



Diocese of Fargo *Our Stories of Faith*

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Doran Chandler's Story

God allows things to happen for our sanctification – I know this first-hand.

My twin brother and I were born into an alcoholic home. Our Dad left when my brother and I were a two and this was our first wound (the message we received was we weren't lovable, we weren't worth it). We moved in with grandpa and grandma and mom went to work. I can remember as a kid having the feeling of always being different and always having a desire to fit in and be just like everyone else. I spent a lot of years trying to please others instead of God! Throughout our lives, my brother and I have battled issues of self worth, anger, resentment, and love.

When we were twelve years old our mother got ovarian cancer. As I watched her fight for life and steadily lose her battle, I became angry with God. Mom had tried her best to raise us in faith, but at twelve, I was wrapped up in myself. Mom passed shortly after our thirteenth birthday. The message I received from her dying was that God was angry with me and I was not worthy of His love. I felt so alone. It wasn't till years later that I found out my brother had these same feelings. Neither of us knew how to handle these feelings. My



brother let his anger show outwardly. His anger drew him into bouts of heavy drinking and trouble with the law. I tried to bury my anger and put on a false front. I became the good twin! I was a people pleaser! I was still searching for love and acceptance so I spent the remainder of my youth with a knot in my stomach, a smile on my face and fear in my heart of being discovered.

At age sixteen God decided to let me feel love. He put Liz in my life! I was head over heels in love with a redheaded Catholic girl. We started dating when she was fifteen. After a while she, and probably her parents, thought we were getting to serious so she tried to break it off. I was decimated! Again the wound came! (*You are not loveable*). I pleaded with Liz and she agreed to remain together. I know this was part of God's plan to save me!

Liz became pregnant and delivered our son when she was sixteen years old. I was seventeen, with a much distorted idea of what a father should be. Our first years of marriage together were very rocky and I have no idea why she stayed those first few years, but God must have told that stubborn little redheaded Catholic girl that He would take care of everything because I sure wasn't! This was a time in my life when I'm sure I inflicted more wounds than

I received. I started drinking. I liked it because it numbed all those hurt feelings inside and I didn't have to deal with them. Satan's brew became my friend, my addiction.

My alcohol use progressed. At the age of twenty-five I got a call from my father. I had not seen or heard from him most of my life. I did not care if he was alive but I found myself weeping as I talked with him. God wanted to heal some wounds but Satan wanted to inflict some more. He came to visit. His alcoholism had consumed him, and I told him he must not drink on his visit and he agreed, for a while.

After a couple weeks he got a job, moved out, got a paycheck and got drunk! I received a call from the sheriff's office. They had him in jail and I can remember being so angry and so embarrassed! The judge said I could commit him and so I signed the papers. Eight years later my brother and I received word Dad had been found dead in a junk car by the railroad tracks in Wilmer, Minn. We didn't go to the funeral, we got drunk! A few months later Liz, once again, said she was going to leave because she could not stay and watch me drink myself to death. The old wound returned! Again I panicked. Having spent a lifetime of people pleasing, I agreed to go into alcohol treatment. It was there God started His healing. I came to terms with my father's illness and death. I finally knew he was ill and although his actions were not acceptable he was still my father and I loved him.

God put me in a spiritual desert for the next twenty years. I remained sober but always had the feeling that something was missing. There was a void that only the Lord could fill. But that was about to change!

My wife decided that since our two children were grown and gone I should go to church with her! I wasn't real keen on the idea but I struggled saying no to her. So I went! I found myself having feelings of

curiosity, feelings of not belonging, but a desire to belong, and at the same time peace. Liz talked me into going to RCIA again. An earlier attempt during my drinking career had failed. This time God loaded both barrels! He sent me Sister Dorothy Bunce! I was ready for her but she blew all my misgivings away with the most beautiful and loving answers to all my questions. God had me just where he wanted me - in His church! I became Catholic for all the wrong reasons but God had a plan which I knew nothing about and now I am Catholic for all the right reasons. After twenty years of being in a spiritual desert, I encountered Christ. Jesus and I met at a Cursillo weekend. How I got to that Cursillo I'm not sure, but I've always had trouble saying no to people. God showed me His love that weekend and introduced me to His son, Jesus. He would soon introduce me to His Spirit.

A couple months later I found myself at a Life in the Spirit weekend. God wanted to heal me because He loves me, and He wants me to be able to love Him and His people. The first time I was prayed over for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit, I sat at Father Neil's table. Father Neil placed his hand on my heart and told me my heart was full of wounds and scars and I should pray to St. Michael constantly. He also told me God wanted to heal my heart and I should ask Jesus to go with me to those deep wounds and talk about them. Be careful what you ask Jesus to do, it can be painful, but with pain comes healing and joy.

Jesus and I have revisited a lot of those wounds. I have shed tears and received a lot of forgiveness and healing. I am not done yet. The battle rages and we are wounded, but Jesus has won the war. What must we do to win? Surrender. Surrender to Jesus Christ and let Him love you and guide you. My life is proof of this.

Doran and Liz Chandler are members of St. Catherine's Church in Valley City, ND