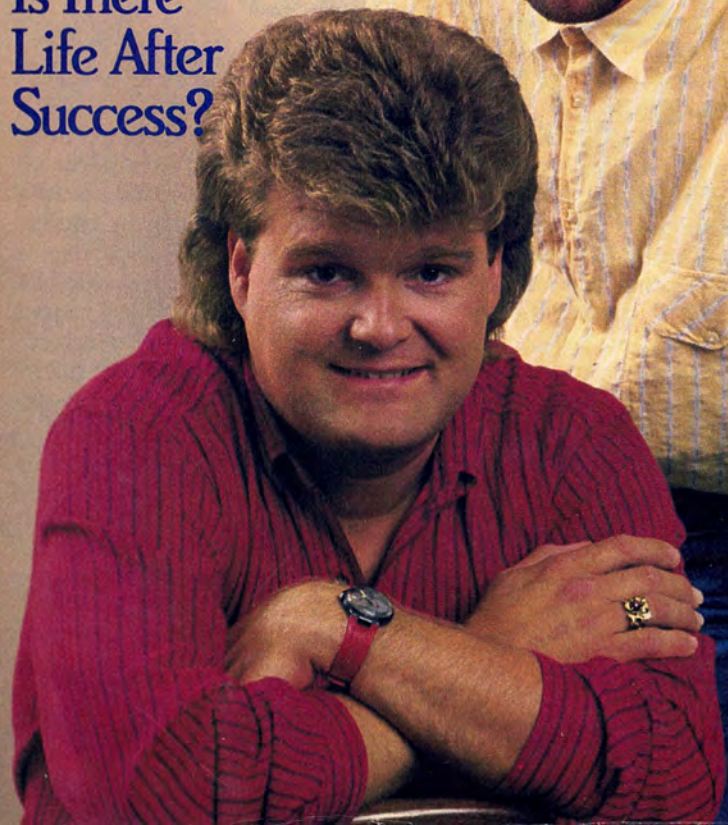


07-89

Full Gospel Business Men's

VOICE

Nashville
and Music:
Is There
Life After
Success?



Ricky Shaege



A Fisher of Men

Ricky Skaggs
Nashville, Tennessee

Ricky Skaggs received his first mandolin at the age of five. Virtually without instruction, two weeks later he amazed the people in his tiny hometown of Cordell, Kentucky by singing and playing progressions on the pear-shaped instrument. Soon he was performing regularly with his parents at a variety of Appalachian church and community events.

Although he accepted Jesus at the age of 10, a lack of Christian growth plagued him for years, until he rededicated his life to the Lord in 1980.

Ricky then offered to give up his popular country music career and restrict his singing to churches if that was what the Lord wanted. Instead, God told him to remain in the secular music world to serve as His witness there.

Most of the 30,000 fans at the outdoor music festival north of Toronto, Canada were either drunk or rapidly approaching intoxication. The applause was hearty while we played the tunes familiar to country music fans, but the mood would soon turn ugly.

It happened after I sent the band off-stage to sing a gospel song *a cappella*. No sooner had I started than, right down front, a man jumped to his feet and made obscene gestures. He was close enough that I could see the hatred in his glazed eyes.

Silently, I cried out to Jesus for His protection and finished the song. I came off the stage depressed and upset, wondering what I was doing there, and praying for the dissenters.

But just as I prepared to get into my van, a man approached me, a look of gratitude on his face.

"I have something I've just got to tell you," he said. "I've been an alcoholic for 15 years and a recovering one the last five. I was out here with all these people and was just about ready to end five years of sobriety, when I heard you sing that song about suffering. I just praise God that you were here and saved me from slipping back into that again."

That is only one of many confirmations the Lord has provided, telling me I am indeed where He wants me to be, ministering in a world where preachers and evangelists are barely tolerated or are automatically shunned.

One other example that touched my heart involved a young girl from Virginia who had run away from home in the midst of her parents' constant quarreling. She heard my tune "Thanks Again,"

a tribute to parental love. It recalls how easy it is to take our parents for granted until we have children of our own and grapple with the tough decisions of directing young lives.

"Thanks Again" struck a nerve with this girl, who bought the record, sent it to her parents and later returned home. A few months after she wrote me, she and her parents showed up in the front row at one of our concerts, smiling and hugging up in the best family tradition.

These incidents demonstrate how the Lord can use country music, which has drawn more than its share of criticism from Christians for all the "cheatin', drinkin' and dyin'" songs that are part of the genre.

I know many sincere believers don't understand how I can operate in this arena, but I don't have any quarrel with them. We're all souls under construction, doing the best we can to please our Lord and fulfill the mission He has placed in our individual hearts.

There was never any doubt in my mind that God has called me to play music, though when I began I was too young to understand what He was doing.

Growing up, I played and sang with my parents on the "Appalachian folk circuit," a succession of church socials, bean stringings, corn shuckings and pie suppers that are as foreign to many

Americans as the idea of speaking in tongues. (To this day, my favorite meal is catfish, pinto beans and fried cornbread.)

Since we performed in so many different churches, the environment was a strong influence in my life. At the age of 10, we attended a revival at a church in a neighboring town, and I walked forward to give my heart to Jesus.

But several factors worked to negate my desire to live out that decision.

Although we belonged to a church, my parents and I traveled so much that I missed out on a lot of the basics, such as good training and growth in the Word. By the time I reached my early teens, frustration at not being able to keep all the "rules" that came from the pulpit led me to reason, "I must not be saved because I don't feel like I am."

Because of my confusion, the influence of Christianity gradually faded as I focused my attention on the music stage that held my destiny. Just before my sixteenth birthday, the legendary Ralph Stanley asked me to join the Clinch Mountain Boys as a mandolin player and vocalist.

I played with the band for more than two years, recording several of the Stanley brothers' classics. At 18, I also appeared on the 2nd Generation Bluegrass album with Keith Whitley.

Although I got tired of a musician's

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long hours, low pay and constant travel, the real motivating force in leaving the Clinch Mountain Boys for Virginia was to be closer to my girlfriend. We had met backstage one night after a concert.

Though I loved my wife and we had two beautiful children, we fell prey to the attacks that stem from natural human weaknesses. Ironically, I was still attending church during this time, but it was more out of a sense of guilt or



Photo: Jim Hagens

“There was never any doubt in my mind that God has called me to play music, though when I began I was too young to understand what He was doing.”

Ricky Skaggs in concert

That's how I wound up as a newly-married, 19-year-old laborer in the boiler room of Virginia Electric & Power Company. If I ever start to gripe about the rigors of traveling, a quick trip down memory lane to that boring job is a sure cure.

I stayed there long enough to qualify for one six-months' raise, quickly abandoning it when The Country Gentlemen invited me to be their fiddle player. From there, I formed my own group, Boone Creek, and two years later joined Emmylou Harris' Hot Band.

But my rise in the music business paralleled the fall of my marriage.

duty, than to seek God's direction.

Since few of my companions by this time were Christians, I faced little condemnation when divorce rode onto the horizon. My parents tried very hard to prevent it, quoting numerous Scriptures about how God hates divorce, but I had my mind made up. I realize now the reason that God is opposed to divorce is the suffering it inflicts on children.

Then I discovered another tragedy of divorce: guilt. I was your basic "happy-on-the-outside, empty-on-the-inside" guy. For a Christian, I was pretty sad. I had no joy and no peace..

Finally, trying to push myself to perform on the road, I landed in the hospital in 1979 with double pneumonia.

While flat on my back, I was visited by a number of Christians, including the woman who later would become my mother-in-law. She knew that while I had accepted Christ, I needed to begin living for Him.

Thanks to her gentle guidance from the Word, I learned that while Satan had tried to convince me I was a failure, if I had Christ in my heart there were no failures. I might fall and stumble, but the Lord sees perfection when He sees a Christian. We are all covered by the blood.

Freed from guilt and the mistaken belief I was lost forever, I returned to church with a new sense of purpose. Oddly enough, I had never been baptized as a youth, so I took care of that on Easter Sunday, 1980.

What a blessing Christian growth became! For the first time, I knew the joy of feeling that I really mattered to the Lord. I knew that He loved me and that through all the pain I had endured, He was there. He had allowed me to bog down in my own troubles so that I would see my need for Him.

