

Alêtheia Christian Fellowship

September 29, 2019

“The Miracle of Grace”

8:00 ~ Service - Communion is for all Christians

9:30 ~ Fellowship & Adult Sunday school

10:30 ~ Service with the King's Kid's - Communion is for all Christians

NEWS

Chili Cookoff and Pumpkin Palooza, Saturday, October 19, at 6:00pm

330 N. Somers Rd. (Mail: PO Box 10626) Kalispell, MT 59904~ (406) 755-1776

Visit the website ~ www.myaetheia.com ~ Hear a sermon at

aletheiachristianfellowship.podomatic.com

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Emails: pastor@myaetheia.com, secretary@myaetheia.com, kids@myaetheia.com

I'm not giving my testimony. I'm giving _____ testimony concerning _____.

1) If you like me more after today...

2) If you like me less after today...

Luke 15:11-32 ~ ¹¹NIV Jesus continued: “There was a man who had two sons...
³²But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.”

3) We're not going to glorify sin...

A) You may not get a chance to _____.

B) You may not be capable of _____.

C) Even if you do, you will be plagued for the rest of your life with the _____ of your actions, the associated _____, _____ and _____, not to mention the _____.

Negative versus positive _____.

Acts 7:59–8:1a ~ ⁵⁹NASB They went on stoning Stephen as he called on the Lord and said, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!” ⁶⁰Then falling on his knees, he cried out with a loud voice, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them!” Having said this, he fell asleep. ^{1a}Saul was in hearty agreement with putting him to death.

Acts 9:1–5 ~ ¹NASB Now Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest, ²and asked for letters from him to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, both men and women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. ³As he was traveling, it happened that he was approaching Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him; ⁴and he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?” ⁵And he said, “Who are You, Lord?” And He said, “I am Jesus whom you are persecuting.”

Luke 5:8 ~ ⁸NASB But when Simon Peter saw that, he fell down at Jesus’ feet, saying, “Go away from me Lord, for I am a sinful man!”

I Corinthians 15:9&10a ~ ⁹NASB For I am the least of the apostles, and not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. ^{10a}But by the grace of God I am what I am.

Alêtheia ~ Testimony Part 1 ~ 092919 ~ Transcript



At the church camp it became clear to me that we have a lot of people at Alêtheia that don't know much about me, or the church, and so it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to me, to remedy that through a couple of sermons - today a bit about me, and next week, a bit about the church. That's the plan...

The purpose is three-fold... Of course, to better get us all on the same page going forward, it's nice to know where we've been and so, how we got where we're at.



Also, it's very good to remember the faithfulness of the Lord. The Israelites built their Ebenezer as an encouragement to their faith – a reminder of the great things God had already done. We need to remember.

The other purpose is to glorify the Lord. He lifted me out of the miry clay, and He built this church - both belong to Him, such as they are...

So, this first part is basically a personal testimony. Personal testimonies are big in many denominations and sort of taboo in others, but here's the deal most people don't get, whether they like testimonies, or not... I'm not giving my testimony. I'm giving God's

testimony as it happens to pertain to my life. It's not about me, it's about Him.

That's the first thing to keep in mind, and I've got a few more ground rules before we start. 1) If you like me more after today, you have missed the point... Like Jesus more after today. 2) If you like me less after today, while understandable, you have shown yourself to be the older son in the Parable of the Prodigal... Guard your heart.

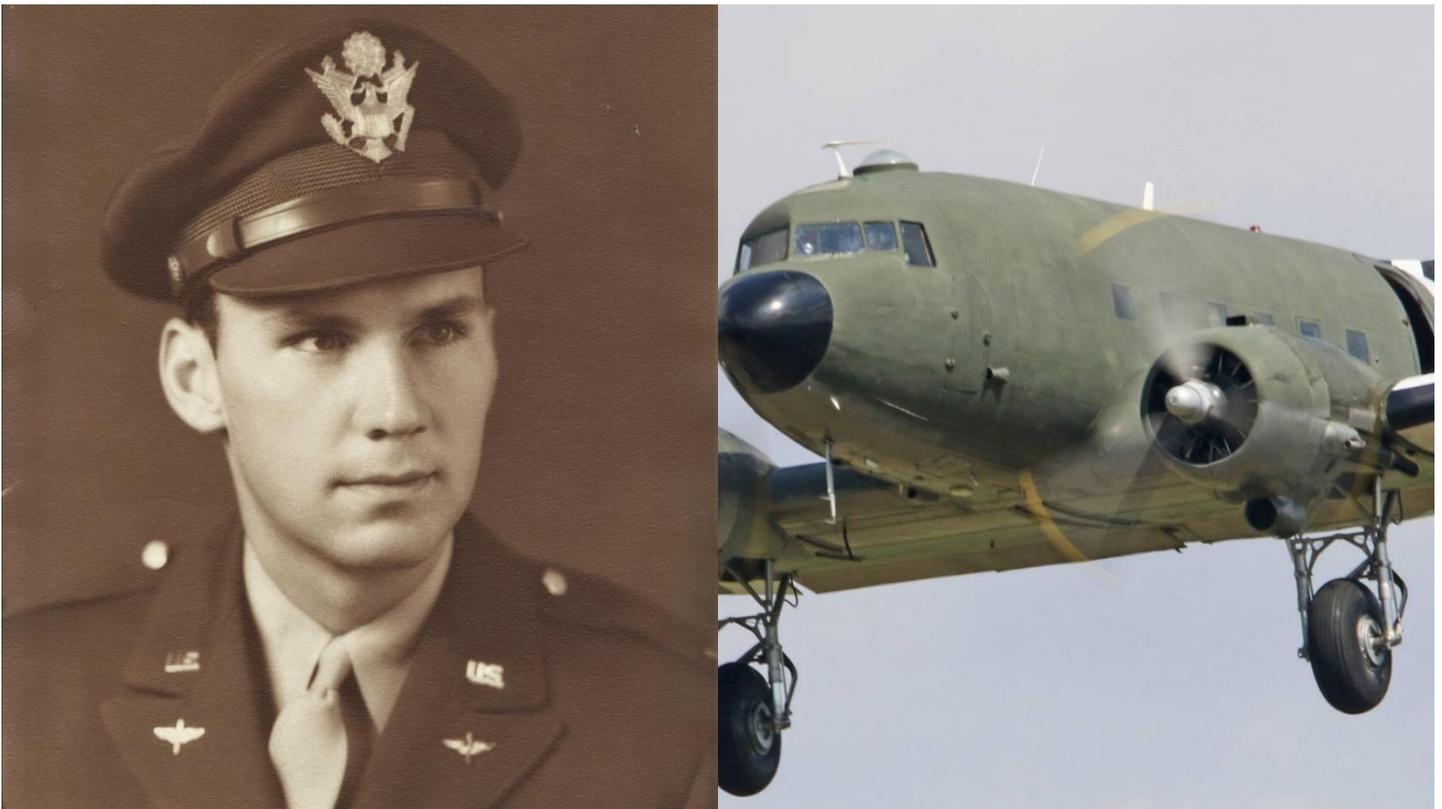
3) Please don't miss the point by thinking that my sinful behavior was fun, or cool, or in any way acceptable. We're not going to glorify sin. Beyond that, don't get the ridiculous idea that you can do the types of things I did, and get away with it, just because it seems like I did. A) You may not live long enough to repent. It was a miracle that I did. B) Even if you do live long enough to repent, the psychological toll sin takes may harden your heart beyond repair. C) Even if you have the time, inclination and ability to repent later, you will be plagued for the rest of your life with the consequences of your actions, the associated pain, fear and guilt, not to mention the memories of your vile transgressions.

