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## *Rachel's Testimony*

I was first introduced to drugs by the smell of my father's marijuana. I was told at a very young age to keep what goes on at home at home. That was the only way I had confirmation in my heart that what was going on was wrong. I always knew my family was different and that made me feel very different. I never felt like I fit in with the 'normal' kids doing normal kid things. So, at a young age I was drawn to the same lifestyle that I was familiar with and everything that came with it.

At the age of 12, I got drunk for the first time. By age 14, I was smoking marijuana, and by age 15, I was popping ecstasy pills and occasionally smoking crack cocaine. At age 16, I was hooked on speed, and pregnant. Unfortunately, giving birth to my son did not slow me down but for a minute. I moved out into my own apartment at the age of 18, and that was when my house was raided and I caught my first adult charges.

I remember the wild lifestyle and that the drugs make me feel good. The higher I was, the better I would feel. Unfortunately, I could never quite get high enough. Once I chased my high to the point of near death. I overdosed while driving down Thomas Drive along the beach at about four o'clock in the morning. The police found me stopped at a red light — unconscious. I was in a comma for about six hours. When I finally woke up, I was alone in the hospital room.

When I able to stand up, the officer who found me was there to take me to jail on a possession charge. When released the next morning, my body felt tired and worn out, but my soul felt dead. All I could think about was how alone I was. No one knew where I was or what I had just been through. My family was used to me running off and leaving them with my son for days at a time. So, no one came looking for me.

I was sitting in the back of the jail waiting to be picked up when a police officer began talking to me. He asked, "Are you the girl that overdosed on Thomas Drive last night?" I said yes. He said, "Yeah, my buddy was the one that found you. He said that he sure was glad you lived because he didn't want to have to do all that paperwork." My heart collapsed inside of me from the pain those words brought. So, as soon as I got in the car to leave, I drank another drink of the scoop that almost killed me the night before and ... off I went again. Not looking back, not slowing down.

The lifestyle that I once held so dear because it brought me excitement and fulfillment soon turned its back on me and robbed me of my joy, peace, self worth and, most importantly, my hope. It was no longer a choice to do the drugs anymore; I was trapped and out of control. Someone once said that sin will take you further than you ever wanted to go, keep you longer than you ever wanted to stay, and cost you more than you ever wanted to pay. They were right, it did.

One night, I called out to the Lord from my hotel bathroom floor and asked Him to help me. I told Him that I could not go another day living the way I was. I was tired. I asked God if He was able or if He was willing, to please help me. I was hurting very bad and needed Him to heal me. I had no idea that God had been waiting a long time for those words to come out of my mouth. And after years of running from Him, I was finally ready to surrender. And I gave my will and life over to the care of God.

The next day, I went to court for my new felony drug charges and was held in custody until my next

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court date. The second day that I was in jail, I found out I was pregnant with my daughter. On my next court date, the judge had mercy on me and offered me the mother-infant program with AWARE. I felt like God had given me a new chance at life. I was scared, yet excited.

When I arrived at AWARE, I was not sure what to expect. I honestly didn't know how to live a normally in any area of my life. AWARE taught me structure and gave me many tools to prepare me for when I would eventually be on my own. When I was in AWARE I, was also able to continue to improve my relationship with God. It provided me the time that I needed to pray and read my Bible, and to establish healthy relationships with several girls that wanted the same things in their lives that I wanted.

I remember on my way to AWARE having to go back through "detox" — the place I had been many times before when I was trying to get through withdrawals from opiates. I would have never believed that the next time I would walk through those doors that I would be trying to help other women out of the bondage that I had been in for so long. All along, God had a purpose for my life. He used the pain I once went through for me to be able to relate and touch the lives of those who are still going through it.

**The Bible says in 2 Corinthians 1:3-4:**

*"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God."*

In December 2004, I graduated from AWARE. Two weeks later, I was invited by a friend to my first "The Most Excellent Way" meeting. When I walked in those doors, for the first time in my life I felt accepted. Rick and Vickie McClung took me in under their wings, and stayed by my side and helped me to align my life and my choices with the Word of God. It has been almost three years since I first walked in those doors. They not only taught me how to live, they also taught me how to lead. I am now an employee of the First Baptist Church where I serve as the Ladies' Ministry Assistant of "The Most Excellent Way."

The life God has given me today is full of peace and hope — the two things I always longed for, yet could never find outside of my relationship with Jesus Christ. Today, I have a safe place for my children and a place to call home. I have a good job, a good church and family that support me. I am blessed with being able to do what I love the most ... help others who are still in bondage to drugs.

I thank the Lord for "The Most Excellent Way" and for investing their lives in me. But, most importantly, I want to thank God for seeing in me what I never saw in myself, for doing for me the things that I couldn't do for myself, and for giving me the strength to persevere.

**The Bible says: "He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world" (1 John 4:4).**

May God have all the glory for my life!

~ Rachel Hamric  
Panama City, FL