When I made my commitment to serve Him, the blessings started flowing. Soon I developed a new sensitivity in my spirit to the things He was trying to do for me, to me and with me.

My career ascent coincided with this decision. I moved to Nashville in the fall of 1980. At the time I was playing fiddle part-time with the popular country group *The Whites*, who were based there. A longtime friendship with Sharon White

also blossomed into romance and we were married on August 4, 1981. Sharon is still my best friend and my inspiration. God has blessed me with a wife whose love for Him and His Word surpasses explanation.

About six months after I moved to Music City, I released the first of nine albums, "Waitin' For The Sun To Shine," launching a solo performing career that has taken me all over the world. But I was still nervous over my promise to the Lord to shun the country music scene if that's what He wanted.

A couple years after my baptism, He made it clear that I was to remain in the secular business because He felt, as I do, that I can touch a lot more people in this world than if I recorded only gospel music.

Two years ago, He filled me with His Holy Spirit at a Bible study in a Nashville book store. Lately He has been strongly dealing with me about the ways in which I witness. There have been times when I have come across as very holy and self-righteous, slamming the door shut with my foot when the Lord was trying to gently open it.

As a result, I'm trying my best to follow the Holy Spirit and speak in a language that everyone can understand. Christians will know I'm witnessing, but an unbeliever will accept the message as a soft-spoken word with a deeper meaning. If I start preaching and injecting a lot of "ministry" which they're opposed to, I will lose them.

I certainly don't mind talking about my beliefs, nor do I try to hide them, because I'm very grateful and blessed to be a Christian. The music industry knows

where I stand, but there have been times when people avoided me because I'm too "religious."

That is one thing I desperately want to avoid, because people can choke to death on religion. It's a relationship with



“... regardless of our occupation, we're all called to be 'fishers of men.' ”

Jesus Christ that's the key, and there's a real difference between the two!

I also struggle with the "star" aspect of my career. My fans want to place me on a pedestal because they want me to be bigger than they are, flashier, glitzier, and more glamorous. After all, who wants to buy a ticket to see themselves?

Given that reality, I try to please them,

but at the same time I have a desire to join them down on the ground and show them I'm just a human being, too.

It's a fine line to walk, and I also find myself caught up in suspicion. Sadly, when someone comes up to me seeking prayer, what they usually want is to slip me a music tape they've recorded or make a "connection."

Despite these drawbacks, I praise the Lord for the opportunity He's given me to spread messages of hope through my music.

One of the best came through the song, "Old Kind of Love Goin' Round," a single released last year from my album, "Comin' Home To Stay." Written by famous lyricist Paul Overstreet, it talks about a rise in faithfulness in marriage and families staying together.

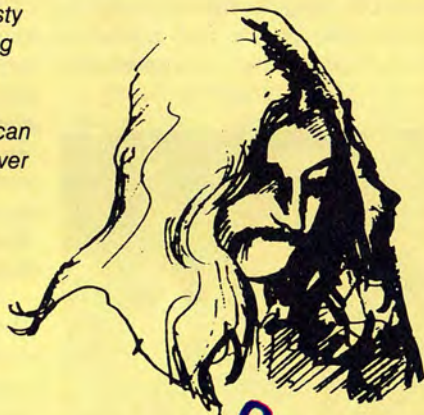
Not every song I perform will be as wholesome, but because of country favorites like "Highway 40 Blues," "Heartbroke" and "Wouldn't Change You If I Could," I have a larger audience to listen to the message in "Old Kind of Love." It provides me with a larger net to catch more fish.

After all, regardless of our occupation, we're all called to be "fishers of men." □

A talented singer, Ricky Skaggs is also proficient on the guitar, banjo, mandolin, fiddle, telecaster and mandocaster. He has won more than two dozen music honors, including three Grammy awards and the Country Music Association's "Entertainer of the Year" in 1985. His first eight albums have sold more than seven million copies, and his ninth, "Kentucky Thunder," was released in June. His wife, Sharon White, is also a well-known singer with The Whites. Ricky has two children from his first marriage, Mandy, 11; and Andrew, 10; while he and Sharon have a daughter, Molly, 5; and another child due soon. You can write to him c/o Ricky Skaggs Enterprises, 54 Music Square East, Suite 100, Nashville, TN 37203.

How often, when we see a juvenile delinquent, someone in jail or someone on drugs, do we wonder, "How in the world did Johnny get that way?" Rusty Comstock, who was a troubled young man himself, offers some intriguing insights from his personal diary.

But perhaps his entire testimony can be summed up in one sentence: *Never give up on anyone!*



Diary of a Loner

Rusty Comstock
Ardmore, Oklahoma

"Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, 'Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ, have come, for (Satan) the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death' "

(Revelation 12:10-11, NKJ).

"By the blood of the Lamb!" That's beautiful.

". . . and by the word of their testimony . . ." that's the exciting part of the sentence. But there's a sad part too. For some people will never really come to know what Jesus' blood ("the blood of the Lamb") is really all about, or what God longs to do for them.

What's worse, on the Day of Judgment, Satan, the accuser, will testify of things about them that are true to a point, and Jesus will not be able to stand in defense of that person because He doesn't know him. So God, the Judge, will have no other choice but to condemn the individual to eternal separation from Him.

For those who stand condemned, my heart cries out. I hurt for them.

Why didn't You send them to me, Lord?

I pray for them.

With that in mind, here is the "word" of my testimony.

August, 1964: I was a fatherless six-year-old child. So my grandparents adopted me and gave me my first stable home. It wasn't religious or spiritual, but it was full of love.

Mid school year, 1966: The school told me I might have to go to special education classes.

I was devastated. I already had red hair and freckles and was fat — now I had to live with a label.

So I fought. Sometimes fist fights, sometimes more than one kid. Funny thing: all the kids from the poor side of

town and the kids from broken homes liked me. But the middle class and upper crust kids looked down on me.

June, 1968: I went to church. God kills people who don't do what He says, so I got baptized. But when my friend stole some money, I helped him spend it. It seemed wrong — but God didn't kill me. So when I asked my grandmother, "Who is God?" she explained, "God is love."



School year, '68-'69: L.S.D. Wild stuff from what I hear. I'll have to try some.

Vietnam. Men are going halfway around the world just to hide in the jungle and kill someone they don't know! Amazing. They get paid for it, too. I can't tell what a "dirty Commie" is. They look like Indians. Maybe that's why they're killing them.

Speed? Guaranteed to make a fat kid thin. I lose weight but can't sleep.

Phenobarbital. Guaranteed to make a fat kid trying to lose weight sleep at night.

But nothing changes red hair and freckles.

Chopped Harleys, greasy Levis, a jacket with no sleeves and mirrored shades. Every kid in '69 has some. Born to be wild.

Summer, 1970: Beer makes me go to the bathroom too much, but it's the thing to drink. People like people when they drink about four of them.

My grades weren't too good last year. Maybe they'll get better. But these Harleys sure are neat. Can't wait to grow my hair long and ride one of my own.



Sometime, 1971: This world is crazy. People are crazy. I get so confused. I thought parents loved their kids, friends were friends and the sun is supposed to shine in summer. But they're still killing each other over there.

Yet God didn't kill me when I stole that bicycle. This is all too weird for me. Can't figure it all out so I'll close the door, smoke Colombians, watch Gilligan's Island and dream about a Harley and a car with mags on it.

Early 1972: Stole a van and drove around stoned. Doesn't seem right, but a lot of things don't. They're still sending hired guns to Vietnam. Now they've shortened the name of the place to "Nam." Maybe they're trying to make themselves look and feel better by making the name shorter. But the people are just as dead.

I'm tired of the same old thing, day after day. I want a Harley or something different.

Spring, 1972: My neighbor had a car . . . a Rancho. I tried to steal it, but couldn't start it with a screwdriver. I knew it was wrong, so I ran away on foot.

Seattle, Washington. No food. Lots of wine. No place to live, but these hippie girls sure have been nice to me. Seems like the guys sleep all the time and do shots with needles.

Now I'm going for a ride in a police car. Then to a cage. I wish I was home. The hippies didn't like it when I got arrested so they must be my friends.