My friends, no matter how close to God you become, how well you're finally able to accept His forgiveness, or even how well, through time and prayer, you're finally able to forgive yourself... You will never be able to forget how you hurt Him.



I have had Christians say to me, "I wish I had a great, dramatic testimony like yours." No, you don't. I have a negative testimony where God had to rescue me from my own stupidity and arrogant pride. Instead of that, cultivate a great, dramatic testimony like Justin and Rebekah are doing, like so many in this room have done.

Let God's testimony concerning you, be about His faithfulness as you boldly step out in faith and minister His Gospel to others. Build a dramatic life with Him that is a positive testimony where God rescued you from the stupidity and arrogant pride of others.



My dad was a combat pilot in WWII. He dropped paratroopers behind enemy lines. He became an airline pilot after the war, eventually rising to Vice President of Flight Operations for the old Frontier, that was bought by Continental, which later bought United. I ended up flying with guys at the end of their careers who flew with my dad at the beginning of their careers.

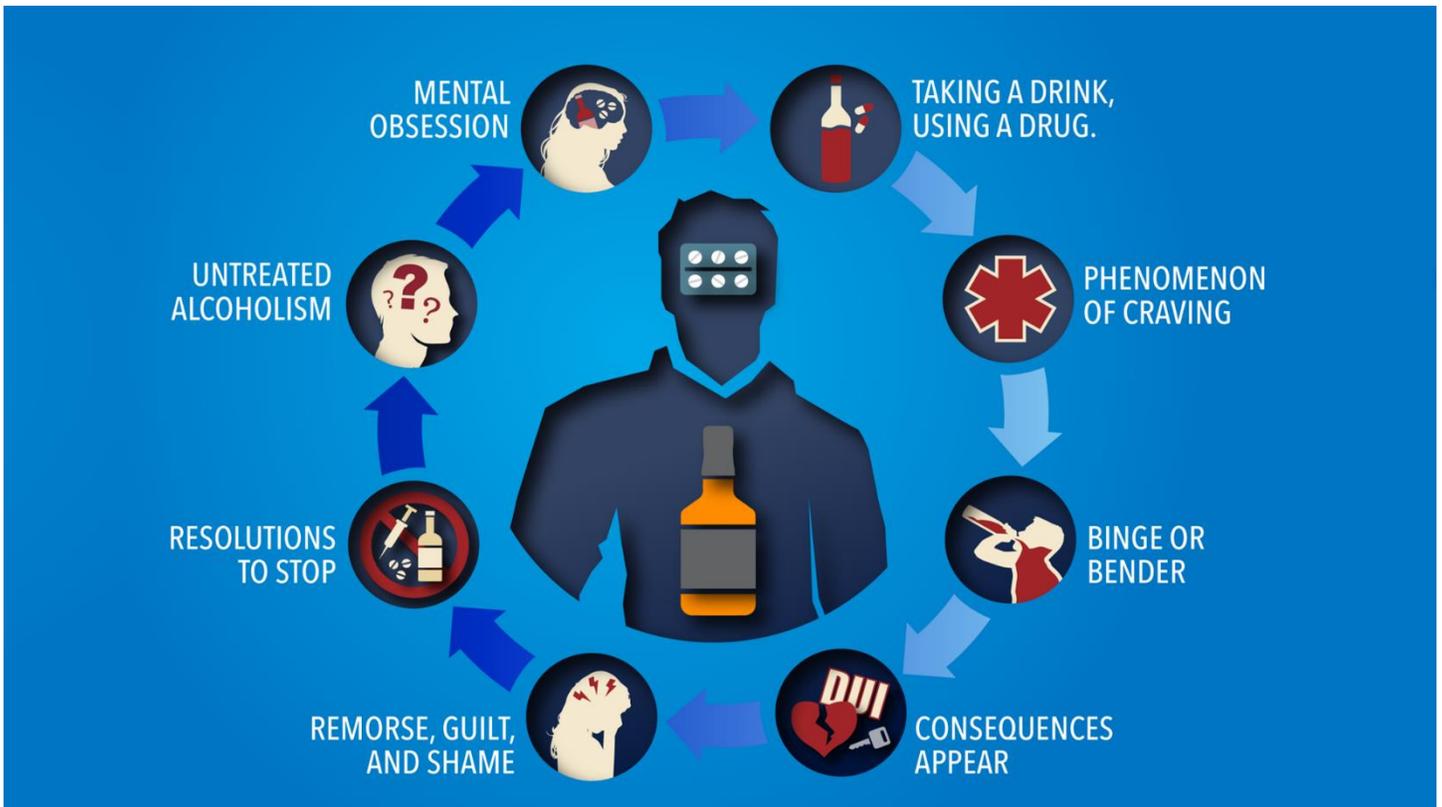


He was the product of the original Mormon pioneers. I joke, that Rob and I are basically Mormon royalty - it's not far off - probably at least Mormon nobility. Our ancestors arrived in Utah in 1847. Our great, great grandmother raised six daughters by herself in a one room cabin on the Green River in what is now Wyoming. Our great, great grandpa, John Scott, yes that's where I get my name, was the personal bodyguard of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young, was in charge of the Mormon militia, was a Mormon enforcer, known as an Angel of Death and helped found several towns in the intermountain west.

Mormonism, like all cults, is very difficult to leave, but especially for Mormons like those in our family, because they take such immense pride in the accomplishments of their ancestors.



