



STEVE GALLAGHER

OUT OF THE
DEPTHS
OF
SEXUAL *Sin*

The Story of My Life and Ministry

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Dedication

I dedicate this book to the Lord. Everything good in my life has come from His hand. My testimony can be best expressed in the words of David: “This is the God who makes a home for the outcast.” (Psalm 68:6)

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INTRODUCTION

My primary purpose for writing this book is to testify to the fact that God can transform the most wretched life into one of decency. Many struggling believers have been overwhelmed by their shortcomings and sins, feeling as though their problems are insurmountable. It would be difficult for anybody to read this book and walk away feeling as though their problems were beyond God's power to conquer. There is simply no getting away from the fact that the Lord can and will set the captive free.

However, there is a secondary reason for sharing my story. It is to refute a widely held notion that change is unimportant in the Kingdom of God. Undoubtedly, everyone would agree that a Christian should not be held in bondage to habitual sin, but unfortunately many believe that any change beyond breaking an addiction is of little consequence—no big deal basically. Their idea is that a person gets saved, lives a decent life and goes on to heaven some day. This mentality is grossly unscriptural. From beginning to end the message of the New Testament is that the Lord is constantly working in the life of the true believer to mold him into the image of Christ. Adam Clarke eloquently conveys the importance of progressive sanctification:

The whole design of God was to restore man to his image, and raise him from the ruins of his fall; in a word, to make him perfect; to blot out all his sins, purify

his soul, and fill him with all holiness, so that no unholy temper, evil desire, or impure affection or passion shall either lodge or have any being within him. This and this only is true religion, or Christian perfection; and a less salvation than this would be dishonorable to the sacrifice of Christ and the operation of the Holy Ghost.

We must be made partakers of the divine nature. We must be saved from our sins—from the corruption that is in the world, and be holy within and righteous without, or never see God. For this very purpose Jesus Christ lived, died, and revived, that he might purify us unto himself.¹

I have done my utmost in this book to be transparent, sharing my deepest struggles and most humiliating failures. Although it was not altogether easy, I have done it knowing that countless others face the same struggles, fears, failures and times of despair as I have faced. If telling about the shameful things I have done and how many times the Lord has bailed me out of trouble will help others see a way out of their troubles, it is well worth it.

My desire is that as you read this story you will be filled with a bright hope that God can bring you out of the depths of whatever you're facing and into a blessed life of joy and freedom just as He has done for me!

Steve Gallagher

One

BUSTED!

It was May 1970 and I had just turned sixteen. “Steve, wake up. There’s a detective here to see you.” It was my dad talking. I looked up through sleepy eyes to see a well-dressed man of about forty, standing there with him. “Did he say detective?” I wondered. Then I noticed what was in his hand and suddenly knew what it was all about. He was holding the three “beautiful” marijuana plants I had been cultivating for some time.

“Hi, Steve, my name is Detective Brown. You’re going to have to come with me. Do you mind if I look around your room while you get dressed?”

My mind raced to think of anything else I might have had that was illegal. “No, I don’t have anything to hide,” I hoped as I nervously watched him search through my stuff.

Every inch of wall was covered with black construction paper. The tin foil in the window made the room pitch black. Checkered over the black paper were psychedelic, black light posters. When the black light was turned on, the room took on a surreal atmosphere. As I tucked my shirt in, the detective turned his attention to my bookcase. Sure enough, when he began pulling books out, a joint of marijuana fell out from behind one of them. “Is this yours, Steve?” he asked.

“No,” I lied.

After he read me my Miranda rights, we left. I had known

it would only be a matter of time before I got busted. There had been so many close calls before. But how providential this arrest would prove to be!

I grew up in a middle class suburb of Sacramento. My dad, who was a supervisor in the civil service, was a very difficult person to live with. He was critical, overbearing, prideful, opinionated and extremely self-centered. He used biting sarcasm to manipulate and control those around him. Jack Gallagher would never admit to being wrong about anything. My mother, sensitive and insecure, simply could not stand up to him. After years of being beaten down emotionally, she eventually closed herself into her own protective shell. The coolness between them made for a miserable marriage, an unhappy home, and an unhealthy environment in which to raise children.

Unfortunately, the strife and lack of love in our home created a deep-seated insecurity in me. Although my mother tried to maintain discipline with my older half-sister and me, my dad was erratic and inconsistent in how he dealt with us. You never knew what to expect from him. Rather than discipline me out of love, he always tried to force me to do what he wanted me to do in anger. His idea of love was to spoil me by letting me have my way—as long as it didn't bother him—and to buy me things.

One incident when I was about twelve years old typifies what it was like living with him. My sister Kathy was from my mom's first marriage, and my dad never let her forget that she wasn't his child. We were eating dinner, and he began criticizing her over something petty. In an attempt to defend her, I blurted out, "Why don't you get off her back?"