My grandparents didn't like it either, but they love me and I love them. I feel real sick.

Got out and stole a car that goes a hundred miles an hour. All those lights look so funny in the rear view mirror. Red and blue and yellow, flashing and dancing. 27.9 miles of a chase at 87 miles per hour. Down the hill but lost it on the turn. The car rolls. This doesn't seem right either. It doesn't happen this way on TV.

Ninety days later: Valley View Boys Home, Inc. Never knew what the "Inc." stood for. Guess they shortened it up to make themselves feel better.

January 1973: We all ran away and got caught in Idaho. Almost froze to death on that freight train bound for nowhere. The hobo had white wine and red pills and so did we.

30 days later: Sent to the River Boys Ranch, Inc. Yes, Inc. again. Ran away to the Indian reservation with a real Indian. Got in a fight and almost killed someone who tried to beat up my friend. Now this makes sense. Kill for your friends, if it's necessary. My friends love me and I love them.

Four months later: Back to RBR. This gets old fast. I found three guys who thought the same thing, so we left, stole the mayor of Toledo's car and got caught.

Things don't seem right no matter what . . . except to kill someone for your friends. So I tried to join the Army. I wanted to serve my country but they said no. Then the Navy. "No." The Air Force? "No." Finally the Marines took me, but tough break: the war was over. Where to go now?

July, 1976: I left the service, dissatisfied. On to drinking, dummy dust and doing foolish things. Piled up the misdemeanors.

January, 1978: Forty-two stolen CB radios. Forty-two separate misdemeanors. I wanted a jury trial for each one. My lawyer thought it would be too costly. One year county jail, continued proba-



tion. On to work release, then out. One problem: broke probation.

February, 1979: So this is prison. They said I had an attitude problem. Being in trouble most of my life, now I was half-way mean. Getting out, I slept in barns, caves, holes in the ground and went for any drugs and motorcycles that were free for the taking. But this was boring. I went to Texas.

Two days before Easter, 1982: A blizzard. Twenty-five degrees. What am I doing standing on the side of the road in Wyoming?

Easter morning, 1982: I feel so lost. The scenery has changed but nothing else has. Why do I keep looking over my shoulder? I'm not wanted anywhere. I want to go somewhere and cry. Make that funny feeling go away!

I'll go for a false peace. Almost O.D. and passed out for a couple of hours. Quiet. Darkness. At least everything's still.

September, 1982: Very withdrawn lately. Got a job and lost it. My boss said to get myself together. So I did — I went out and got drunk. Ended up in jail and fired all in one smooth move. Am feeling funny inside again.

October, 1982: Met this gal. Beautiful! I'd never found someone to love before, and she was it. Must be getting soft or it's the drugs.

Why do I suddenly want to get married? I actually told someone I loved her and meant it! It felt good. I took her home, moved the motorcycle out of my bed and started making plans.



February 11, 1983: We got married in Wichita Falls. The J.P. said the words. We meant the words. Took a 1-1/2 month honeymoon to Oregon but still paranoid at times. And I feel funny over the strangest things. Like, I robbed a house and said, "I shouldn't do this." I hadn't said something like that in years!

April, 1983: After wrecking the car, we got a '48 Ford pickup, \$400 and a quarter pound of pot. That should get us to Oklahoma. So with our stolen Doberman Pinscher, we headed out to start a new life.

I got a job as a laborer. One night my wife asked me to go to church with her. I didn't want to go, but nevertheless, there I was sitting in the pew, not paying attention, but with this funny paranoid feeling coming on me strong.

I told God that if He wanted me saved, to pick me up and make we walk to the front of the church. The funny thing is, I really wanted Him to. I longed to be saved, but was too weak in my mind and heart to do it.

After all, I was a biker. A tough guy who smoked pot and didn't need God.

Well, my wife got saved. I didn't. And later I didn't help my wife stay saved. In fact, I pulled in the other direction.

We couldn't have children, but while she was in that church she prayed for a baby. All of a sudden she was pregnant. I was puzzled and felt very funny inside.

October, 1983: My wife was showing real good. She headed back to church and reading the Bible. I was kinda thinking about it myself. I threw away my paraphernalia. No time like the present to start. But it was time to move on.

Our truck broke down in Strasburg, Colorado. We lost almost everything. My wife was upset. The only thing I could tell



her was, "Whatever the devil takes away, God gives back more and better." I don't know where I came up with that, but it sounded more than right. We continued by bus.

December, 1983: A new Harley . . . black and chrome and fast. My wife was showing a lot and reading the Bible. I was riding a lot and it was showing too.

One day just before New Year's, it was cold and clear with a little snow on the ground. On my way down the hill from riding the back hills, I saw three churches below me. I wanted to go talk to a preacher, but none around I suppose. There were no cars. So I rode home, feeling empty and funny again.

March, 1984: I got a job. We got an apartment, a Harley, a pickup, furniture, a stereo, TV and dishes. I told her, "See,

I told you God gives more and better than the devil can take away!" But something was going on deep inside me. There was this digging and grinding.

April 1, 1984: Beautiful day. But the tune "Desperado" kept running through my head. I worked on the bike for a couple of hours. Then I kicked it and kicked it again and it wouldn't start.

Now, I prided myself on one thing . . . that my bikes always start on the first kick. So I pushed it down the road, throttle wide open, in second gear. After a while it spit. Finally it caught and I took off like a rocket, stuck in second gear with the throttle full open . . . stuck. The thing wouldn't shut down.

I thought about my wife and unborn child, then hit the guard rail head on at 40 miles an hour. "Oh God," was all I could get out before I hit the pavement. Three seconds later it was real quiet. I thought I was dying.

At the hospital I got more bad news. I had to go to jail for old warrants from Oklahoma. I couldn't die in the hospital. They wanted to prosecute someone living.

I got out and my wife bore us a little redheaded girl named Sarah. What a joy!

One day my next door neighbor witnessed Jesus to me. He was different than anyone else. It takes a lot of heart to witness Jesus to a biker! More than any other human being, he planted a seed that led to my salvation.

January 3, 1985: No job. No money. And a broken motorcycle in our kitchen. It



snowed and got cold. They shut off the electric. So we partied and then we fought. Then we went to jail. Fifteen days to sit out!

February, 1985: We got on a bus for Oklahoma. Paranoid. My friends all look like undercover cops. I got a job building a house, then building cabinets and got another pickup. Summer was coming. On to a job as an electrician in Texas. We had it good for a while.

October, 1985: Feeling kinda withdrawn again. There's that Bible I got when I was in prison. It sits there and begs me to look at it. Weird! I must be getting old or weak.

Must need another Harley.

On to Fort Worth. My kind of people here walking around in leathers with sawed off shotguns and pistols and partying all night.



November, 1985: This is getting really weird. That Bible practically yells for me to get it and read it. There's a church on the way to the store.

Deep inside, I want to go in and find out what to do. I need out of the things I'm into.

Me and my wife talk it over: quit the drugs, go to church and become a denominational preacher.

God had different plans. My wife took our daughter to Oklahoma. I was to follow her after I tracked down our pickup, sold our stuff and gave my life to Jesus.

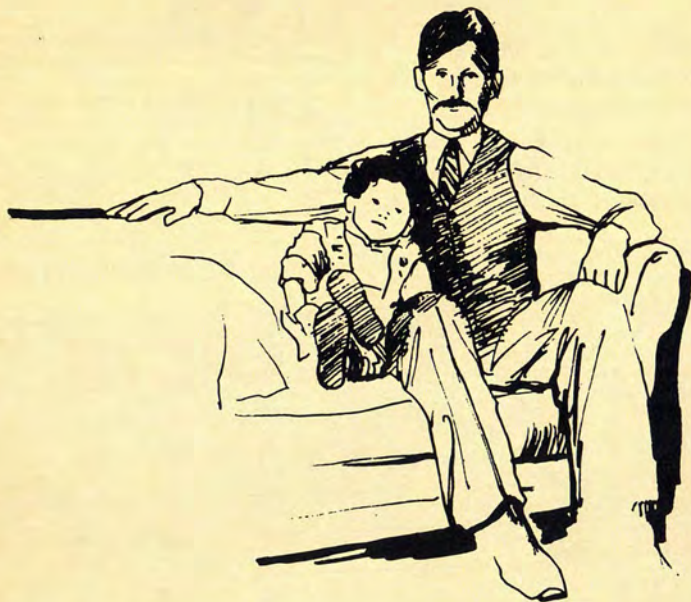
November, 1985: I was arrested for a misdemeanor — possession of an amphetamine. That night in a jail cell de-

signed for four people (of which I was the seventh), I knelt down and gave my life to Jesus Christ. I didn't know what to pray. Nobody helped me. I just started quietly praying on the floor, right next to the toilet.

