



**NOW
FREE**

**BARRY
WOODWARD**

*Author of **Once An Addict***

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A vintage-style metal birdcage with a wooden perch and base is centered in the background. A green silhouette of a parrot is overlaid on the text. The background is a soft-focus outdoor scene with a white geometric grid pattern.

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HOW I GOT FREE

Many who read this booklet will have experienced life as an addict similar to mine. Or, at least, they will know of some whose lives have been devastated by drugs. And so, I am not going to recount the all too familiar story of another life [mine!] that succumbed to drugs – and to the crime that almost always goes with it.

Instead, you will read a far less familiar story. But it is, by far, the better part of my story – of how I became completely free from my addiction in a matter of weeks.

Drugs had taken over my life for 15 years, during which I was as addicted to the process of injecting as I was to the drugs. I used to crave the sensation of the needle sliding into my arm and the buzz of the chemicals flowing into my bloodstream.

I used to crave the

sensation of the needle ...



Such was this overwhelming need to inject that eventually the veins in my arms disappeared under my muscles. I'd also had a mental breakdown, after staying awake on amphetamines for nine months.

But in 1997, after those 15 years of living in different areas of Manchester, I moved to Rochdale on the outskirts of the city. I gave up my old contacts. Having also split with Lisa, my longstanding girlfriend, I acquired Kim – a little Jack Russell. I was still using all my prescription drugs – my methadone, my Valium, my DF 118s – smoking weed and taking the small quantities of speed I could cope with. Now with a nice flat, I was content with life.

Now with a nice flat,

I was content with life.

One Thursday, having collected my benefits, I was on a bus into Rochdale town centre to do some shopping. At the next stop, a guy takes the



seat next to me. I could have done without the conversation but he was really friendly and I asked myself, 'What has he got that I haven't?'

On the Sunday, when I was out with Kim, I met him again – John, as I discovered later. He was walking past Birch Hill Hospital. My heart sank when I learned that he had just come from church, apparently in the hospital grounds; he was a Bible basher. When he invited me to go to the church, he got a very straight answer, 'No way, mate, there's no getting me into church. I'm not into that.' But I was intrigued about the church; I had never noticed it.

... there's no getting

me into church ...

A couple of days later, I had an appointment with my new psychiatrist, Dr Samuel Yangye. And then on the Friday, a neighbour came to introduce herself. As we chatted, I asked if she knew of a church close by. 'Yes, I go to that church! I'll take you on Sunday!'



To my disappointment, Dot kept her promise. I soon discovered ‘the church’. It was not what I expected. There were about 40 chairs out. I sat on the second row with Dot, feeling really uncomfortable – and it was not the chair! Church was just not my thing; I wondered how I managed to end up here and how long I would be stuck here.

Five minutes later and I had John sitting on the other side of me. Then, I was startled by a loud, ‘Hallelujah, praise the Lord’; it was Dr Yangye!

This was all so remarkable. I had been in my new flat for just about four weeks and the three people I had met, all within the space of ten days, attended this church. Had this been some sort of conspiracy – what with John sitting next to me on the bus and then Dot knocking on my door? I was still suffering from amphetamine psychosis and so I was used to thinking this way – looking for a conspiracy, for signs of collusion amongst imagined enemies.

**Had this been some
sort of conspiracy ...?**



With the room now almost full, the service started with some singing, very different from the few hymns I could remember from the distant past. One guy started dancing a kind of Pentecostal two-step, prompting Dot to get out her tambourine. This was all very new to me.

I hardly remembered anything from the sermon, but I sat up when Alan Reeve, the church leader, made an invitation: 'If you believe in a God who can heal you, we will pray for you, because we believe in a God who can heal.'

... we believe in a God

who can heal.

I thought, 'What have I got to lose?' So I went to the front. When asked what I needed, I saw no point in holding anything back. 'Well, I'm on 55 mls of methadone, I've been an addict for 15 years and I've been hearing voices in my head for nine years.'



As Alan put his hands on my head and started to pray, I began to shake, tears started to run down my cheeks and I felt really hot, like fire rushing through my body. I knew that whatever this was, it wasn't anything to do with me being ill. I also knew that it wasn't any kind of withdrawal symptom; this was something completely different, an entirely new experience! The 'Amen' finally came. I sat down in bewilderment, totally gobsmacked.

**I began to shake, tears started
to run down my cheeks ...**

I had an unexpected experience when I got home – total silence, complete and utter silence. The voices, the cursing and swearing and the foul language had all gone. The sickening tension in my stomach, the sense of fear that had blighted my life for so long, had also disappeared. I was now convinced that there is a God; and I knew that I had met with Him.