As soon as the words left my mouth, he backhanded me right out of my chair. I stormed into my bedroom and shed tears of humiliation into my pillow. Shortly thereafter, he came into the room and attempted to make up for what he'd done. But I was determined that it wasn't going to work this time and ignored

him for several days. Eventually he tried to make amends with me. He knew that I really wanted a certain locomotive for my train set. “Look, Steve, if you quit pouting, I’ll buy you that locomotive you want.” Swallowing my pride was acceptable if it meant getting something I really wanted. I reluctantly agreed.

One of the few things that I didn’t get my way with was going to church. I was forced to attend services at the large Southern Baptist church my mother belonged to.¹ Sometimes I would cut Sunday school, take the fifty cents my mom gave me for the offering, and go spend it in a nearby donut shop. Nevertheless, in spite of my poor attitude, the pastor’s sermons were getting through, and one Sunday morning I responded to an altar call. “There was no stopping Steve from going forward that morning,” my mother later said. Unfortunately, little seemed to change in my life afterwards.

Although I was a selfish, mouthy, spoiled brat, I really didn’t start getting into trouble until the sixth grade. I began to hang around with two rabble-rousers who were feared and respected by the other kids because they were such troublemakers. Being their friend brought me the same notoriety.

Our mischief wasn’t anything too serious at first: throwing eggs at houses, picking on other kids, shooting spit wads at the teacher when her back was turned, and so on. As we entered junior high school, the trouble gradually became more serious. We began to experiment with drugs. It started with sniffing glue, but before long we were excitedly smoking our first “joint” of marijuana.

It was also about this time that a cousin from Ohio came to live with us. One day, I stumbled upon one of his *Playboy* magazines and scanned its pages from cover to cover with wide-

¹ My mother (Frances) had been a Christian since childhood. Her close relationship to the Lord helped her endure her life with my father. Many nights I would come home in the early morning hours high on drugs to find her sitting in her favorite rocking chair with her Bible sitting open on her lap. For the next 30 years she faithfully ministered to children as a Sunday school teacher, finally retiring from this service in her late seventies. She is 80 years old, as of the writing of this book, and her faith in God remains as robust as ever.

eyed astonishment. Over the next two years, I returned to his secret cache of magazines again and again. It was during one of these forays that I discovered masturbation, which quickly developed into a regular routine.

During junior high school I made a number of clumsy attempts at seducing girls but didn't "go all the way" with a girl until age fifteen. She became my girlfriend for a short time—until I grew bored with her and began looking for another lover. This established a pattern of developing short-term relationships with girls. Each new cutie would fascinate me at first. Everything about the girl's physique would inflame my lust. She became the sole recipient of all my self-serving desires. She would bask in all of this attention, convinced that she was my one and only. However, once we went to bed together, I began looking for my next prey.

There were two powerful passions that drove me to seduce girls. One was simply an insatiable desire for variety. If my current girlfriend was a blond, I would become fascinated with brunettes or redheads—or perhaps a girl of a different race. The female figure—tall, petite, buxom, or slender—also enthralled me. The possibilities were endless.

The other motivating factor involved was the need to improve my image to those around me. Every young lady "conquered" became another "notch on my belt." Every conquest enhanced my reputation as being a "ladies' man."

By the ninth grade our gang was totally immersed in the drug culture. It was 1969 and we absorbed the rebellious music of the Doors, Janis Joplin, Led Zeppelin and Jimi Hendrix. We idolized the Hell's Angels, who occasionally roared up to parties we attended on their Harley Davidsons. We all longed for the day we could afford to buy our own "choppers."

Those early days of smoking marijuana were enormously exciting. I got high just about every day throughout the ninth and

tenth grades. However, over time smoking dope became almost drudgery—not much better than the excruciating boredom of being sober. Never afraid of trying something new, I started injecting drugs. Once I experienced the rush of barbiturates (reds) and methamphetamine (speed) through my body, nothing else would do. Eventually this escalated to shooting up opium and heroin. It got so bad that, wanting others to see me as being fearless, I would recklessly shoot up large quantities of drugs at a time. I was miserable inside and simply didn't care if I lived or died.

Another contributing factor to my internal misery was an unrelenting, tormenting fear of others. My deep-seated anxiety about people advanced until I was constantly bombarded with paranoid thoughts. My daily dosage of hallucinogenic drugs (*i.e.*, marijuana, LSD, mescaline, and peyote) magnified this unreasonable fear. Although many hallucinogenic trips turned into bad experiences, I continued to self-medicate.

My difficult, abrasive personality resulted in strained relations with others. Having an intense, excitable and angry character tended to alienate me from other people. My harsh and unbearable nature usually invoked fear or outright anger in most people. No matter how hard I tried to be different, my words always carried a certain undertone of sarcasm or hostility.

