

CHAPTER 2

LIFE BEYOND THE STREETS

With all the tension between her and her husband, Rose was disappointed that the church wouldn't be more actively involved. Her view of the church began to change, and she saw it as nothing more than a charade. She had sought solace and support within its walls, but to her, the church had failed to provide her with any meaningful comfort, especially during her darkest moments of despair. Her bitterness and resentment toward others began to manifest in increasingly harsh ways.

In her mind, Rose felt like a spectator in a game she couldn't comprehend; yet, she was unwilling to confront her vulnerabilities. When her husband expressed concerns about her spiraling downward behavior, warning her that she was on a path that could lead to a similar fate as her past had dictated, she confidently dismissed his cautionary words. "It will never happen to me again," she asserted, firmly convinced of her ability to overcome her addictions.

However, the reality of her addictions began to creep into her life, and before long, she found herself once again grappling with intense cravings for crack cocaine. Shortly after enduring the emotional turmoil of a troubled marriage, she ultimately surrendered to the temptation. What began as a fleeting indulgence swiftly evolved into a full-blown addiction, and in a matter of days, crack became her drug of choice again. Now her husband wanted nothing to do with her and kicked her out. This led her to homelessness. Her once-stable life crumbled, forcing her to navigate the harsh realities of living on the streets. This unfortunate lifestyle lasted for seven years.

Her life became a constant battle that often put her in a difficult place. She frequently scoured urban landscapes for water to wash herself and rummaged through alleyways and dumpsters in search of food. She often moved from one location to another at all hours, day and night. The constant search for safety made her feel vulnerable and desperate, causing her to often seek refuge in the nearby woods. It was here that the dense trees would offer her a brief and fragile shield from the harsh elements and the dangers. Adding to her problems, her addiction had tightened its grip on her life, causing her to do things she hated, but she had to survive.

Drugs became a temporary sanctuary, offering her fleeting moments of relief from the emotional turmoil and chaos of her past. Her constant struggles with addiction deepened more and more, and the once-vibrant relationships she shared with friends and family began to diminish as she gave in to temptation. The laughter of friends, the warmth of family bonds, and the sense of belonging within her community faded into distant memories, leaving her feeling lost and alone. Memories of laughter, dreams, and belonging seemed like distant echoes, overshadowed by the harsh realities of her current existence. Every decision and moment felt like a pivotal turning point in her quest for redemption and healing.

Rose recognized that freeing herself from the grips of substance abuse was crucial if she wanted to rebuild her life and find peace. It was during this time that she became involved in a devastating accident with an 18-wheeler. The impact was beyond horrible and could have easily claimed her life, but she was alive. The accident became a turning point in her life. She knew she had to have a higher

purpose and calling to have survived this accident. This stirred thoughts within her that she had felt since childhood.

Days following the accident, she underwent intense physical and emotional pain. In her desperation to escape the constant suffering, she reached out to her caseworkers, urgently requesting permission to use drugs again, believing that the substances might offer her a brief escape from the pain. Her caseworkers remained steadfast throughout the grueling seven-year process, visiting her regularly and providing essential support.

The case workers took the time to understand her struggles and provided a listening ear, offering encouragement and guidance. Their unwavering commitment to her well-being became her lifeline, reminding her she was not alone. She longed to reclaim the vibrant person she once was, full of dreams, laughter, and hope, before her life was overshadowed by the grip of drugs and the hardships that came with homelessness. With each passing moment, she grappled with memories of better days, desperately seeking a way to break free from the chains that bound her and rediscover her true self. Recognizing the severity of her situation, her former caseworker reached out to her, aiming to reconnect and guide her toward accepting the harsh truth regarding her addiction.

It was not long before the weight of her struggles became too overwhelming to ignore. She had endured a failed marriage, and she now faced the daunting reality of trying to reclaim her mind and spirit from the tangled web of addiction that had trapped her. She understood that breaking free from the dangerous clutches of substance abuse was essential if she hoped to rebuild her life and find peace. However, during her hospital stays, her old friends would sneak in to see her, bringing illicit substances to her, which she gladly indulged.

Once she was discharged from the hospital, she returned to her old ways and resumed her life on the streets. As she drifted further away from connection and support, not even her caseworkers knew where she was or what she was doing. After driving around for a while, she decided to return home. On her way home, her car ran out of gas, forcing her to walk the remainder of the distance. This gave her time to reflect on her thoughts, emotions, and the many challenges ahead. As she entered the front door, her fairly new boyfriend, who typically greeted her with warmth and affection, was missing. The house felt empty, and she sensed that something was wrong.