Our mom is half Italian and comes from a long line of Catholics, probably going back to the beginning of the Church. While I had some Mormon influence growing up, I was raised as a Catholic, attended Catholic school for a couple of years and served as an Altar Boy.



Bluntly, honestly, Rob and I had a dysfunctional childhood. Our dad, as great as we thought he was and as much as we loved him, was a dedicated alcoholic. If you haven't had first-hand experience with an alcoholic or addict, you just can't understand.

He would often fly a multi-day trip and just not come home at the end of it. Sometimes for several days he would binge drink in a shady motel somewhere.

Mom didn't take that too well. Things got even more contentious when she was saved and filled with the Holy Spirit. It's a great story, but it's hers to tell, not mine. As a result of her new Christian sensibility, she

got rid of all of Dad's booze. He had a full bar in our house - I mean, like a bar, fit for a bar, and she put his bar out of business.

Dad didn't take that too well. As the tensions increased, there was often talk of separation or divorce, and there were frequent moves. We lived in 9 different houses, in 4 different states, and I attended 8 different schools in 8 completely different school districts, starting all over, each time, without knowing a single soul there.

My childhood was in constant state of flux, without any real sense of stability.



In 1974, Mom, searching for answers, took us to many strange Charismatic groups and was finally taken in by a false prophet charlatan and formally separated from our dad and took us to be part of what was a Jim Jones, David Koresh type of full-blown cult. If you haven't had first-hand experience with a cult leader, you just can't understand.



About two years in, mom realized the deception and reunited with dad, and we all moved to Kalispell.

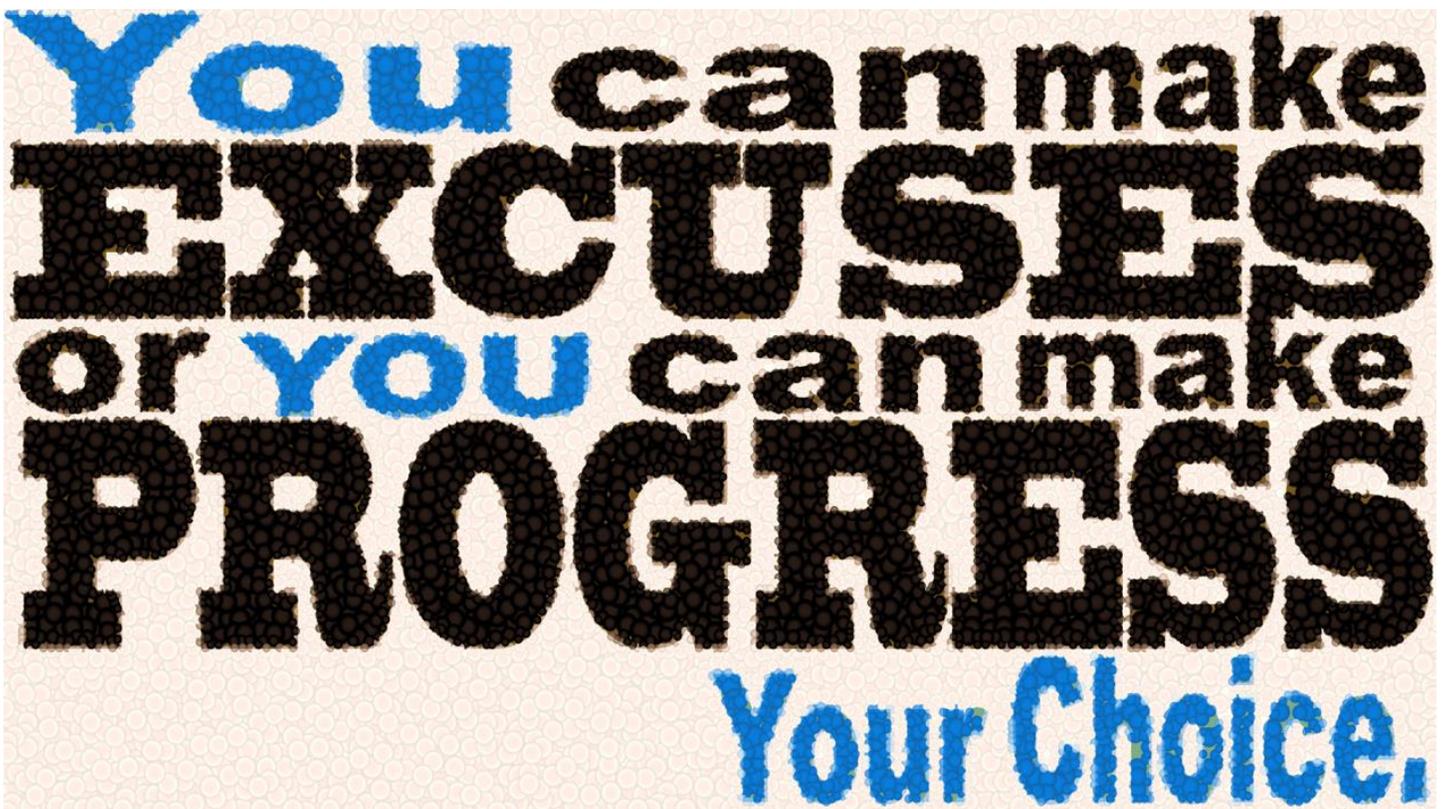
We attended Christian Center, Grissom was the pastor, his son Gordon, was in my class. Later, Bob Ross became pastor, and switched from using the KJV, to using the new NASB.