Finally I found peace. I felt accepted. I felt loved. It was the most beautiful moment of my life. The Lord held me safe and loved me.

I'd been running for so long. I was so tired.

Deliverance came. I was redeemed. Now I wanted to go home, sit in church and be a Christian. Small problem. My misdemeanor was now a felony! I was facing two to twenty.



Then it came to me: What the devil takes away, God gives back more and better. I prayed and prayed. Read the Bible and reread it. Soon the Holy Spirit came over me and my prayers changed. Jesus kept saying, "Follow me." So I began to pray that even if I went to prison, even if I lost my wife . . . no matter what, I would follow Him no matter what the cost.

I got four years. After I was in the hole a short time, I went before the classification committee. I remembered how Jesus acted before His accusers. I made no defense for myself. At night I studied the Bible in my cell.

September, 1986: I was sent to a 90-day release. I witnessed to some and prayed every day by the pine trees and hog pens.

October, 1986: I got on a bus and went home at 4:45 in the afternoon. Praise the Lord! We are reunited again.

September, 1988: Here we are, looking back and seeing how God has worked on me. I give praise and glory to no one but

God and His perfect Son Jesus. There is no other living God!

The men God has sent to help me have been great men — but they don't know it. They've come quietly, studied the Bible with me and taught me many truths, just by the way they are, much more than by what they've said.

I want to go back to prison now and do great things for my Master. For one who has had much forgiven, there is much to be thankful for! To glorify His Name is my minimum reasonable service.

I want to glorify God everywhere I go, in everything I do. "By the Blood of the Lamb and the Word of their Testimony..." This has real meaning now. □

Rusty, his wife Stephanie, and their two children, Sarah and John, now live in Oklahoma where he works as an aide in a nursing home. Next month he will begin training to become an LVN (licensed vocational nurse). In addition, he is active in prison ministry and winning others to Christ.



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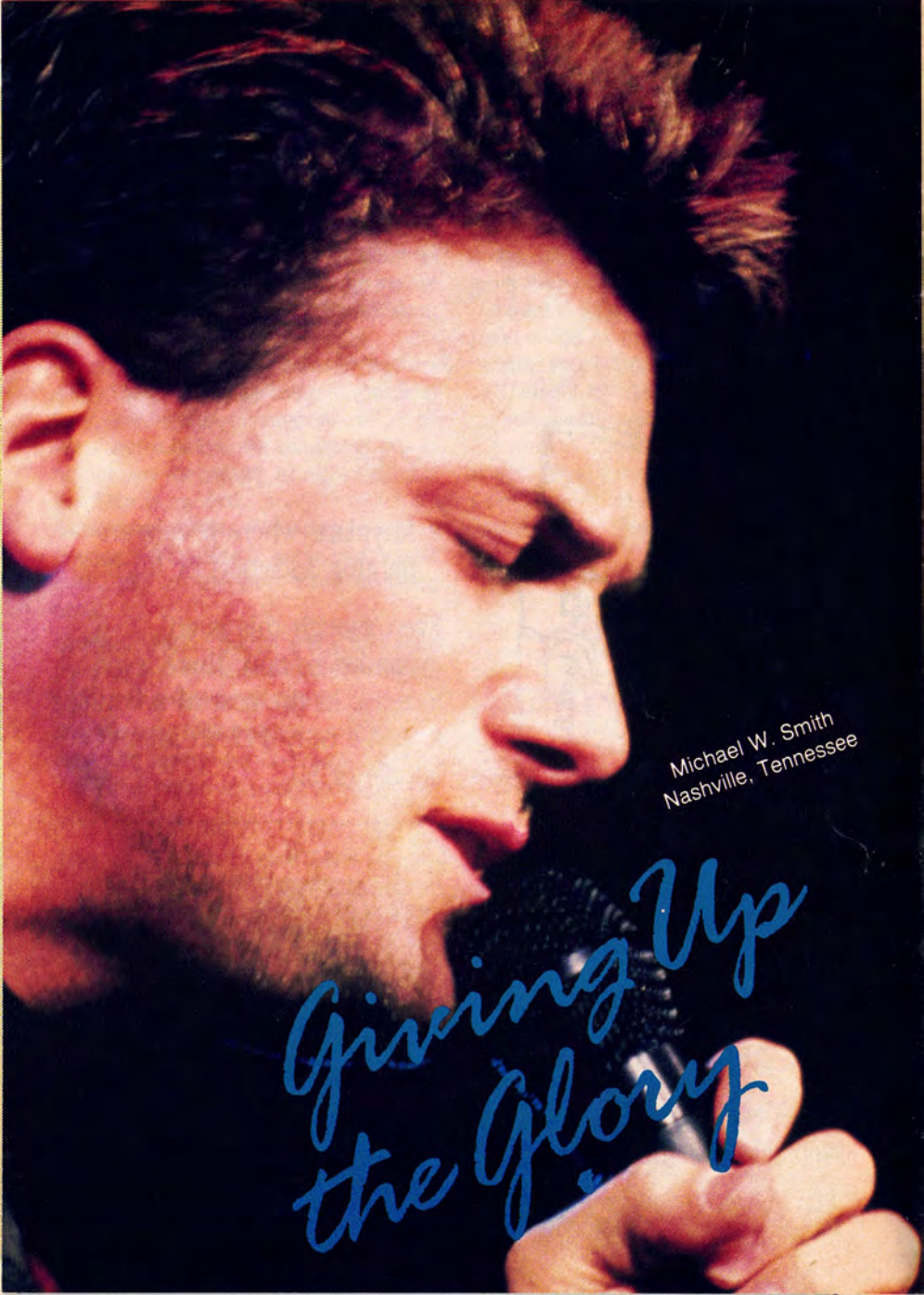
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Michael W. Smith
Nashville, Tennessee

*Giving Up
the Glory*

Michael W. Smith's story is the classic tale of the small town musical genius who arrived in Nashville with little more than high hopes. But just four years later, he was writing songs for artists like Amy Grant, T.G. Sheppard, Steve Green, the Bill Gaither Trio and Pat Boone. Soon, he was nominated for a Grammy Award for his first album, then won a Grammy for his second.

Smith, who loves performing, admits it would be easy to get carried away with success. But keeping accountable to close friends in Christ as well as to his local church, helps him keep a proper perspective on worldly achievements.

A deafening roar thundered down from the crowd, the applause rocketing through the curtain that sheltered me from the stage.

I stood there drinking in the scene. Just seven years after I left my small hometown of Kenova, West Virginia, my style of music had generated such an incredible response that we (Reunion Records, Blanton-Harrell, Inc., my management company and I), had launched a national tour. It was unbelievable. There were 6,000 people in this Seattle arena and the fans were screaming and pounding their feet on the bleachers so loudly we thought the building might collapse.

"Michael!"

I turned and saw three girls up behind the curtain, leaning down over the balcony railing.

"We love you, Michael!" they waved. "Wow," I thought. "This is a great feeling!"

Just as I was ready to launch a full-scale ego trip, I felt a hand firmly grab my shoulder. It was Don Finto, the pastor of my church who had accompanied me to some of the concerts on my 1985 "Friends" tour.

"Give it up," he said, referring to the pride and the glory. "Give it up. It's not you. Give it up."

I bowed my head like a little boy who had just been disciplined behind the woodshed.

"You're right," I said softly. "It's not me. I'll give it up."

I'll never forget that experience, for it has helped me maintain my perspective. Maybe I had shown up in Nashville as an unknown and quickly progressed to writing songs for and touring with star Amy Grant. Maybe my own albums had sold thousands of copies. Maybe I had become a "name" performer. But it was the Lord who made it all possible, and it's His glory that I must always seek.