After a little while, the door swung open, and her boyfriend walked in. His face was lit up with a broad smile that radiated joy as if he had just discovered a hidden treasure. She immediately took a deep breath and informed him about the car situation, explaining that it had run out of gas and was now stranded in the street, a predicament she was sure he would find inconvenient. Still grinning, her boyfriend waved off her concern and returned to retrieve the car left beside the road.

Once they were settled, her curiosity got the better of her, and she asked him what had caused such an unexpected wave of happiness. To her surprise, he shared that he had recently heard a message about Noah building an ark. The message inspired him so much that he decided to stroll through the nearby park to reflect on its meanings. Intrigued, yet skeptical, she playfully asked him if he was considering embarking on a project to build an ark. Rose began to entertain thoughts, wondering if her boyfriend had found Jesus. As these thoughts swirled in her mind, she couldn't shake the guilt and shame that began to surface. Her heart was heavy as she acknowledged that she had allowed crack cocaine to fill the void that once belonged to God.

Memories of the joy and peace that faith had brought into her life came rushing back, and amid her turmoil, she felt a powerful conviction wash over her. It came as a gentle whisper, a small voice resonating deep within her spirit. Recognizing this voice as that of the Holy Spirit, she was struck by a wave of regret and anxiety. Suddenly, the weight of her choices felt more pressing than ever.

Rose was shaken up when she dreamed of finding herself at a crossroads where one path sharply turned to the right, while the other meandered off to the left. This dream prompted her to start thinking about the choices she had made in life. With her heart racing, she picked up the phone and called her physician, seeking guidance and support for her troubling situation. The physician arranged for a caseworker to visit her at her home and assured her that help was available and that she should hang on.

As the day of the caseworker's visit approached, unexpected excitement filled the air. The thought of receiving help sparked a flicker of hope in her heart. It did not take long for her resolution to be tested, for when she stepped outside, she was taken back to see both her caseworker and a car waiting to take her to the crack house parked right in front of her home.

The sight of the two vehicles parked side by side brought back a flashback of her earlier dream about standing at the crossroads. In that trying moment, she felt God's powerful reminder about the crucial choices she needed to confront and the path she wanted to pursue. It was as if a light had illuminated the options before her, making her aware of the significance of taking action.

Anxiety swept over her as memories from her childhood returned, bringing with them the voices of her parents' heartfelt words: "Daughter, we cannot help you, but God can if you take the first step to help yourself." These words, filled with love and wisdom, had always inspired her, but now they resonated with a sense of urgency, prompting her to recognize her struggles and her need for assistance.

Rose admitted herself into the hospital, and upon her arrival, the medical staff promptly administered three powerful injections that would render her unconscious for the next three days. As she drifted into a deep sleep, the weight of her struggles began to lift and float away. When she finally awakened, she felt an intense urge to explore her surroundings. As if being guided by an unseen force, she entered a meeting room with other patients battling their demons. There, she spotted a man who radiated calmness and a sense of purpose.

The man approached her, explaining that he had been sent to help her on her journey toward healing. His presence offered her hope, and she felt an instant connection as if their paths were meant to cross at that moment in her life. They took a short walk, and along the way, he stopped to open a Bible and read from the eighth chapter of the book of Romans. As the man read the scriptures, she began to tremble, especially when he read the sixth through eighth verses, which read, "To be carnally minded is death, but spiritually minded is life and peace." After a few days, the hospital discharged her. She really felt joyful and had hope for her future.

However, this joy was short-lived. Shortly after arriving home, her desire and craving for drugs began to tug at her mind, and she gave in to it to satisfy her need. Still, she discovered that no matter how hard she tried to escape through substance abuse, she could no longer achieve the high she had achieved before. Fighting her inner motions, she attempted to find the man who had helped her during her hospital stay. He was known as Prophet Joe. He had read the Bible to her, comforted her in her darkest

moments, and was willing to listen attentively when she approached him for guidance. He had encouraged her to resist the allure of drugs and to focus on serving God.

Prophet Joe's wisdom had motivated her to reconsider God and the church. Rose decided to visit Prophet Joe, and she mentioned another man who had prayed with her. To her surprise, Prophet Joe revealed that he knew the man and said he lived nearby. They decided to go to the man's house to seek his guidance and to ask for prayer. After leaving the man's house, Rose experienced a profound moment with God, and a beautiful, unknown language began to flow effortlessly from her soul.

