

How a Rebel Found a Cause with the Help of the Lord

By Shelley Karja

I was raised a Catholic and enjoyed going to church with my father. I always believed in God, but as a teenager I put my trust in my judgement rather than following Jesus' direction.

I became a rebel, started smoking pot at 15-16 years of age, which led to drugs and some alcohol. I hooked up with a guy my parents did not approve of, and I would not listen to them. I ran away from home, ending up in a foster home. My parents said "Pick him or us". At 17 I quit school. At 18 I got married and life continued on a downward spiral. More lies, drugs became very bad, and my husband was abusive.

With the help of my older sister, Chris, after our second anniversary I left the marriage and got a divorce. I continued to smoke pot, got remarried in 1982 and had a son. When he turned 2 I realized I needed help. With the help of a sponsor I started with AA and found God was merciful and loving. I became sober and drug free in 1984. I became restless in my marriage, which ended in divorce.

At an AA meeting in 1989 I met my husband, Brad Karja. We found out that his mother and my mother were close friends. Brad had two sons, and a short while later Brad and I had a daughter together. We blended our family of 5.

While many in AA claimed to be Christians, we found they were not walking with the Lord. There was lots of swearing and women-bashing at the meetings.

Brad and I attended a Billy Graham meeting in 1994 and dedicated our lives to the Lord. We got married with all of our children in attendance.

One thing I started 20 years ago was a prayer journal. I started praying for all the people that came and went from my life. There are around 200 people listed in my prayer journal, some have found the Lord, others have not - YET. I guess you could call this my "FRANC" group. I also write down specific prayers for individuals and difficult situations in this journal. I love going back to see God at work through the many prayers He has answered.

I must admit that I have missed many opportunities to share my faith. My salvation is a gift from God and I should be willing to share that gift with every person that comes into my life.