

I NEEDED  
TO SEE MORE  
THAN THE TIP  
OF THE TREE

BY CHRIS PARENTE





I THOUGHT I WAS GOING TO LOSE it in that jail cell in Fort Lauderdale. The girls who were locked up with me were getting squirrely. Without booze, without a guy, I felt hopeless. But there were two things that kept me hanging on. One was a lady who came by in the afternoon and played records and read a book to us. The other thing was the tip of a tree I could just barely see through the high county jail window.

I kept looking at the tip of that tree...

Several years later I saw the entire tree of God's plan of life and salvation. I saw it with the help of Ilene, a beautiful and loving woman who took me into her home. Gently she talked with me about the truths of the Bible until I was willing to open my heart and allow the Holy Spirit to have complete control.

I started drinking when I was 16. I had moved with my family from Queens, New York, where I was born, to Inglewood, California. One night I had been waiting in front of the donut shop where I worked. My boy friend was supposed to have picked me up. Instead, some friends came by and told me there had been an accident. My boy friend was paralyzed in the hospital. I went straight home, found a half gallon bottle of wine, and began drinking straight out of the jug.

From then on I was heavy into booze...mostly wine and vodka.

I didn't finish high school. As soon as I was old enough I took the G.E.D. and enlisted in the army. 13 months of that and I went AWOL. Back in California I got married. But that didn't last long. Soon I was drifting around the country, first with one guy and then another. More than once I landed in jail -- charged with being drunk and disorderly...or hitch hiking...or interstate auto theft.

Besides California, I was in Wyoming, Illinois, Louisiana, Texas and Florida. One time in Florida I actually caught sight spiritually of the tip of God's tree of life.

There was a lady at my bus stop who kept asking me if I knew Jesus. She told me that I ought to let Him come into my life. I finally went with her to her church where I went forward and made a confession of faith. I felt a new freedom from things that had been bothering me at that time. But it was not long before I was back in the old pattern.

After that I was in the midwest where I hit a real low. I was alone. I couldn't find work anywhere. I drank water and ate potato chips for a whole month. Then I took a job in a massage parlor. I hated what I found myself doing. I kept saying to myself, "This can't be me!"

Then I met a married man who paid all my bills for me. He had me living in a trailer. For a year I did nothing but lie in bed smoking and drinking!

Enough of that and there could be no place to go but a detoxification center. I went. When I got out, I didn't drink for 6 months. Then I got mixed up with another guy...and back to booze for 7 months. I stayed drunk that



whole time. For variety we did drugs: acid, speed...we shot up MDA. I really felt like I was in hell.

I knew I had to leave that lifestyle. And that is where Ilene found me. I was drunk when she took me to her home. At first I didn't respond to her counsel. But her warmth and love were so great. One day in the kitchen I turned my head around and listened. That was it! The Holy Spirit did a work in me! I experienced God's full salvation.

That day in Ilene's kitchen was during February, 1978. Two months later I was baptized.

God worked miracles in my life. He led me into a warm fellowship of His people. He directed me to a neat trailer which became my home. He is allowing me to live in a beautiful country where I can enjoy not only the tip of the tree, but the whole woodland. And he has me working and witnessing in the very detoxification center where once I stayed.

God had been after me for a long time. But it was not until I put complete trust in Him that He made such a dramatic change in my life.





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