

“My Secret Battle with the Bottle”

by Greg Ingersoll



As a freshman, I was one of the most popular students in my high school. My popularity came from athletics and an outgoing personality. I could drink with the best of them and then compete at a very high level in track and basketball. After my sophomore year, my friends and I took a trip to Mexico. We had an absolute blast drinking and partying. I thought I was on top of the world. My parents and my friends from our solid bible teaching church knew little or nothing of the "other" side of me.

Soon after, the Lord got a new hold of me. I rededicated my life to Him. I knew this meant my life would have to change. Outwardly it did. Gone were the wild nights with the gang. My Christian peer group began to have more influence. I started dating a beautiful Christian young woman.

I spent a few years at a Christian college. I married that high school sweetheart. I have the privilege of being the father of three young men. I am a leader in our church with several responsibilities. On the surface, people would think I had my Christian life together --- and I honestly didn't know any better.

Here lies the rub. I had learned how to abstain from alcohol, but I didn't know how to overcome my desire for it. My wife didn't know about my problem. My closest friends had no idea. I lived everyday in frustration and defeat.

Steve Freitag and I have been friends since high school. We roomed together in college. We stood up for each other at our weddings. Back in 2000, he started telling me about his ministry at CrossCounsel. My wife and I supported his new step of faith by inviting our friends over to hear about the ministry. Afterwards, I asked him if there was anything else I could do for his ministry. He didn't miss a beat, "You could see if the Lord wants to deal with any area of your life. I'll pray with you."

Innocently, I agreed. We got together a week or so later. Before praying, I had to run an errand. Here I ran up against the largest "thorn" in my extended family. I was fuming. Now it was time to pray. My anger surfaced and I knew it had to be dealt with. As I focused on my anger towards this certain person something strange happened. I connected back to a time where I was partying with my friends. It was a "great" memory - total freedom. Then I saw myself in Mexico having the time of my life. I was asked how I felt about feeling good about these rebellious times. I felt like such a hypocrite! That's exactly how I felt about the person I was angry at! Then to top it off, the Lord took me to the two times I had used the Internet sinfully. I had enjoyed that, too.

We prayed to break the hold that those things had over me. Then we prayed for God to reveal His truth. I was believing deep within my soul that the Lord wouldn't forgive my open rebellion. I believed I was unacceptable to Him. This was a lie wrapped in darkness. I waited for the Lord to come in to the darkness and bring His light. If I simply moved into the light of my knowledge (i.e. I am acceptable) then the lie would only be covered over and not healed.

His truth came in no uncertain terms. Jesus was calling me to Himself with open arms! A flood of

tears overwhelmed me. Then I looked up and said, "My jaw isn't clenched anymore!"

Steve thought I had been clenching my jaw for the past twenty minutes. I had been clenching it for fifteen years! I dealt with my desire to drink by tightly clenching my jaw. This was an ongoing process for me. To alleviate the physical pain this created, I would either chew gum or bite down on toothpicks. I went through more toothpicks than I could count. In fact, I had realized the night before that we had gotten down to our last one. I purposely set it aside to make sure it didn't get used by anyone else. I had given the empty box to my wife that morning as a reminder to get more. After we had prayed and talked I got up and went over to the kitchen cabinet. I took out this last remaining toothpick and joyfully threw it in the trash!

It has been many years since that time (May 2000). I'm thrilled to report that there has been no desire to drink or any evidence of the pain in my jaw! More importantly, I've seen just how powerful it is when our experience matches up with God's Truth. This is truly a glimpse into the victorious and abundant Christian life that Jesus promises.