**KEEP
CALM
AND
READ THE
HOLY BIBLE
KJV-1611**

Cries of outrage were heard around to globe - Elders walked out and the church split. That nonsense, coupled with all the deceit and deception of Mormonism, Roman Catholicism, Signs and Wonders Pentecostalism and manipulative brain-washing cultism, then coupled with the hypocrisy I saw in supposedly correct Christianity... People acting like saints in church and devils outside... My own dad, by that time appointed as a church Elder, still binge drinking... Still staying away from home, drunk out of his mind, for days at a time. Let's just say, I was done with Christianity.

Add to that, the continuing drama at home and me going through that transition from child to adult, with all the uncertainty, concern and fear that brings... I was kind of a mess. I would say an angry mess. I quit going to church, started chewing tobacco and drinking in local bars... I was 16.

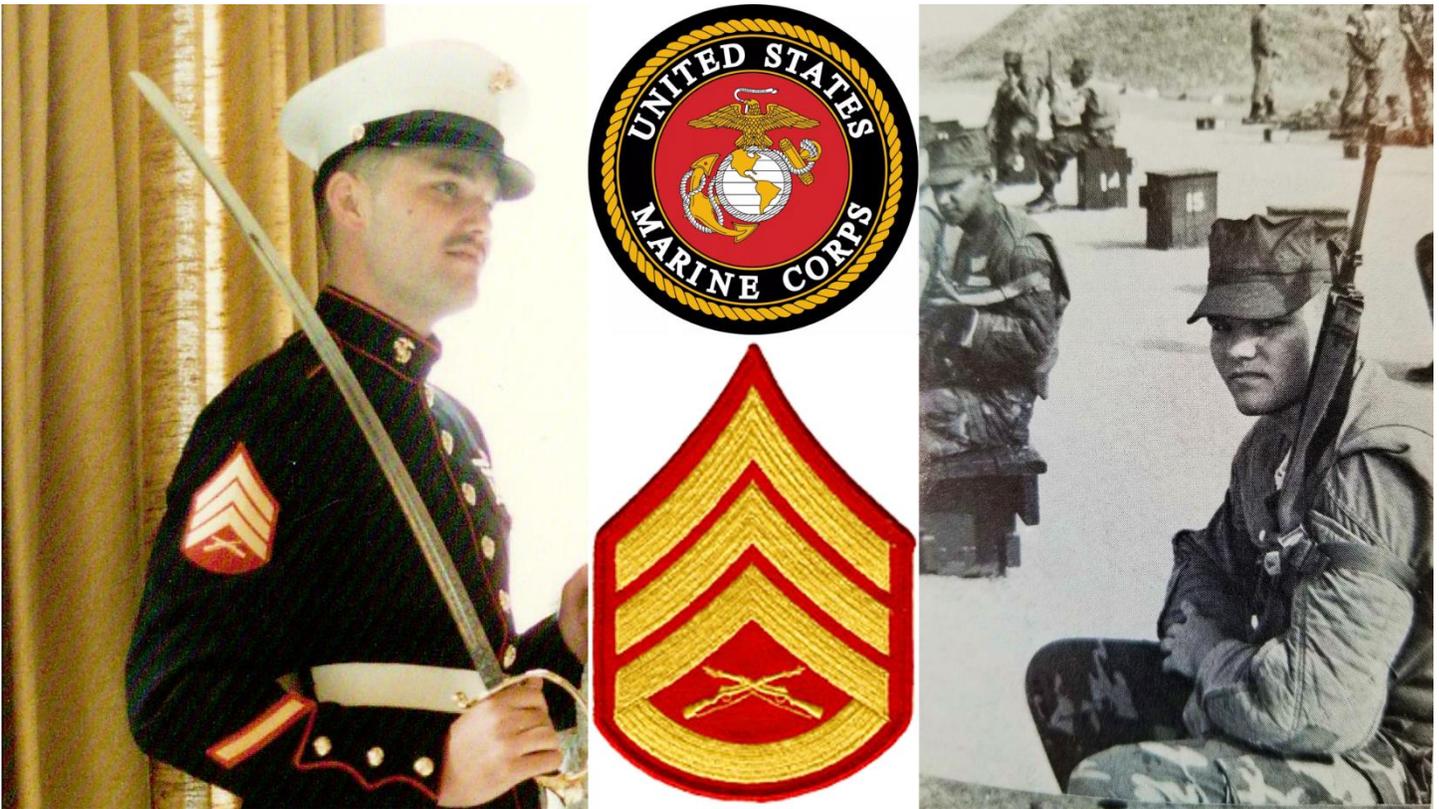


You can make
EXCUSES
or **YOU** can make
PROGRESS
Your Choice.

