at that age scarred me very deeply. I was confused. I didn't really know what was going on. I just knew whatever peace was in our home was crushed. My parents were trying to hold the family together the only way they knew how.

I started having feelings of abandonment and lack of love and attention. I began to fear women and started developing severe self-esteem issues. With so much attention on my sister's issues, with good reason, I somehow felt inadequate and that there was something deeply wrong with me, I just didn't know what. As my sister started putting the pieces of her life back together I went through middle and high school, leaving all of my emotional and psychological issues

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unchecked. I buried them down deep where not a soul on Earth could find. I graduated in 1995 and started working immediately afterwards. I wasn't out of school a year when the descent of my life began. All of the people that I was hanging out with at the time were drinking and using drugs, but I wasn't. I remember the feeling. I was so scared and I could feel it in my heart. I knew something bad was going to happen if I crossed that line.

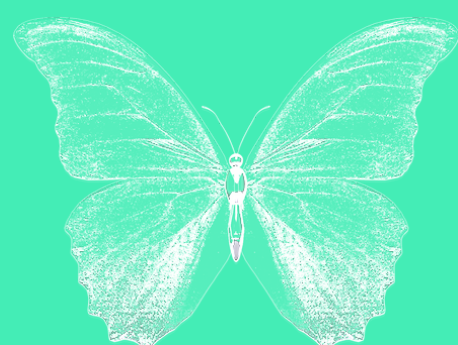
Though not aware at the time, this is when the Lord was first starting to speak to my heart. Unfortunately I did not respond. 20 years of my life went like a vapor, like the twinkling of an eye.

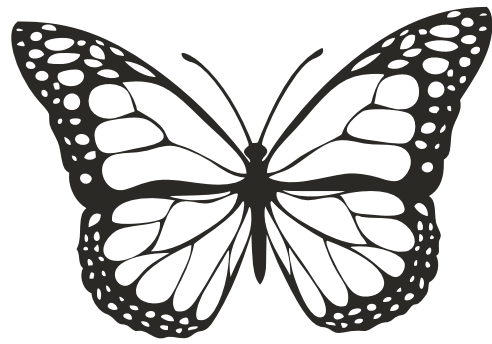
Alcoholism, drug addiction of every kind, pornography, arrest after arrest after arrest with unholy, unhealthy relationships one after the other. I was brutally addicted and arrogant with a selfish heart. My spirit was sick and deeply lost.

My entire life imploded in the fall of 2017 the year of hurricane Irma. My parents told me to leave the house. I could not be trusted and was completely out of control. I was homeless on the streets of Fort Myers for 4 months. I went through all the money I had saved up from my last job, nearly \$20,000 all on drugs and alcohol and the money was soon depleted. I was completely strung out on the street. I became desperate. There was a line I felt in my heart I could not cross. I was not suicidal. I knew I would never hurt anyone physically. I was so lost and was searching for something.

There was a warrant out for my arrest for a misdemeanor charge and I knew the police were looking for me. I will never forget this moment as long as I live. I was walking down US 41 at night and I saw two or three police cars in a parking lot as I walked by slowly and out of their line of sight, I heard in my heart STOP. I felt it so deeply in my spirit I dropped everything and sat down on the curb. Seconds later the police quickly approached me and asked me if I was ready to go. I was.

It was time to stop running. 2 months in jail was one of the most powerful experiences I'd ever had in my life. I don't know how else to explain it. There was a sense of peace and of calm in my heart. I knew I was exactly where I belonged and where God wanted me. I was on a spiritual journey. I knew it and I could feel it. I found a faith-based program called New direction. They moved us out of our cells and we lived for the next 2 months outside in what I can only explain as huge round open-air dorms that looked like circus tents from a distance. They called this building the GOD POD.





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I remember this moment like it was yesterday. When I walked into the dorm the presence of the Lord was there and flooded the atmosphere. With tears in my eyes I knew at that moment I was going to be okay and that a new season in my life was about to begin.

This time was so special to me. I started reading scripture slowly and writing my prayers down. The chaplain and other men of faith would come in and minister to us. It was so inspiring and encouraging to the men who really were seeking the Lord to change their lives. 2 months were up and I was to be released.

I knew the Lord had something special planned for me and it wasn't to move back home with my parents. I found a Christ-centered homeless shelter just minutes down the street. I lived there for the next two and a half years and would be forever transformed by the experience.

With on-site pastors and church services throughout the week, it was everything I was looking for. Soon afterwards I knew I had to make a decision and I did. I turned my life over to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and asked Him to save me.

I began to start seeing people differently through the Lord's eyes and not my own. The men that came through the rescue mission were so special, so fragile, with each one at a different place in their lives. They needed Love and Hope. So many of them just wanted to talk and wanted so desperately for someone to listen, encourage and to motivate.

I am eternally grateful for the rescue mission which I still consider home. It has been 5 years since I left. It hasn't been without trials. relapses, setbacks, mistakes and more mistakes. But, I know this, I serve a God who loves who is patient, merciful and good and the blood of my Savior can pull down any stronghold that is in my life. Jesus saves. He restores and He redeems.

I do not blame any person for my life and my decisions. The lord gave me free will. I know now Jesus has always been with me every moment and every second of my life. He will never leave me or forsake me. I love Him and I trust him.

My sister was saved nearly 25 years ago and the Lord took her home this past holiday season. My godly grandmother, who ministered to me throughout the years, is now in heaven with our Father. My parents were saved a few years back at a Franklin Graham revival. God has done such a powerful work in my family. I am forever grateful. I leave you now with my favorite passage of Scripture. It has helped me so much in my faith and in my recovery.

Hebrews 13:3 Remember the prisoners as if bound with them...

My purpose is to love everyone unconditionally and indiscriminately to remember those in bondage. To bring light and joy and peace to people no matter what difficulties they are walking through.

Thank you and God bless. - Jud

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