Today, it's not just my pastor who helps me maintain that balance. It's people such as my wife, Debbie, my pastor, fellow church members and my managers. For without the steadying influence of fellow believers, we are easy prey for the enemy.

I know, because even after being saved at age 10, having had a major encounter with the Spirit in my early teens, regular Bible study and a fantastic home environment, I strayed from the path midway through my junior year of high school.

To this day, I don't fully understand

why. I guess I was afraid I'd miss out on the excitement.

I grew up in a town of 5,000 in south-eastern West Virginia. Kids from the town next door, Ceredo, and my neighbors formed the student body at Ceredo-Kenova High School.

I was always a big sports nut, and so although I had never particularly wanted to play football, peer pressure convinced me to play for C-K, a perennial state play-off contender. It also lured me into frequent trips to the Ohio River flood wall, still a popular spot for teens to drink beer, smoke pot and engage in other "activities."

To this day, I regret getting involved in that scene, since Satan occasionally uses the memories to play games with my mind. He also nearly prevented me from reaching the destiny the Lord had created for me.

After school, I enrolled at nearby Marshall University to study music. But music theory didn't interest me, I wanted to use my talent to play music, since I always felt that I was supposed to use it to reach the world. Finally, I set out for Nashville in the spring of 1978.

Shane Keister, also a West Virginia native, had achieved musical success in Nashville and through him I managed to get an appointment with Randy Cox, the head of a Christian music publishing company. Randy liked my music, but didn't think much of my lyrics. So he got me together with his wife, who was also a songwriter, and the two of us began crafting songs.

On that trip, I also met Shane's brother, who needed someone to work in his landscaping business and help pay

the rent. Just like that, I became a Nashvillian and writer for Paragon, a publisher of Christian music.

But the seeds planted in high school were bearing rotten fruit and I tried wasting a golden opportunity. Soon I quit digging shrubs to join nightclub and rock bands, all the while partaking of Nashville's active partying scene.

How did I handle the hypocrisy of writing music for a Christian outfit while drinking and smoking pot? The same way I did in high school — by not facing it, even though deep down I knew I eventually would have to deal with this contradictory lifestyle.

Gradually, the Lord gave me a desire to change. I even started praying, "God, do what You've got to do. Break my legs, whack me on the side of my head, get my attention."

In November of 1979, He did. My younger sister had moved to Nashville and I was renting a house with her and a friend from our hometown. But this night, they were gone. My rock band had just fallen apart, leaving me unemployed amidst a mountain of credit card debt. Depressed over my circumstances and inability to do what I knew was right, loneliness enveloped me.

Feeling like I was spinning alone through space, I broke down and wept. Then God spoke in His quiet way.

"This is it," He said.

"I know," I answered. "I give up. I can't do it by myself. I'm willing to make a turn."

That night, sprawled out on my kitchen floor, I felt the weight of the world lift from my shoulders. When I awoke the next morning, I even felt different.

"Well, if I'm supposed to be writing songs for Paragon, I guess I'll go down there," I thought.

No sooner had I walked in than the man who had given me my first audience said, "Hey, I know a group, *Higher Ground*, who needs a piano player. They want to know if you would be interested."

Would I? I couldn't believe this was happening less than 24 hours after I had pledged to give my life back to God. Though the weekly \$125 salary was far less than the \$300 I had pulled down in nightclubs, it was just what I needed.

The other band members were solid, mature Christians and they nurtured me through a critical period in my life. During the nine months we were on the road, I regularly read the Bible and we had devotional times, with each other and audience members after some concerts.

When I returned to Nashville, the Lord quickly opened doors, which is the easiest way to explain how I wound up writing songs for Amy Grant and joining her for her national tours. Then one of my songs hit number one when Sandi Patti recorded "How Majestic Is Your Name."

I should clarify "song writing," because I'm a musician. Most of my lyrics are written by others, including those for "Friends."

My wife wrote the words in about 15 minutes as a going-away present for a friend who was moving across country to work with Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship. They touched me so deeply I quickly wrote a melody. "Friends" has since been played at funerals, memorials, and as a high school graduation song.

The many ways God works never

ceases to amaze me. I've received hundreds of letters from people telling me how their lives have been affected by my songs, but two in particular stand out.

One came from the mother of a boy who had been seriously injured in a car wreck. Admitted to the intensive care unit, the doctors said he wouldn't live through the night. But he did. Then he made it through a second.

Since he was a big fan, his friends somehow persuaded the hospital to let them go into his room and play my songs for him all day. He woke up 38 hours later, and a week and a half after that, he went home.

Who knows how much the music actually had to do with it. But to receive a touching letter like that . . . it's hard to put my feelings into words.

Another moving testimony concerned a teenager whose friend had given him my album, "The Big Picture," which contained an anti-suicide song called "The Last Letter."

Despondent, the boy had decided to end his life. Taking his dad's pistol into the bathroom, he was preparing to pull the trigger when "The Last Letter" came on. He listened, put the gun down and gave his life to the Lord.

Mail like this is living proof of the miraculous ways in which God works. I only played one small part in this boy's turn. What if he hadn't had a friend who cared enough to give him the tape? What if he hadn't played the album at just the right time?

Since my music is classified as "rock," some people automatically believe it's of the devil. Obviously, seeing the way it has touched some lives, I don't

agree, but neither do I try to debate the issue.

My mail is the reason I began tailoring my music to modern day issues several years ago, in an effort to speak to youth who are grappling with a frightening world. The breakdown of the family unit, the fading of the church's influence and the numerous temptations prevalent in our society make it tough for young people to cope, let alone live a Christian lifestyle.

Two years ago I also wrote the book, *Old Enough To Know* in order to address some of these issues.

My open invitation for readers to write to me has helped create a load of letters (averaging 150 a week) in which the writers reveal their innermost problems and intimate details of their lives.

I could quit the music business for a few years to devote all my time to answering my mail, but that's not what I'm called to do.

I have an assistant who reads every single message and refers the urgent ones to me. Every so often, I try to phone these young people. You can't believe what a lift it is for them . . . not because I have that much to say, but because someone cares enough to take the time to call!

Because of my experiences, I feel that many Christians are missing out on a major ministry that lies right under their noses: taking time to be a friend. Many of the young people who write me are simply lonely and struggling with self-esteem. Worst of all, they don't have anyone with whom to share their problems.

But I believe the tide is turning!

From last September through April, I



Photo: Tim Campbell

(Top) From their '88-'89 "Lead Me On" world tour: Michael W. Smith, Amy Grant and Gary Chapman. (Above) The Smiths: Whitney, Debbie, Ryan, Michael and Tyler.

toured again with Amy Grant and Gary Chapman throughout the United States, as well as in Canada, Great Britain, New Zealand and Australia. From what we observed, there are hundreds of thousands of young people who are giving their lives to Christ. Young saints are being separated from the world. Many who had straddled the fence have quit playing games.

As I see and hear about people getting saved or recommitting their lives to the Lord, I'm thrilled and encouraged. My role is to simply rally the troops.

We've already won the war, believers. Let's go out and claim the victory! □

Michael W. Smith has been nominated for 12 Grammy and Dove Awards, winning one Grammy and three Dove honors. Last year, his book, *Old Enough To Know* was nominated for a Gold Medallion Book Award in the youth category. His five albums and two videos have sold more than 1.4 million copies, and the first half of his 1988-89 tour with Amy Grant drew a live audience of more than 500,000.

Since leaving the tour last April, he has been working on a soon-to-be-released Christmas album and preparing for a solo tour this fall. He and his wife, Debbie, have three children: Ryan, 5; Whitney, 3; and Tyler, 1. They are members of Belmont Church in Nashville.

You can write to Michael c/o Reunion Records, P. O. Box 25330, Nashville, Tennessee 37202.