It had never crossed my mind that I would ever want to give up drugs but I did now. That desire to be rid of them welled up inside me and I shouted at the top of my voice, 'God, you really are there! God, you are alive! God, what have I been doing with my life?'

'God, you really are there!

God, you are alive!'

I quickly made a decision – that I would come off methadone over a period of four weeks. And I managed it, with only a bit of rattle in the final week.

On the Monday, I went to a meeting to hear a former chaplain at Strangeways Prison, Noel Proctor. I learned that Jesus died on the cross to take the punishment for our sins; I had a repeat of that experience of heat, shaking and crying. It was God again.

And again I found myself at the front of the church - this time to receive Christ into my life. With tears



once more running down my face, I prayed to ask God to forgive my sins and to receive Jesus into my life. I was trembling and I left the meeting absolutely beaming with a bright red face. I was on fire!

**I prayed to ask God to forgive
my sins and to receive Jesus
into my life.**

I was now a totally different person, consumed with God. And I had done absolutely nothing to deserve His pity and mercy. He had changed me completely just because He loved me – and always will.

Eventually, I undertook formal training at Bible College and then in my last year, 1999, I set up a charity to facilitate my ministry as a speaker. I now visit prisons and churches to speak of Jesus and to explain how He changed my life so dramatically.



WHY JESUS?

Let me explain why I received Jesus into my life – and why He came from heaven to earth to die. It is what I have been preaching and teaching ever since.

Jesus came to die to save sinners. Every person who has ever lived is guilty of sinning. Sin is our rebellious and disobedient nature directed at God; we rebel against Him because we want to live to please ourselves rather than please Him. Our sin becomes a barrier between us.

God hates all sin. And because He demands justice, He cannot simply turn a blind eye to it. But He loves us, regardless of the mess we may have made of our life. And so He sent Jesus to take the punishment on our behalf. Jesus did that when He willingly surrendered His life; He suffered the most horrendous death by crucifixion.

But He had the power to overcome death and after three days He rose from the dead.



We all face a choice; only those who trust Jesus for the forgiveness of their sins will be saved from God's punishment. They will live with Him in heaven forever. But all who reject Jesus will face God's punishment themselves. That will happen when Jesus returns to earth to judge us.

... all who reject Jesus

will face God's punishment ...

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. John 3:16



God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

2 Corinthians 5:21

Following Jesus will mean giving up some, and perhaps many, of the things we enjoy – and, probably, friends too. And we will still encounter the disappointments, struggles and stresses that are a normal part of life. Our problems will not suddenly disappear.

But the cost of following Jesus is nothing compared with what we gain – real purpose, meaning and contentment and the promise of everlasting life with Him.

If you are serious about starting a new life with Jesus, you can do so by ‘repenting’, which means:

- confessing your sins to God and turning your back on your old ways
- asking Him to forgive you, and, with His help, starting to live His way.



This is a prayer to ask God to forgive you and accept you as His child, when you are ready to do that.

Dear Father God,

I am really sorry for everything in my life, past and present, which is not right. I want to stop living that way.

I want a new life.

Thank You for sending Jesus to die in my place, in order to save me from the punishment which I deserve. I want to live to please Jesus and to make Him the centre of my life – to be my King.

So please forgive me and accept me as Your child.

Please fill me with Your Holy Spirit to help me live this new life with Jesus.

Amen



If you have prayed this prayer and been sincere, God welcomes you into His family as His child. Do not worry if you do not feel any different. It is important not to rely on your feelings but on God's promises in the Bible.

Tell a Christian leader or friend of your decision and ask them to help you to begin reading the Bible. It is also important to meet with other Christians. They will help you as you begin your new life.

But perhaps you are not ready to decide just now. If you have questions, I encourage you to speak to a Christian you know or write to BeaconLight Trust. But please do not 'sit on the fence' or just put off your decision; it will be too late when Jesus returns from heaven to judge everyone and we do not know when that will be.

I have never regretted the decision I made more than 20 years ago. If you decide to follow Jesus yourself, I know you will not regret it either.

May God bless you.

Barry Woodward

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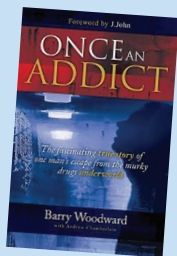
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Barry Woodward was a drug dealer and heroin addict who once lived on the notorious Bull Rings in the centre of Manchester. *Now Free* describes how he escaped from his addiction.

Barry tells his story in *Once An Addict*. He is the founder and director of Proclaim Trust and travels throughout the UK to communicate the message of hope that is found in Jesus.



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