

Youbert Davood

March 2005

I have been attending Love Lifted Me Recovery meetings for about 5 months now, and I can truly say that it was the turning point in my life. I first heard about it through my friend Vince. During the first couple of months there was no genuine change in me. In fact, I remember showing up stoned a few times, being annoyed by some of the others in attendance, or just not showing up at all. I had been smoking weed (marijuana) heavily, and on a daily basis, since the age of 16, and I've just turned 31 years old. I often ate 'shrooms, and for a while was snorting crank and cocaine. It was like a bandage for all the emotional scars I received as a child. Ever since I was a baby, I watched my alcoholic dad punch, slap, and on several occasions, stab my mother for no reason. He was in and out of prison, jail, and rehab. He would smack my brother and me around and teach us how to fight. He would often come home covered with blood, having beat up and stabbed people he came across who stared at him too long, or said the wrong thing to him. Every day, he would threaten to kill us and himself. He was a ruthless, vicious monster. He would bring women home and have sex with them while we were home. My mom was too scared to divorce him, and besides, it was strictly forbidden in our Assyrian culture for a couple to separate. When I was 10 years old, my mother convinced him to go back to Iran to visit his relatives. He agreed, but my mother never did his paperwork for him to return to the U.S. Many years later, he got saved in a country where you can get executed for being vocal about Christ. Unfortunately, by then the seeds of rage and belligerence had already been planted in my young mind. I began to emulate my dad, and ever since first grade, I was constantly fighting and getting suspended from school. At 19 years old, during a period of deep depression and loneliness, I got saved. However, without fellowship or guidance, I quickly strayed away. Then, in my early twenties, despite the fact that I lived in a nice Westside neighborhood, I got "jumped into" one of the biggest and most violent Hispanic gangs in L.A. I started gangbanging and selling weed in L.A.'s most violent and poverty-stricken district: "Pico-Union". After about three years of fights, time in County Jail, and getting jumped and shot at by rivals, I gave up bangin' and attended church regularly. I was still double-minded, because I was still smoking pot, fornicating, and watching pornography. After my ex-girlfriend broke up with me, I hit rock bottom and contemplated suicide. I started going to a church, but it was too large and too liberal for me. A few years later, my friend told me about Pastor Tom and Dottie Hooper and their wonderful ministry. On February 24, 2005, I went to their house for "deliverance". I repented, and had all demonic bondages rebuked and removed from me - praise the Lord! Ever since I rededicated my life to Christ, I have been full of joy, peace, and comfort. I am now a disciple of Christ (John 8:31), rather than a slave to sin! He has sanctified me (I Corinthians 5:17) and transformed me by the renewing of my mind (Romans 12:1-2). I have lost most of my "friends" and yet I am happier than ever, because Jesus is the Friend that sticks closer than a brother!

A few days ago, I was in my bedroom, reading the word of God with my 13-year-old nephew Chris. He had recently got saved and was quite receptive during our Bible studies. As I was testing his knowledge from the book of John, my mother barged in and yelled in Assyrian (Aramaic), "You idiot! Stop teaching him that garbage, you're giving him a headache, Stupid!" My nephew replied, "I like reading the Bible!" My mother, a self-professed Catholic who also likes to tell peoples' fortunes (do "readings"), demanded that Chris come downstairs and watch TV with her instead. Not wanting to provoke her any further, I told my nephew to do as she says. Having Scripture fresh in his mind, Chris insisted they play a new DVD he had my mom buy him, called "The Gospel of John". As I began reading the word in solitude, God brought this revelation to mind: what my mother intended to prevent through evil influence, God had turned it around and manifested the book of John in the form of motion picture, and moreover, my mother was forced to watch the whole two-hour movie with him! Later that night, just seconds after I fell asleep, I felt an evil spirit hovering right over me. It had an aura of vileness, hostility and lewdness all mixed together. Another demon got into bed with me and slipped under my covers, while yet another one crawled across my chest, from the right to the left. It felt like my soul was rising out of my body. I was extremely disturbed. It was very difficult to "snap out" of it. At first, I was perplexed and fearful. Then I remembered what

Dottie had written and given me several months ago, that the word of God says we have authority in Christ over evil spirits and principalities. I sat up in bed and proclaimed, "I rebuke all demonic presence in my room. You have no right being here! I am a servant of Jesus Christ, and I command you in Jesus' name to leave my room now! Be gone!" Needless to say, I slept like a baby that night. Luke 10:19-20 says, "Behold, I give you power (authority) to tread upon serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven." Thank You, Jesus, for saving me by grace through faith, and that not of myself, but the gift of God; not of works, lest I should boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9). I give thanks to Pastor Tom and Dottie for their intercessory prayers, divine counsel, and scriptural knowledge. May God continue to empower you with wisdom, spiritual discernment, and fortitude.

Updated 5/7/07

Dear Brothers & Sisters in Christ, I have been attending LLMR for about four years now. When I would show up consistently, I felt the Lord working in my life. Having Pastor Tom and Dottie, my spiritual parents, there to guide and counsel me was immeasurably helpful and necessary for my growth and development as a young Christian. When I failed to attend the meetings regularly, it usually meant I was backsliding. That was just the case earlier this year. I was working as a valet parking attendant on Rodeo Drive in Beverly Hills. I was strong in my faith and told all my co-workers about Jesus. I gave them tracts and was generous and very friendly with everyone. Tom and Dottie had helped me quit smoking pot through prayer and Bible study several months before I got hired at this job. It was in November of 2006 that I began working there. Sometime in January, I started to smell marijuana in many of the luxury cars I was parking. At the same time, I got lazy in the area of prayer and Bible reading. I started to believe the lie that I could smoke pot here and there and still be a good Christian. I have always had an extreme nature, and so occasional smoking quickly turned into daily obsessive use. Just as rapidly, I relapsed in the other two strongholds in my life: anger and lust. I stopped attending church and LLMR meetings. I started hanging out with old pot-mad friends, and found some new "stoner" friends, too. My life quickly spiraled out of control. I got fired from my job for losing the keys to a Mercedes-Benz. I got road rage and challenged people to fights. My anger and anxiety got so severe that I could hardly breathe. I had to quit smoking pot! That brought on severe withdrawal symptoms. I finally mustered enough strength to go to Tom and Dottie's for prayer for deliverance. I could barely walk or go out in public because I was so anxious and would run out of breath. I went to the emergency room four times in as many weeks. I was under heavy demonic oppression. After Tom and Dottie prayed for me on Friday, April 27th, I felt the Lord starting to heal me, but I was far from healed. Two days later, I was still miserable, paranoid, and barely able to breathe. Psalm 55:4-5 describes exactly how I felt: "My heart is severely pained within me, and the terrors of death have fallen upon me. Fearfulness and trembling have come upon me, and horror has overwhelmed me." I knew as a Christian I can't be demon-possessed, but it was obvious I was demonized. That Sunday after church, there was a church picnic. I saw Pastor Tom there, and sat by his feet hoping he could help me somehow. The Holy Spirit spoke through him as he told me to praise God even for my pain and affliction. His words reminded me of one of my favorite verses: "My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor detest His correction; for whom the Lord loves He disciplines, just as a father the son in whom he delights." (Proverbs 3:11). Later that day, when I dropped my friend Vinnie off after the picnic, he suggested we pray. When it was my turn to pray, I praised God for my misery and pain, and thanked Him for using it to draw me back to him. Thirty minutes later, I was completely healed. Thank You, Lord, for having mercy on me your prodigal son, and thank You Tom and Dottie for your prayers and wise counsel. Love always, Youbert