The Last Letter

by Michael W. Smith and
Wayne Kirkpatrick

Sitting alone up in your empty
room,
In the stillness of the night,
where all the many dreams that
used to carry you,
Are no longer in sight
You put your feelings down in black
and white,

A sad disturbing reply
That no, you don't really want to face
another night
So you're saying good-bye
But do you know that you're saying
good-bye to a lifetime

(Chorus)

Well, I've got to tell you there's another
way

To be free, to be complete
But you've got to make it through
another day
And deny your own defeat (don't give
in)

And I'm here to tell you there's another
way

To consume a hungry heart
All the love you need is just a prayer
away
Let it in to where you are

You've made it to the edge of 17
Thinking now you've reached the end
of the line
But there's so much of life that you've
never seen
Now you won't have the time
You say that you don't hear the music
play

So you're ready to give up the dance
Now that nothing really matters anyway
Oh, you give up your chance
But do you know that you give up your
chance at a lifetime

(Chorus)


Well, I've got to tell you there's another
way

To be free, to be complete
But you've got to make it through
another day
And deny your own defeat (don't give
in)

And I'm here to tell you there's another
way

To consume a hungry heart
Jesus is waiting just a prayer away
Let Him in where you are

Words and music by Michael W. Smith and Wayne
Kirkpatrick. Copyright 1986, O'Ryan Music, Inc./Emily
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A surreal painting by David McCall. The scene is set against a deep, dark blue sky. A wooden bridge with a railing arches over a chasm, supported by two thick, weathered stone pillars. The bridge and pillars are built on a dark, jagged, rocky cliffside. A small figure of a person wearing a hat and a light-colored shirt stands on the bridge, looking out. To the right of the bridge, a yellow diamond-shaped sign on a post is visible. The overall style is expressive and textured, with visible brushstrokes and a moody, atmospheric lighting.

A TEEN AT THE END OF THE ROAD

David McCall
San Antonio, Texas

During my thirteenth year I was undergoing such inner turmoil that I no longer wanted to live.

A lot of kids have thoughts of ending their lives during the stressful years of adolescence. Like many of them, the chaos within me had become so compelling that I set a date to commit suicide.

My trouble was not the absence of loving parents or a good home because I had both. But I was a middle child, caught between two older brothers and two younger brothers and a sister. Sure, my mother and father both told me they loved me. But so much attention was going to my older brothers, my only sister and my baby brother, that I felt lost in the shuffle.

I was a kid who required a lot of attention. Yet in a big family no one seemed to notice (or so it seemed to me). The result was that I felt alone, neglected and sad. Since my predominant feelings were depression, worthlessness and loneliness, I began to wonder what the point of life was.

If there was anyone who made a special effort to give me some personal attention, it was my immediate older brother Charlie, who walked me to school every morning. I guess my mother felt that she had Charlie to look after me. She even gave him a handkerchief to wipe my nose when I was little.

I didn't know how much Charlie's companionship meant to me until I reached my lowest point. It was on my thirteenth birthday when I was in the seventh grade. It had been a rough time for me so I had decided to take my life that very day.

The idea that there was no other solution to my adolescent problems, seemed confirmed when I got ready to go to school. Charlie wasn't there. For some reason he had gone on ahead of me. That capped it. I would go through with it after school. Then no one would miss me until it was all over.

Something that is often overlooked when a teenager commits suicide, is that on the surface he or she appears to be getting along quite normally, (allowing for the usual peculiarities of growing through adolescence).

Kids, especially young teens, like to look good — like they have everything under control. I guess I looked that way to my parents, even when I was plotting to leave them forever.

I had even accepted Christ. I am sure my parents looked on this decision as an indication that things were going well with me.

The truth was that I had developed no close relationship with God. Neither had the Word of God become a working reality in my life.

Biblical teaching prohibits the murder of anyone, especially one's self. But the pressures that overruled everything else within me, even my fledgling faith in Christ, were that I was alone, that I was of little or no worth and that I was not aware that anyone particularly cared. No one had ever reached out and really demonstrated it in a way that I could understand and respond to. So I was zeroing in on suicide as the only solution to a miserable existence. The appointed day had arrived.

That day in school was miserable just like all the others had been in the seventh

grade. But added to it was a bizarre inner excitement because the clock was ticking down to the time when my troubles would be over.

However, halfway through the morning there was a knock at my classroom door. I didn't notice anything unusual until the teacher announced, "It's for you, David. Will you come to the door?" I did and was both surprised and frightened because the school principal was in the hall. Then I saw my Dad behind him. The only thing I could think of was that I hadn't done all my morning chores. I hadn't emptied the trash that morning.

"Why are you here, Dad?" I asked, thoroughly confused.

He reached out and put his arms around me. "I came because I wanted to spend some time with my third-born son," he said, and squeezed me a little tighter. "Let's spend some time together, just the two of us." So we spent the rest of the day sighting in our rifles and just having a good time together. I asked him how he managed to get off from work just to be with me.

I'll never forget his answer. He told me, "While I was reading my Bible and having a prayer time this morning, I kept feeling the Holy Spirit prompting me to spend time with my third son. David, I knew that God wanted me to take you out of school today so that we could be together."

My determination to do the awful act I had been planning for that very afternoon melted away. In fact, that one-on-one time with my dad went a long way toward changing my whole outlook. For the first time, I began to feel like somebody who counted for something. My

dad's love for me was demonstrated by him taking the time to let me know that for a precious time, nothing else was more important than me.

Dad followed up on our trip to the rifle range by taking me out to dinner where we were able to talk. He told me how



special I was, that God had created David McCall as a unique person and that I had special gifts and abilities which God had given to me alone, and that God wanted to use these specific abilities.

From that time on, my dad lost no opportunity to let me know that he loved me in an extraordinary way. He continued to

show it by setting aside time just for me on a regular basis.

I now look upon Dad's visit to my school that day as a miracle from God that saved me from suicide. His immediate obedience to the Holy Spirit's prompting proved to be life saving. Yet I

“Dad . . . told me how special I was, that God had created David McCall as a unique person and that I had special gifts and abilities which God had given to me alone, and that God wanted to use these specific abilities.”

David and Wendy enjoying their favorite recreation.

was by no means out of the woods.

The way I felt about myself definitely improved and I never got low enough again to consider suicide. But I was still a highly emotional teen, needing much affection and compassion. My parents' whole schedule could not be redirected to meet my needs alone. There were five

other children, three younger than me. But now Dad seemed to understand my longings and emotional requirements.

However, the following years of my adolescence proved to be a long haul for him as well as me. I would have lapses in my behavior that certainly strained his patience and caused him considerable suffering.

For instance, during my junior year in high school I had five car wrecks in one month. When I totaled the second car in a matter of days, Dad became furious and upset. But he quickly calmed down and put his arm around me and told me that he still loved and supported me.

I believed him and returned his affection. But when I wrecked the next car a little over a week later, he sat me down for a serious talk. He explained my responsibility when entrusted with family property. I ended up getting a job with a construction company working twelve hours a day and turning half of my paycheck over to him to partially cover the repairs. This was a giant step forward for me, proving that I could pay for some of my mistakes.

But the confusion that had not yet worked itself out of my system kept surfacing. During the eleventh grade I flunked all my subjects the first quarter. Dad didn't harass me, but in a loving way helped with a solution. I was placed in a private school to catch up on my grades and learn how to study.

Dad knew that the problem ran deeper, so he started a regular Bible study. After supper the whole family would gather around the table. Even when our friends would come to visit, Dad would invite them to join the family study. He

was trying to teach us that we were God's special children and that He had a plan for each of us. It was vital for us to learn God's Word and pray to learn His will for our lives. A foundation was being laid that would eventually take hold of my life.

When I finally graduated from high school, my life was still without direction. It was then that Dad came into the picture with a deal that I couldn't turn down. He told me that he would pay my way to any college I chose, if I would take one year of Bible training at one of the Torchbearers Bible Schools. So I enrolled at Ravencrest Bible School in Estes Park, Colorado. Its curriculum comprised an intensive year of college-level Bible study.

However, I still didn't buckle down to the kind of work that was expected, spending most of my weekends skiing when I should have been studying. I was away from home for the first time in my life and was testing my freedom.

One night my lack of focus abruptly ended. A telephone call informed me that my older brother, Steve, was dying of leukemia. I was summoned home immediately as he was given only three weeks to live.

Steve knew me like the back of his hand and was close in his walk with the Lord. He was also amazingly sensitive to God's will. When I walked into his room, we both knew that this would be the last time we would be seeing each other in this world. He asked me to sit down on the bed as we talked. Then he cried and put his arms around me.