In the days that followed, she became fascinated by the story of Legion in her Bible. She was excited as she read about the people who encountered this man after he had been freed from demonic possession. She felt some hope when she read the part that declared, "Legion was fully clothed and in his right mind, sitting peacefully at the feet of Jesus" (Matthew 8:28-34; Luke 8:26).

Later, when the drug dealers saw her, they noticed something different about her, including her boyfriend. She felt she was different and wanted to learn more about the God Who had changed her life. She felt led to ask Prophet Joe to come to her home for a church service. He said he enjoyed preaching for her, and she asked him to come every Saturday to preach a sermon in her home. Upon hearing this news, one of the visiting women asked if they could cook for the preacher, to which she replied, "I think you are on to something, and they always say that a way to a person's heart is to serve them some good food."

One Sunday, Rose spotted a high school friend sitting close to her during a Sunday service at one of these meetings. The two women had a tumultuous history; after a heated quarrel during high school, they hadn't exchanged a single word since that day.

As Prophet Joe delivered an inspiring sermon, the atmosphere in the room became charged with emotion, which prompted the long-lost friend to squeeze Rose's hand gently. This simple yet powerful gesture triggered a flood of emotions, and the two women found themselves in tears as they confronted their unresolved feelings and grievances.

The following week, Prophet Joe arranged for a special guest to visit Rose's home. She was taken back as the minister introduced himself as Paul, who was known as "The Trucker Evangelist." Rose later discovered he was renowned for his dynamic preaching style, which had made waves on radio and television stations throughout America.

When the trucker evangelist brought the Word inside her

home, she and her boyfriend felt convicted and realized that, despite having separate bedrooms, they still lived together without marriage. She began to pray about how to fix this.

Unfortunately for Rose, feeling depressed was something she still battled with. The medical and other bills had become more than what she could handle, and she found herself extremely sick. So she checked herself back into the hospital. After she was settled into her room, she called Prophet Joe, who also informed the evangelist that she was suffering from depression. The evangelist informed Prophet Joe that he was on the road and could not take time off to visit her.

The evangelist asked Prophet Joe to give her some of the books he had sent him. His famous book, "18 Wheels And Jesus," was included in the books. Later, Rose called the evangelist and mentioned that

when Prophet Joe gave her the books, she was skeptical because she only liked her Bible and a few other books. However, she said that when she picked up the book, God smiled at her through its shiny cover. She said she felt a powerful connection to the stories in the book.

Later, she told others that the main character's struggles, dreams, and experiences closely mirrored her life. She had felt a jolt of surprise as she read about how God's powerful works were displayed through the character, prompting medical doctors to embrace the idea that prayer can change things. This deeply resonated within her spirit, and she confidently reassured herself, "If God can perform such incredible miracles through a trucker who has endured a grueling seven-year nervous condition filled with suffering and disappointment, then indeed, this same God can help me out of the nightmare that I have been living in.

Rose immersed herself in one of the other books and loved its captivating story, "Deliverance from the Road." The story features Ray, who arrives at the "76" truck stop along Interstate 20 in Georgia. As he pulls onto the certified truck scale, he eagerly anticipates the process, only to be informed by the fuel clerk that the scale's computer is currently out of order. This unexpected situation with the Cat Scale adds an element of uncertainty to his journey, yet it reflects the underlying theme of faith and reliance on God.

The story continues to describe how Ray parked his rig and told the clerk that he would be at the chapel until they figured out the source of the breakdown. The clerk had told him it was a rare occurrence and that she would wait a few minutes to try again. He continued to go to the chapel. The moment his foot touched the first step at the door of the trucker's chapel, he heard the voice of the HOLY GHOST say, "I want you to pray for someone to be delivered from demons of alcohol today." So Ray proceeded into the chapel with his heart and spirit girded to battle. The Chaplain greeted him inside, and Ray declared the Word of the LORD that had been given to him.

The Chaplain then informed Ray that five other ministers were in the truck stop's restaurant working with a young man, who was facing a difficult situation, which had to do with alcohol. Then, the heavy chapel doors creaked open. A solemn procession of ministers entered, leading a young man who embodied the struggles of alcoholism, disheveled and emanating a strong odor that reflected his challenges.

The clergy members approached Ray, sharing that God had individually stirred their hearts, guiding them to this remote truck stop to offer help to this troubled soul. They informed Ray that the young man resisted their counsel, leaving them frustrated and helpless, despite their best efforts. These confused ministers turned to Ray, knowing he had a reputation of preaching and ministry, urging him to approach and work with the young man. Ray was more than agreeable. He made his way over to the young man, and with a firm yet compassionate tone, he proclaimed, "Young man! God has gone to great lengths to bring these dedicated men here today to help you.