Despite all my brashness and “tough guy” façade, I was also very sensitive. I can remember, as a child, feeling terribly vulnerable and fearful of the cutting remarks of my classmates, the abrasive comments of my father, and the foolish jokes of my friends. Underneath my tough exterior was a thin suit of skin.

In the meantime, the fear of being seen as a “chump” grew within me. I did my best to keep up with the others, but some of my acquaintances were vicious. The drugs continued to take their toll on my confidence level.

One particular night the fear simply took over my mind. I went to a Hell's Angels' party with a friend. It wasn't easy for me as a fifteen-year-old to maintain my image around these hardened

bikers. We were all sitting around the living room passing around one “reefer” after another. I made the foolish mistake of taking a tab of acid and gradually began to lose touch with reality. The sense of everybody being against me grew in my mind. The more fixated I became on this thought the more I panicked inside. Frantically, I tried to think of a way to get out of there without drawing attention to myself. Not knowing what to do, I finally lay down right there on the living room floor and acted like I had passed out. It was the only way to get out of the situation and still maintain my “cool.”

Actually I was wide awake all night long and was convinced that everyone there had been talking about me. The reality, of course, was that nobody was paying much attention to this kid in their midst. Nevertheless, from that night on, fear plagued my life. No matter how confident I tried to appear, I was terrified that my friends would see me as a “chump”—someone to be taken advantage of.

The summer of 1969 was a wild one. By this point I had begun to develop friendships with an older and more hardened crowd. During the week—while my parents were at work—my house was a hangout spot for various drug users. On the weekends, we would have wild parties at various locations.

One huge party was the Amador Pop Festival. Thousands of people attended this massive drug-fest. We arrived there around noon. Music was being played on a stage in a small valley, and people were seated or lying all of the way up the hillside. I took some LSD and was once again gripped with overwhelming fear. To counter the effects of the “acid,” I sat down in the middle of the crowd and shot up some barbiturates.

I stumbled through the crowd—sometimes stepping on irritated people—and finally ended up in the Hell’s Angels’ camp. They had thrown a tractor tire into the campfire causing black smoke to billow up into the atmosphere. One of the HA’s (as

we admiringly called them) had a whip attached to a wristband and was snapping any hapless person who walked by. Every time he would thrash someone he would let out a hideous bellow of laughter. The others would join in the fun, too. Before long, the inevitable gallon of cheap wine—made milky by dumping dozens of “reds” into it—made its way around the circle. I dutifully gulped some, passed it on to the next guy and stumbled off into the crowd looking for my friends.

Parties weren't our only source of entertainment. We regularly drove around at night smoking marijuana and drinking beer or wine. One day a few of us went for a drunken ride in a car owned by the mother of one of the guys. As we recklessly rode around, the guy behind the driver put his hands over his eyes, while the rest of us laughed. We were speeding down backcountry roads, whooping it up. As we zipped around a curve, suddenly the asphalt ended and the road became gravel. In a panic, the driver slammed on the brakes. The car fishtailed into a ditch and rolled over twice. When someone yelled that it was going to blow up, we all scrambled out to safety. Once we realized none of us were badly hurt, we all got a big laugh out of it—that is, everyone except for the guy who had to go tell his mother we had totaled her uninsured car.

Recklessness constituted my daily life. Memories of giving my life to Jesus in that Baptist church years earlier were far from my mind. Little did I know then that God had His hand on me and was sparing my life for a reason. Twelve of my friends were killed during this period of my life, but this didn't bother me very much. Being extremely selfish, my only concern about someone dying was how it might affect me personally. For the most part, a friend getting killed only tended to reinforce my image of being tough and fearless.

Summer was soon over, and it was time to start high school. My friends and I would often skip classes to smoke pot. During the first six months of the school year, I was suspended six different times for cutting school, stealing or smoking. The

Randy went home at dawn and I fell into a deep sleep, not waking up until my parents returned home from work. I must have looked pretty disgusting to them. My thick, brown hair was hanging around my shoulders, and my jeans were filthy and ragged. After all, the Hell's Angels never washed theirs!

I took a shower and joined them for dinner. I quickly ate my food, wanting to get back out to the streets where the action was. I could hardly endure being in the presence of “straight” people. They didn't understand anything. My parents didn't approve of my lifestyle but never reached out in warmth and love. My problems were too overwhelming to my mother, and my father simply didn't care.

As we ate in silence, my dad told me that he wanted me to quit hanging around with my friends. “Why?” I asked—not that I had the slightest intention of obeying him.

“Because they're a bad influence on you,” he responded.

It was clear that he didn't have a proper understanding of the situation. “Dad, I'm the one that's a bad influence on them!” I informed him.

END OF EXCERPT