"David," he said, "I know that everything isn't right between you and God.

That's why I want to tell you my two greatest regrets, just in case I don't see you again." Steve was twenty-five and I was nineteen, but neither of us were embarrassed because we were crying.

He continued, "My first regret is that I have played games with God. I have done my own thing when He was directing me to follow His leading. I call this 'playing around with God' — putting Him off like an immature kid.

"The other thing is that far too often I have settled for second best." He explained to me that "second best" was choosing your own way instead of seeking and following God's will. Finally, Steve looked at me through his tears and pleaded, "David, don't play around with God. And don't ever settle for second best."

It was the last time I saw him. I returned to school and he died a few weeks later. However, that last visit with my older brother accomplished what my Dad had been trying to fulfill through prayer, love and firm parenting ever since he took me out of school the day I planned to kill myself.

From then on I tackled my studies at Ravencrest Bible School with single-mindedness because now I was seeking God and God alone for my life. The folly of skiing and horsing around aimlessly now seemed adolescent.

God had used Steve to call my life to meaning in Christ. This did not instantly iron out all dilemmas I faced, but it did establish the Holy Spirit as my supreme guide and teacher. The Word of God became my real strength and guide. As is written in Psalm 139:16, God had formed me for a definite purpose, even before I



David and Wendy with daughter Ashlei Nicole

was born. I know that now.

After completing my year at Ravencrest, I had my Dad's backing to try for any college I chose. I earnestly sought God's leading and joined my brother, Charlie, at Columbia Bible College in Columbia, South Carolina to prepare to become a youth minister.

The Holy Spirit has convinced me that the most worthy service to God that I can perform is to help kids learn to seek God and God alone for their lives, replacing the turmoil and near extermination that I suffered.

Now, ten years later, I have over two hundred junior high and high school stu-

dents as my special parish in a large Bible-centered church. God is richly blessing this ministry as I seek His guidance in teaching them that it is God alone who matters — now and always.

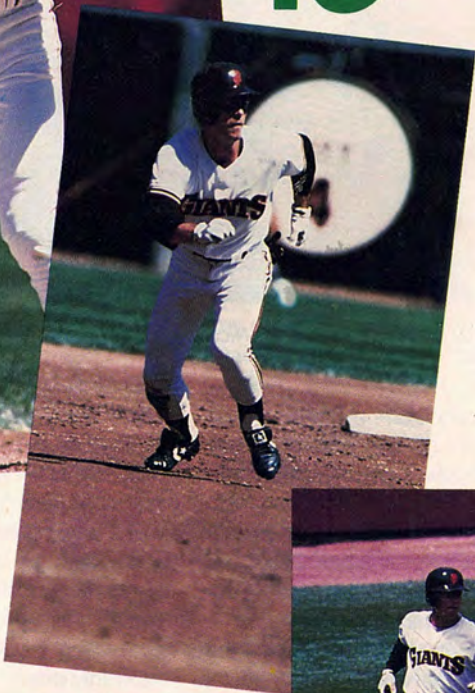
My dad and my brother, Steve, lovingly taught me that I didn't have to prove myself to my earthly father, but that everything would be right if I sought my heavenly one. □

David McCall and his wife, Wendy, have one daughter, Ashlei Nicole. Today David is Youth Pastor at Wayside Chapel, San Antonio. David is a graduate of Columbia Bible College. He is also continuing his studies at Dallas Theological Seminary, San Antonio Branch. His office address is 214 Roletto Drive, San Antonio, TX 78213.



A
ROCK
TO

Brett Butler
Foster City, California



LEAN
ON



I had just completed one of the best seasons of my baseball career. I scored over 100 runs, batted .311, stole 47 bases, and led all American outfielders in fielding percentage. The Cleveland sportswriters named me Man of the Year as the Indians' best performer of 1985.

So that winter at my home in Atlanta, I was relishing the off-season and looking forward to the year ahead. But on January 16, 1986, my baseball future almost came to a sudden end.

While I was playing racquetball that day, the ball smashed into my right eye, breaking my protective goggles. My eye hemorrhaged and my vision was impaired. For five days, I lay on my back in the hospital with patches over both eyes.

I knew my career might be over. But, being a Christian, I put everything in God's hands. I told Him, "If it's Your will for me to do something else, I'll accept that."

When the doctors removed the bandages, they were amazed. My injured eye had cleared up. God had healed me! It was a miracle.

I hadn't always been so submissive to the will of God. Although I grew up attending a Christian church, it wasn't until I was a sophomore in high school that I understood I needed to accept Jesus into my heart in order to go to heaven. That year, at a Fellowship of Christian Athletes conference, I received Christ as my personal Saviour. But total dedication didn't come until later.

After graduating from high school, I played junior varsity baseball at Arizona State University. Then I transferred to Southeastern Oklahoma State University, where I was an All-American in my

junior and senior years. In 1979, I was drafted by the Atlanta Braves and began my climb through their minor league organization. I was named the Most Valuable Player in the International League in 1981.

I saw how God was directing my steps, and turned to Him for help in various matters. I even cut out drinking and tried to stop swearing. But there was one area of my life that hadn't changed — my relationship with women.

I enjoyed wining and dining, and if it led to anything, I figured that was all right. But then I'd feel bad; I'd feel guilty, because the Lord was convicting me of the fact that it was wrong.

As I struggled with this weakness, I asked God to put a Christian woman in my life. So in 1982, in Richmond, Virginia, I met Eveline Balac, who had become a Christian just a few months earlier. Three days after we met, we knew we were getting married.

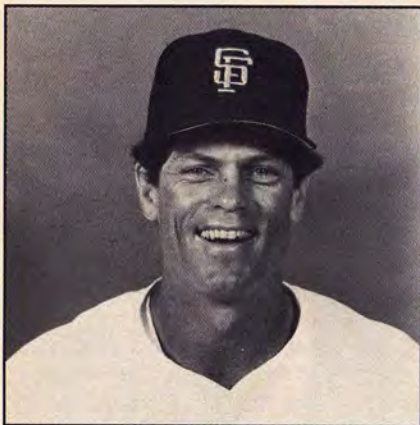
We were married that same year and the Lord solidified that aspect of my life. He dealt with the one weakness I couldn't give up by putting a Christian woman in my life. It's made my entire walk with God stronger.

The Lord has blessed us with four healthy children, and they're all gifts. For me it is essential to be with your family. The constant travel in baseball makes this tougher, but we try to keep the family as close together as possible.

In life we are faced with many tests and trials, and believe me, baseball players are not exempt.

For example, in July 1987, when I was with the Indians, we were playing the Royals in Kansas City, and things really

got out of hand. The previous night, the Royals' Willie Wilson was ejected from the game for tackling our pitcher, Ken Schromm, after a pitch came close to Wilson's head.



turn the other cheek, so I repented, "Lord, forgive me for this. It was a hostile act, not a controlled act." Then, out of that attitude, I did the things that needed to be done.

"I don't know what the future holds after baseball. All I can do is take it one day at a time, and live the way God wants me to live."

San Francisco Giants' Brett Butler

I should have expected trouble as I stepped up to the plate, the first batter of the game that evening. I dug in to face hard-throwing Danny Jackson, and his first pitch sailed behind my head. I thought, okay, the guy threw at me one time. I'll let it go. No big deal.

But then came the second pitch — right behind my head again! Well, the human side of me came out. I charged the mound. I threw some punches. Both Danny and I were ejected from the game.

I paid the price for my outburst. I jammed my thumb during the fight and had to sit out four games. Then I was suspended for three games.

That gave me plenty of time to think about what I had done. I asked myself, as a Christian, how do I handle that situation? I realized that the Lord tells us to

Both Danny and I were on the Board of the Players' Association, and we met after that season at the winter meetings. I went up to him and said, "Danny, forgive me for charging you, because being a Christian, I shouldn't have done that." He apologized too, and we sat down and talked about it. Danny Jackson and I now have become friends. We don't have any hostility towards one another.

I think we can grow a lot from our mistakes. If somebody threw at me again, I'm not saying I would just get up and go to first base. Frankly, I don't know what I'd do. But I feel I would be able to handle it in a better manner than I did.

