

The Story of a New Creation

By Jesse Larsen

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.”

(2 Corinthians 5:17)

It is my desire that this testimony will reveal the root of all problems in life and that it will point people to the solution of those problems.

I am currently 32 years old. I was born with Tourette's Syndrome, obsessive compulsive disorder, and a learning disability. As a teenager, I was very troubled and very miserable. I often struggled with severe depression, anxiety, rage, and there were even times when I was suicidal.

During my teen years I developed an obsession with angst-based bands like “Korn” and “Nine Inch Nails.” The majority of the music that I listened to expressed feelings of anger and despair. The lyrics were often harsh, sometimes suicidal, and sometimes even murderous.

After going through years of ridicule, I felt that my hatred and self-pity was justified because of things I had been through and because of the way people had treated me. My fascination with this music was more than just a mere interest – it was a total obsession. I felt that I could strongly relate to the feelings expressed in many of the songs, and the music became like a religion to me.

I viewed this music as a way of venting my unpleasant feelings, but these feelings only became all the more severe as the years went by. In a perverse way, the music seemed to make me feel better while I was listening to it, but my heart was becoming increasingly cold over the years, and my unpleasant feelings were only getting worse.

Through a psychological counseling-based group that I was in at the age of 15, I was taught that venting was a good thing...so I did not see any problem with what I was doing.

At the age of 20, I came to a point of utter despair, and it seemed like nothing in life made any sense. Around that time, my mom came over to my apartment one day, and she began talking to me about world events and how they relate to the Bible and where the world is headed.

It was on that day (July 4th, 1999) that I received Jesus as my Savior. After that, I got rid of some of my CD's, and I tried to avoid any music that involved any violent content, anything blasphemous, or anything else that I saw as immoral...but I still viewed my venting as a good thing, and I still continued to listen to some of the same music that I always listened to.

Shortly after that, I began reading the Bible. I did not know where to start, so I just decided to start by reading through the books of Psalms and Proverbs.

I was still very new to the Bible during this time, so much of what I was reading was hard for me to understand. Nevertheless, many of the verses that I read gradually revealed the vanity of the lifestyle and the beliefs that I had been holding onto for so long. During this time, some of the verses that gradually opened my eyes were Psalm 37:8; Proverbs 1:7; Proverbs 15:1;

Proverbs 18:2; Proverbs 29:11; Proverbs 30:33; Ecclesiastes 7:9; Romans 12:21; and more.

As I came across these verses and others, it was becoming more and more clear that the lifestyle and beliefs that I was clinging to had never gotten me anywhere, and it had only made my life an even bigger mess than it already was.

Now that I understood that this lifestyle was not right, I tried to give up all of this music, but the music still had a hold on me, and I could not give it up no matter how hard I tried. My obsession with this music was deeper than I can even describe, and it still had a hold on me, even though I now understood that it had never gotten me anywhere. I began to see that there was still bitterness deep within my heart, although I was hiding it from myself and others.

Soon after my attempt to overcome my obsession with this music, I began reading more through the New Testament. It was then that God revealed to me that I simply can't overcome my obsession with this music – only He could overcome it through me! If you do not understand what I mean by that, then I will let the following verses explain.

This became clear to me as I came across verses like Ephesians 2:8-9; Titus 3:3-7; Romans 3:19-31; Romans 4:1-5; Galatians 2:19-21; and more. Here was my problem: I was trying to overcome my obsession with this music in my own strength rather than trusting in God's strength, which is made perfect in my weakness (see 2 Corinthians 12:9). I was still putting too much focus on myself and what I can do, rather than *looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of [my] faith* (Hebrews 12:2).

This message became all the more clear to me as I continued to read the Bible. My desires began to change, and thanks to God, I no longer have the desire to listen to the music that I was once so deeply obsessed with. God, through His grace (*by the grace of God I am what I am* – 1 Corinthians 15:10), has taken the place of the things that were once filling the void inside me. In fact, I now prefer the old hymns. Around that time (when I was around 22 years old), I not only lost interest in the music that I was once obsessed with, but I also lost interest in other things, such as horror movies and violent video games. These things just simply didn't appeal to me anymore, although they were once the center of my life.

Throughout my life, every material thing that I sought for satisfaction has only filled the void temporarily...then the emptiness came back, and it only got worse when it came back. But God has filled the void permanently, and I have no longer felt empty since He has taken the place of the things that were once temporarily filling the void inside me. Jesus, through His Spirit, has continually changed my desires over the years since the day that I received Him as my Savior (read John 1:12-13; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Romans 8:1-10; Galatians 2:20; and 2 Corinthians 3:17-18 for more info).

Over the years throughout my Christian life (I have been a Christian for about 13 years now), through trials of affliction and through His Word, God has continued to reveal hidden selfish motives deep within my heart which I did not even know existed (read Jeremiah 17:9-10; Hebrews 4:12; and Proverbs 20:30 to better understand what I mean).

As we **continually** realize how weak we are in ourselves, it is then that we are able to *be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might* (Ephesians 6:10). This is what it means to have

God's strength made perfect in our weakness, and this is what makes true biblical Christianity distinct from every religion in the world, including much of professing Christianity today. It is only through true biblical Christianity that Christ lives His life through us by His Spirit, and it is only through true biblical Christianity that God's strength is made perfect in our weakness.

Even now, I believe that I still have more to learn. I will always have more to learn until the day that Jesus is revealed, and I *see Him as He is* (1 John 3:2). It is only then that *I shall know, just as I also am known* (1 Corinthians 13:12).

Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance (Jesus, from Mark 2:17).

This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief (The apostle Paul, from 1 Timothy 1:15).