Ray informed the young man that God had gone so far as to break a certified scale to ensure he would be here for this moment, and He had brought five area preachers just for him. Ray emphasized that God was deeply concerned about him, and yet he act like he didn't care. Frustrated Ray told the young man that he was wasting their time and causing God to be so upset that He couldn't even weigh him on a scale just for the sake of his soul.

Ray continued to urge the young man to respond to God's call and to bow to His authority. He warned him that there wouldn't be any water where he was headed, if he didn't. The young man was moved by the Spirit, and finally broke down and asked Ray to pray for him. Ray took his hand, and the Holy Spirit manifested in him so strongly that he broke out in chills—goose bumps were visible on his arm. Ray sensed the presence of the demonic forces gripping the young man and said, "Devil, you heard him say with his spirit that he wants to be free! He wants God's salvation, Who is offered through His Son, Jesus Christ."

Ray then said, "Devil, I don't think you want to argue with this!" This young man breathed a sigh of relief as he was delivered. The glow of God's glory appeared on his face as he exclaimed, "Preacher, I feel clean!" Ray was so overcome with joy that he began to preach as he walked out of the chapel, down the steps, and into the parking area where the trucks were parked. When he finally came to himself, he checked at the fuel desk, and they informed him that the Cat Scale was now working.

The stories in the "18 Wheels and Jesus" book profoundly impacted Rose, inspiring her to share her testimony with anyone who was willing to listen. In a heartfelt call to the evangelist, Rose shared how God had led her to Jefferson Street, a street notorious for its high crimes and danger. She told him that behind her home was a street called Bankhead Street, where the United States Postal Service refused to deliver mail to its residents. It was on these very streets where Rose had struggled with addiction, using and selling drugs for seven long years. Now, she can walk these familiar streets where she once aimlessly wandered, but she does it with a sense of purpose.

The neighborhood where Rose lives has an unsettling resemblance to a war zone. The numerous houses that stand with their windows boarded up are a haunting reminder of the drive-by shootings that occurred all too frequently in the area. Each shuttered home tells a silent story of violence, and the aftermath of these brutal incidents has left many residents grappling with injuries, some limping through the streets, forever marked by the senseless acts of aggression that shattered their lives.

Rose had one advantage: she was well-known among the wrong crowd, and her past was intertwined with many of the neighborhood's troubled souls. She believed God utilized the experiences shared in the "18 Wheels And Jesus" book to elevate her faith and empower her mission. Fueled by a profound and newfound determination to create hope and inspire meaningful change, she now dedicated herself to uplifting her community to spread hope and inspiration through the life-touching power of storytelling. After considering various titles, she ultimately selected the book "18 Wheels And Jesus" because it was rich with heartfelt stories that illustrated themes of redemption, resilience, and how to triumph over adversity.

Rose hoped that by sharing these stories, she could inspire others to recognize the possibility of them also having hope and being able to change. She believed that the stories in the book could ignite a spark of hope in those who read them. She carried dozens of copies of the evangelist's books, each carefully selected to reach out to those she may encounter. She believed that each book she handed out represented far more than just a series of pages bound together. It was a beacon of hope, a crucial tool for healing, and a heartfelt invitation for readers to envision a brighter future, one that would allow them to rise above the pervasive cycle of violence and despair that often engulfed their lives.

Rose loved to explain the significance of the stories in the books to anyone who would listen. She loved to explain how each story within the pages was a testament to being resilient and offering strength for those who put their trust in the Lord.

As she distributed the books, she envisioned a world being transformed by these powerful stories, where individuals who were grappling with their inner demons could find a voice of understanding and empathy. She pictured them turning the pages, feeling a deep sense of connection with the experiences of others.

Rose hoped the books would help hurting people recognize that they were not alone in their struggles, and that through shared experiences, they could begin to heal and find solace. She imagined having community gatherings where people could come together to share their thoughts and feelings, fostering a stronger sense of unity and support among one another.

Rose discovered that the “18 Wheels And Jesus” book emerged as a vital lifeline for many, allowing readers to reflect deeply on their struggles and hardships as they navigated through the complexities of life. Rose began to pray and believe that God would inspire the people in her city to confront their fears, openly share their challenges and triumphs, and recognize that some people suffer more than others. She came to believe that no one is beyond redemption and that everyone needs to know they are valuable in the eyes of God. Rose started praying and trusting for the Lord to use her to break down barriers, soften hardened hearts, and lead people to a place where they could write their own stories about the life-changing, transforming power of God’s amazing grace.