If you look at athletics as a whole, there's a lot of pressure. Some people turn to drugs, to drinking, to women, or whatever it may be.

But if you have Christ in your life, it stabilizes you, it gives you a rock to lean on. It helps you not to go through the peaks and valleys so much. You still have your ups and downs. But having the Lord in your life enables you to handle those situations.

Philippians 4:13 says, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." In actuality, that verse means, "I can handle everything with Christ's strength. I can handle all the obstacles, all the good times, all the bad times, knowing that Christ is in control."

Some people have a misconception about ballplayers who are Christians. They talk about us being passive. But if Jesus Christ was a ballplayer, He'd have been the best there is. Look at Orel Hershiser or other Christian athletes who play very, very hard. You can't tell me that these are passive individuals!

I've always tried to give it my very best in baseball. But, as I've discovered, even your best is no guarantee of job security.

In 1983, my first full season with the Braves, I was the starting centerfielder and the lead-off man. I set an Atlanta single-season record with 39 stolen bases, led the Major Leagues with 13 triples, and got five hits in one game against Montreal.

But late that season I was traded to the Cleveland Indians. It was a tremendous shock to me, as I'd been with the Atlanta organization since 1979.

With God's help, I was able to let the past go and gave it my all for the Indians. In 1984, I became the first player in Cleveland history to steal more than 50 bases and score more than 100 runs in the same season. I had four solid years

with the Indians, averaging 41 stolen bases a season and leading the Majors in triples again in 1986. But after the 1987 season, we couldn't agree on a contract. So I decided to become a free agent.

I try to let God direct my steps, so I just said, "Okay, Lord, wherever You want me to be." I never expected San Francisco.

But I really enjoy it with the Giants. I grew up across the Bay in Fremont, so it's almost like coming home. In my first season with the new club, I led the league in runs scored and the team in stolen bases.

So, even through the unexpected changes in my career, the Lord has blessed me unbelievably.

My career didn't end the day I was playing racquetball, but it might well have. Being blind for five days is a very humbling experience, but it helped me to put life in perspective.

As it is, I'm not going to be in baseball very much longer — five or six years, maybe. And I don't know what the future holds after baseball. All I can do is take it one day at a time, and live the way God wants me to live. When the game is over, I'll cross that bridge when I come to it.

Looking at my life, of primary importance are my children and my wife. I want to be able to at least give my children what I have — a relationship with Christ, so that they will have the assurance of sins forgiven and an eternal home in heaven.

That's the bottom line — not just for them, but for everyone. □

Fans can write to Brett Butler c/o The Giants, Candlestick Park, San Francisco, California 94124.



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CONVENTIONS

USA NATIONAL CONVENTION

July 4-8, 1989

Opryland Hotel
Nashville, TN
Contact: FGBMFI-Headquarters
P. O. Box 5079
Costa Mesa, CA 92628

SOUTHERN TIER MINI CONV.

July 16, 1989

Owego Treadway Inn
Owego, NY
Contact: Kenneth F. Perkins
Cork Hill Rd.
Little Meadows, PA 18830

SOUTHERN GEORGIA COUPLES' ADV.

July 28-30, 1989

Epworth by the Sea
St. Simon's Island, GA
Contact: Richard Fix
P. O. Box 72
Brunswick, GA 31520

VIRGINIA STATE MEN'S ADV.

July 28-30, 1989

Massanetta Springs
Harrisonburg, VA
Contact: Jim Thorsen
7808 West Boulevard Dr.
Alexandria, VA 22308

MISSISSIPPI REG. CONV.

August 3-5, 1989

Holiday Inn Downtown
Jackson, MS
Contact: Dr. William R. Keller
314 N. Magnolia St.
Laurel, MS 39440

COLUMBIA GORGE CONVENTION

August 3-5, 1989

Exec U Lodge
The Dalles, OR
Contact: Rodney M. Vickers
4300 Hwy. 35
Hood River, OR 97031

B.C. VANCOUVER IS. FAMILY CAMP

August 3-7, 1989

Nanoose Bay Pentecostal Camp
Nanoose Bay, BC
Contact: Dr. Rod Lindsay
2224 Departure Bay Rd.
Nanaimo, BC V9S 3V8 Canada

ST. LOUIS STATEWIDE REG. CONV.

August 10-12, 1989

Marriott Hotel
St. Louis, MO
Contact: Terry Joggerst
4114 Rutherford
St. Louis, MO 63125

WEST. NEW YORK/ROCHESTER RALLY

August 19-20, 1989

Genesee Plaza Holiday Inn
Rochester, NY
Contact: Jim McDonald
79 Norcrest Dr.
Rochester, NY 14617

WEST VIRGINIA STATE CONV.

August 24-25, 1989

Ramada Inn
Fayetteville, WV
Contact: Erwin L. Conrad
215 W. Maple Ave.
Fayetteville, WV 25940

CAROLINAS MEN'S ADV.

August 25-27, 1989

Camp Lure Crest
Lake Lure, NC
Contact: Reidy Lawing
P. O. Box 9027
Charlotte, NC 28213

WORLD CONVENTION

August 29-September 2, 1989

Intercontinental Hotel
Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
Contact: FGBMFI
Caixa Postal 125811-CEP 24731
Santa Izabel - Sao Goncalo
Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

5th NIGERIA NATIONAL CONV.

October 18-22, 1989

Port Harcourt Civic Centre
Contact: Sam Mbata
24 Ikwerre Rd.
P. O. Box 674
Port Harcourt, Nigeria - West Africa

CONVENTIONS PUBLISHED IN THIS ISSUE WERE APPROVED ON OR BEFORE APRIL 21, 1989.

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If you have a testimony that will glorify God and bring others to Jesus through Voice, your are invited to request guidelines from the Editorial Department, P. O. Box 5050, Costa Mesa, CA 92628.

6 STEPS TO SALVATION

Men still cry, "What must I do to be saved?" The Bible provides a clear answer.

1. Acknowledge "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). "God be merciful to me a sinner" (Luke 18:13).

2. Repent "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3). "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out" (Acts 3:19).

3. Confess "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved" (Romans 10:9).

4. Forsake "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord. . . for he will abundantly pardon" (Isaiah 55:7).

5. Believe "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:16).

6. Receive "He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name" (John 1:11, 12).

Why not make your eternal decision now: "Lord Jesus, I believe You died for my sins and I ask Your forgiveness. I receive You now as my personal Saviour and invite You to manage my life from this day forward. Amen."

Write us to tell of your decision. We'll send you a booklet, "Now That You've Received Christ." Our mailing address: FGBMFI/Box 5050/Costa Mesa, CA 92628.

CHAPTER OUTREACH

Requests come in daily to start new chapters. If you have this burden laid on your heart and see the vision for your community, write for complete information to: Chapter Department / FGBMFI / P. O. Box 5050 / Costa Mesa, CA 92628.

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WHO WE ARE Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship International was founded in 1952 by Demos Shakarian to reach men for Jesus. One year later, God gave him a vision of the people of every continent, revealing that the ministry of the Fellowship would result in people everywhere being brought to Jesus and linked in loving community.

That vision is becoming a reality through the Fellowship's ministries, now touching ninety-eight nations and transcending denominational, racial and cultural barriers. Men interested in participating in this exciting end-time ministry are invited to write: Chapter Department / FGBMFI / P. O. Box 5050 / Costa Mesa, CA 92628.

CONTENTS

Nashville and Music: Is There Life After Success?

Two different young men, from two different small towns, came to Nashville. They came with ambition, dreams and talent. Years later they were both honored with Grammys and other prestigious music awards. Ricky Skaggs and Michael W. Smith know about overcoming adversity and then living with success.

(Cover photo by Beth Gwinn)

2

Diary of a Loner

Rusty Comstock was a troubled youth who grew up to be a troubled adult. His personal diary helps us understand how the inner turmoil that led to crime-drugs-booze and utter aimlessness was finally resolved.

8

A Fisher of Men.....	2	Conventions.....	35
Diary of a Loner.....	8	Six Steps to Salvation.....	36
Giving Up the Glory.....	18	Chapter Outreach.....	36
A Teen at the End of the Road.....	24	International Directors.....	37
A Rock to Lean On.....	30		