I say all of that to give you a feel for where I was at as a young man. I don't say any of it as an excuse for anything. I have fully forgiven anything there may have been to forgive, I take full responsibility for my actions and make no excuses at all.

No matter how bad your childhood, no matter what trauma, what neglect, what disappointment, what pain... No matter how unfair you think life has treated you, at some point, you must stand up and take ownership of your actions and reactions.

Until you do, you will remain that scared, hurt, little child, no matter how old you get.



In the late 1970's descent jobs were hard to come by in this valley and so, at 18, Tom ushered me into the Marine Corps. Thanks Tom.

Two of the Pilskalns boys talked to me about joining the Marine Corps - they both served - God bless them for their sacrifice. I tried to talk them out of it. When that failed, I tried to talk them into joining the Reserves instead of active duty - it didn't work.

I spent 7 years as an active duty Marine. I was promoted quickly. By the time I left, I was an E-6, Staff Sergeant, I had a wealth of experience leading Marines and I had a Bachelor of Science Degree (Largely paid for by them). With that level of success, why didn't I enthusiastically recommend the Marine Corps to Hans and Atticus?

It's hard. It's very hard and it changes you forever. Former Marines oftentimes seem like normal people - we're not. I'm just telling you something is changed deep down inside, and you never come back from that. As a junior Marine life is very hard and I was angry.

Shortly after becoming a Marine, my parents finally divorced, and both rather quickly remarried. Most people think that divorce and remarriage is much easier on adult kids – it's not. Most research show just the opposite.



All I know, is I didn't take it well. Not only had I given up on organized religion, not only was I so angry with life I could spit, now my disillusionment with God turned to furious rage.

The divorce was the final straw for me. How could God be so uncaring, or so incompetent or so vindictive and mean-spirited? Not only did I hate God, I wanted to hurt Him. How do I know that evil is at war with Christians? Because I began to actively oppose Christians. I didn't like them. I thought they were weak and stupid.

It's weird, but I was so enraged all the time, all I could see was the bad in my life and I attributed it all to God.

Honestly, in my mind, every achievement, every positive thing was made possible only through my hard work and ingenuity, while every failure, every negative thing, every injury, slight and injustice, was directly due to God's mismanagement or, more and more, His direct action against me personally to make me suffer and to see me squirm.

To me, God was a big kid with a magnifying glass burning an ant caught outside of the pile and I was that ant.



In 1986, I transitioned from the enlisted ranks of the Marine Corps to the officer corps of the Air Force.

You'd think that being an Air Force officer flying fighters that I would have been grateful, happy, or at least content. I wasn't. For whatever reason, I always had the attitude that no matter what I achieved, it wasn't enough. I always felt that God was holding me back from my full potential, and honestly, I was so bitter, so full of anger, so outraged when things didn't go my way, that I invented ways to be evil.

I got to where I thoroughly enjoyed being good at being vile, because I felt like I was getting back at God – punishing Him for ruining my life.

While the Air Force could never be confused with the Marine Corps, for aviators strapping themselves into fighters, it was as close as it could be. In both cases, the tip of the spear - the warfighters of America. In both cases, high testosterone, high aggression, high competition, check your slack at the door, environments.

As such, my harsh demeanor, my readily accessible violence, and my ever-present rage, was largely appreciated and even somewhat encouraged.

On March 10, 1992, Rob's 29th birthday, God decided that He had, had enough of my snotty attitude.



Two quick background facts: 1) I was living with a woman, nearly 10 years my junior. We were engaged and we were living in sin and I take full responsibility – it was my doing – I was definitely the one to blame.

2) The Air Force had revamped the way they did business, putting all the aircraft maintenance units directly under the control of the operational squadrons.

Previously, a Master sergeant was the number 3 dude in his maintenance unit. A couple of officers were technically in charge, but this guy ran the show, He had all the stripes and he was the Big Kahuna, directly supervising maybe 300 enlisted maintainers.



In our flying squadron we had about 60 officers. Putting Maintenance under Operations, instantly took the Big Kahuna from number 3 to number 63. He didn't like it. None of the enlisted guys liked it, and they showed us, by doing shoddy maintenance work on the jets.



So, on March 10, 1992, my best friend Smokey and I were flying together, in separate jets – a two-ship sortie. We were both instructing young pilots in our respective fighters – as I say a two-ship formation. It was standard fare.



We were to take off together as the sun was setting, fly to a tanker for air-refueling, continue to a holding point and then, in the pitch-black night, roll into a steep dive, aim for the rocks and pull up at the last moment to fly a low-level route through the mountains at 600 mph and 400 feet above terra firma to our intended target where we would each drop a single bomb and go home.



By the time we started the low level, the fighter I was flying was already falling apart. So many things had quit working by then, it was ridiculous. Because there are backup systems and work arounds, we were able to continue, but the effort and stress required to keep all the parts moving in the same general direction was rising exponentially.



As we flew through the canyons in the dark, well below the rims, peaks and ridges, we were completely reliant on our radar to show us the terrain.

Systems continued to fail. It had become unsafe and we should have aborted and returned to base, but retreat wasn't in my nature, so I pushed - stupidly, typically, I pushed.

My student was getting more and more nervous... He asked a few times if we should climb out and go home. I insisted we keep going. We must accomplish the mission!

By the time we got to the range we had lost every primary system associated with navigation, weapons calculations and release, and all the low-level sensors, radars and displays.

The only thing I had left was a small strip map, a stopwatch and our main mapping radar. I knew I'd never see the target in the radar in time, so I made some calculations and drew a grease pencil line on the radar with an azimuth and bearing from an offset point I would see.

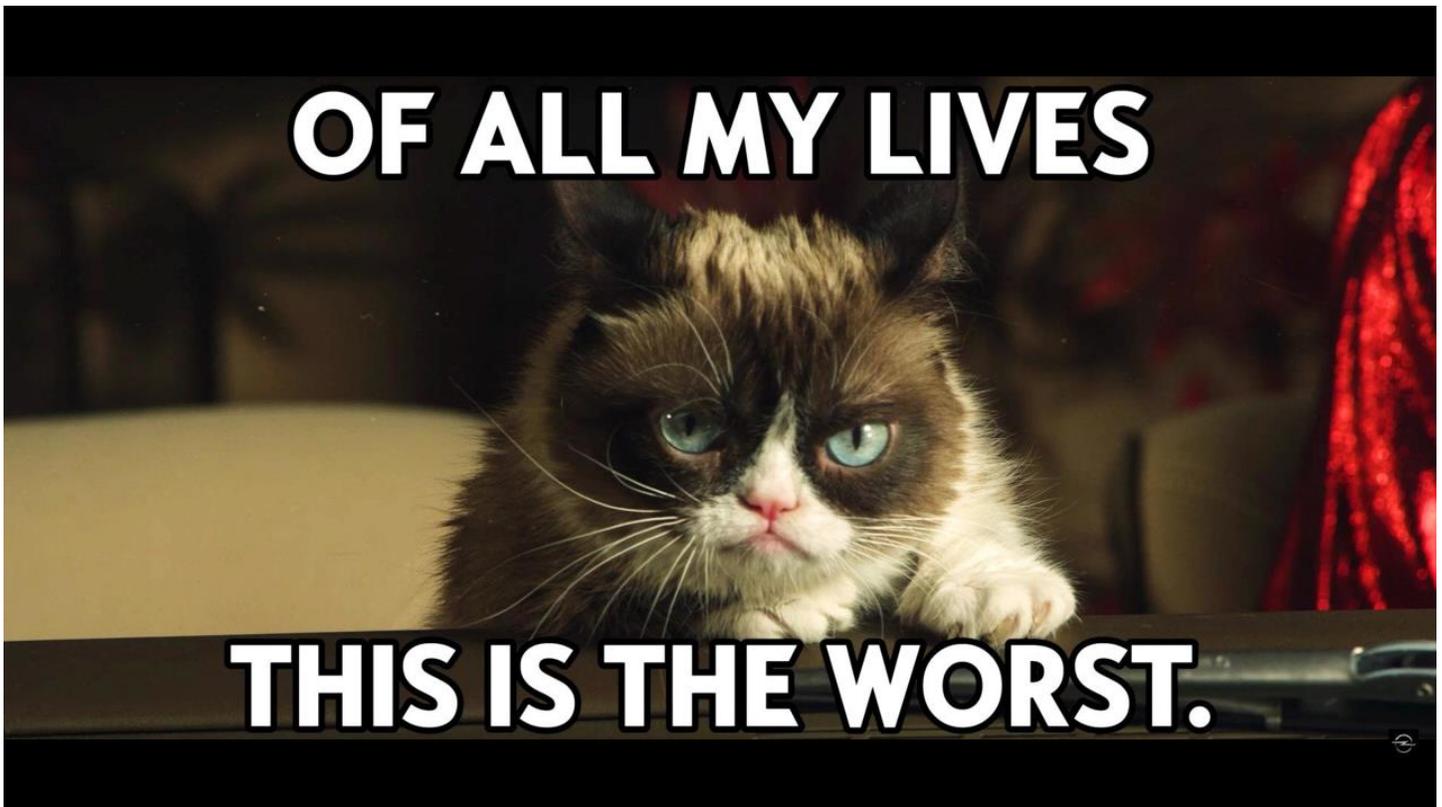
If we could maneuver the jet onto the correct run-in line, be at the right altitude above the target and be at the correct speed, accelerating to just under 700 mph, then when the offset point hit my mark, I would start my watch, and 1.2 seconds later push the pickle button, and voila.

Just as we got all lined up, I saw the offset point tracking down the screen towards my mark... And then the screen went blank - the radar rolled over and completely died.

Now, we were just a few hundred feet above the ground going nearly 700 mph, and completely, 100%

blind. Both protocol and common sense said you had to climb immediately. My student wasted no time and started to initiate the climb and I predictably yelled at him to stay the course. We were a few feet higher and a knot or two slower, I made my best guess and I pickled off the bomb. Then I allowed the climb to safety.

As we did, the ranger told us the bomb had impacted off the range. I'm saying the bomb - fortunately a practice bomb, but still a 25-pound hunk of metal, with an explosive marking charge, flying just below the speed of sound, landed in a farmer's field, in the middle of the night.



I was displeased. I didn't react well. Like the divorce earlier, everything came to a head in that moment. All the stress, all the anger, all the resentment... I exploded in a rage and started punching the dash of the airplane. I then turned my attention to the radar and punched it. It was a wimpy punch, because my control stick was between the screen and me, but the glass shattered, nonetheless.

I was surprised, a little taken aback, but so furious, I quickly got over my shock and continued to boil.

Once on the ground, the procedure was to call maintenance on the radio and tell them about any

issues with the jet and then they would tell you where to park, so they could work whatever was wrong.

I got on the radio, gave them a laundry list of discrepancies that went on and on. finishing with the radar screen is cracked. There was a long pause - I'm sure the guy was trying to write it all down.



I was, who I was, and so, I keyed the mike again, and said, “Are you going to give us a parking spot, or do you want me just to taxi this thing up to the front gate and put it on a pedestal?”

The Master Sergeant I mentioned earlier who was number 3 and now 63, was listening in and was not amused. He had been around long enough to know jets and to know my reputation, He quickly surmised the truth about the radar screen and had his chance to get back at an officer.

He was smart though and played dumb. Later, when I was filling out the aircraft log, he cleverly got me to write in a reason the glass was broken. I was too angry to understand his ploy. I wrote that the map light had come loose while pulling "G's" and had hit the screen.

I wasn't going to tell them the truth, but I honestly intended to tell my Squadron Commander what happened the next day. I figured he'd yell at me, make my life miserable for a few weeks, and that would be the end of it. I was wrong.



That night the Master Sergeant called his buddy who was the Chief Master Sergeant of the Numbered Air Force. This guy worked directly for the Three-star General in charge of several bases, including ours.

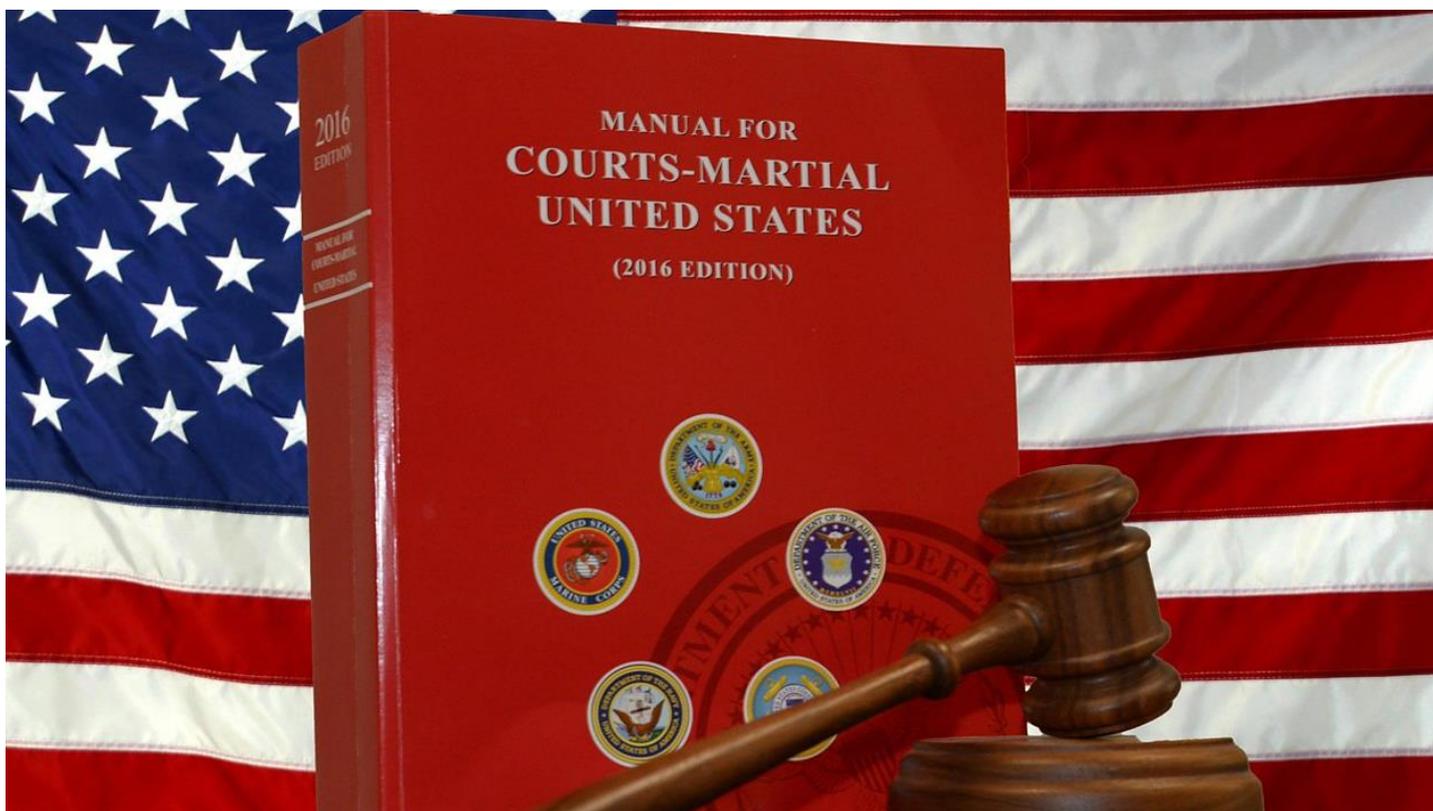
At our base, the Wing Commander, a Bird Colonel, was the guy in charge of the four fighter squadrons, including mine. The only thing on his mind, was the same thing that is on every Colonel's mind, and that's getting a star. The guy who would largely decide if the Colonel would ever be a General, was this Three-star.

The General had called early in the morning to chew out the Colonel, demanding to know why he had to

hear from his Master Sergeant that some Captain was over there at Canon AFB, breaking his airplanes.

Right after that call ended, I got a call. Not only does it roll downhill, in the military it rolls downhill fast. I was ordered to report to the Wing Commander immediately. I poured myself into my flight suit and headed for the base but detoured to the home of my student pilot first. I didn't intend to tamper with him as a witness, I just needed to find out what he was going to say.

He told me that he didn't know how the screen got broken and that he would stick with that story. I then went to see the Wing King and was met by Judge Advocate. He was a Lieutenant Colonel in charge of Base Legal. He was the Wing Commander's legal counsel, the chief prosecutor and as the commander of Base Legal was in command of all the lawyers, both the prosecuting and the defense attorneys.



He told me that he had advised the Colonel not to talk to me, but rather open a formal Article 32 investigation into charges for a General Court's Marshal. It's like convening a grand jury to see if there's enough evidence for a federal trial. The potential charges were Conduct unbecoming an officer, destruction of government property and falsifying an official government log – the aircraft logbook. He went on to say, that he would personally be handling my prosecution and would press for the maximum punishment possible. What was the max? Federal felony conviction, loss of rank, 10 years hard labor and a dishonorable discharge on the other end. Why, you might ask?

In the Air Force, if you don't fly airplanes, even if you're a doctor, or a lawyer, you are at best, a second-class citizen – particularly in a fighter wing. This guy was thrilled to have an opportunity to stick it to an arrogant flyboy. As for the Colonel, he would go along with destroying me, to show the General he was worthy of promotion.

I was then read my rights. If you've never been read your rights for real - it is a sobering experience.

They told me I could go to base legal where a young captain there would act as my defense attorney. Yes, my assigned defense attorney worked directly for the dude who was so eager to prosecute me he was literally all a twitter, buzzing with excitement for the chance.

I was taken off the flight schedule awaiting the outcome. They did the same to my student in an effort to break him. Young fighter pilots want to fly more than anything else, yet this guy never flinched.

I'm skipping a lot of details, but basically, I had politely declined representation from Base Legal, and had

requested an attorney directly from the headquarters of the Air Force. The wheels of justice turn slowly. It took three months for my attorney to meet face-to-face with me. Up till then we'd talked occasionally on the phone, but I was so paranoid about my line being tapped, I never told him that I was basically guilty.

Friday afternoon we got together for the first time and I spilled the beans. He was shocked, having assumed that I was innocent all this time. He finally just blurted out, "Are you stupid?"

He said as an officer you must testify, or the panel will know your guilty for sure, and since we're both officers and I know the truth, I cannot allow you to lie on the stand. You're done.

The only thing we can do now, is go to the Wing Commander and confess. Plead insanity for dragging the investigation out and hope for some leniency. I think I can talk them into three years in prison.

I freaked and told him I couldn't do that. We finally agreed that since it was already late Friday and the Commander was probably getting ready to leave – I should take the weekend, get my affairs in order and

that he would meet me in the Wing King's office first thing Monday morning.

I drove home in a daze and considered my options. What I knew for sure was that I wasn't going to confess. I'd been a Marine, so prison didn't scare me, but the dishonor was unacceptable. I may have been an idiot, but I was an idiot who had done his best to serve the nation for 13 years and I wasn't going to go out like that.

I thought of running – living in a cave in the wilderness for the rest of my life – it was a foolish notion, not much better than confessing. As I saw it, there was only one choice. By then, I had been very close to several friends who had successfully committed suicide, even watched a guy do it. I also felt like I had cheated death on numerous occasions and now it was my time to pay up.

Resolved, I had one final task and that was to get rid of the woman I was living with. She was sweet and still fairly innocent, despite my efforts to corrupt her. I did not want her to have to deal with my mess.

I went home and told her that she had hitched her boat to a sinking ship and ordered her to pack her junk and go home. She became the second person in a few hours to ask me if I was stupid. I did everything I could to send her away, until she was crying and begging, and then I relented.

My plan was to get alone during the weekend. Try as I might, I could not get away from that girl – she was stuck to me like Velcro. I'd say I'm going to run an errand and she'd say let's go. By Sunday night I decided to take my pistol to work Monday and kill myself on base.

As I laid in bed Sunday night, I said, God, if You're out there and You can get me out of this, I'll serve You for the rest of my life.

As the idea of God entered my thinking, my life passed before my eyes – just like they say when you're about to die. What stunned me was how far I had fallen into vile blasphemous behavior. I really was shocked at how the good little Catholic Altar Boy had become a man who had literally broken all Ten Commandments.

People often say, that they have broken them all. Friends, there is a world of difference between taking away a person's life and thinking about it... Or taking away another man's wife and thinking about it. Every commandment literally broken.

I didn't apologize, but I didn't feel too good about it either. The next day, I kissed the girl and drove to the base with my Glock 10mm in the glove box. I decided I'd stop at the Squadron and say goodbye to a few friends and then go out to my car and finish what I thought had to be done.

As I stepped into the building, I was surprised to see my Commanding officer standing there. He said follow me and even though I wanted to bolt for my car, something wouldn't let me. It was almost like someone else was driving by body following after him into his office.

He had me sit, something made me bend my legs and sit. He said, "I just got off the phone with the Wing Commander." I tried to run but couldn't move. He said, "The investigation has been concluded, you're completely exonerated and you're back on the flying schedule, get to work."

You could have pushed me over with a feather. The military is all about inertia – once you get a ball rolling downhill, no one stops it, not until it has run its course. There was no way that could happen. It was utterly impossible.

I stumbled back to my office and sat down behind my desk. After I gathered a bit of composure, I said out loud, Man, I've got to hand it to You God, I'm impressed! That was unbelievable.

At that moment the room filled with a supernatural presence. I knew instantly and precisely Who it was. The Lord Jesus Christ entered that room and began slowly moving towards me.

As He got closer, I got further away, until I was literally standing with my back against the wall.

I don't know if I said it out loud or in my mind, but I remember trying to push Jesus away saying, A deal is a deal, I'll serve you in whatever way You want, but we can't be friends. I know I'm evil, I know I crossed a line back there in my past, I know I'm going to Hell, I know that You can't forgive me... I just relived my past last

night... I'm well aware that I'm beyond redemption, way beyond love.

Jesus moved forward until He embraced me fully – He enveloped me with love and forgiveness – there wasn't even a hint of holding back, no displeasure, no judgment - it was complete acceptance and renewal. It was I love you and I want you to be healed – I want you to be whole.



I don't serve Him because of the deal I made. I serve Him, because who wouldn't after that?



If you hadn't guessed, that girl that wouldn't give me any space to kill myself was Mariah and we got married as soon as we were able.

My question is this... How much more did my salvation cost Jesus, than your salvation cost Him? Shouldn't we all serve Him with the exact same devotion?

