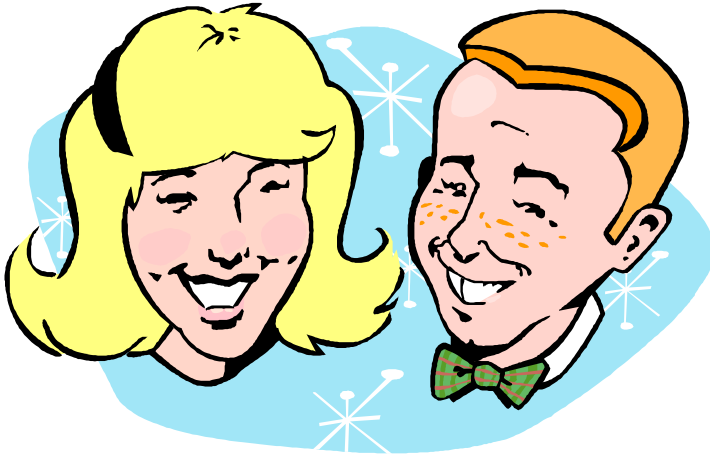


Booklet 9

Helps for Young People



A Different Kind of Rave

Does God Really Love Me

Compiled by Hervey Bay Gospel Chapel for its young people

A Different Kind of Rave

I went to the rave to sell drugs, but I walked out with something that would change my life ...

By Daniel Markey as told to Mark Moring

I've got a confession. Well, a few confessions, actually. I've done drugs. I've done witchcraft. And I've done time ... behind bars.

But somewhere along the line, somewhere between the highs and the lows, between the agony and the Ecstasy, God really got my attention. And you wouldn't believe where.

At a rave.

Yes, at one of those all-night dance parties where you'd expect to find drugs and sex and all kinds of things you don't wanna mess with.

Except this wasn't just any rave. This was a *Christian* rave.

So how *did* a guy like me end up in a place like that, anyway?

I'll start from the beginning ...

"are you out there, God?"

I was adopted as a baby, and I grew up going to church. As a kid, I wanted to be a preacher when I grew up. But in my teens, I started rebelling against my adoptive family.

I didn't want to do anything they wanted me to, and I wanted to do everything they didn't want me to do. I started drinking and smoking pot. I wasn't just hanging with the wrong crowd. I *was* the wrong crowd.

When I was 16, my mom contacted a leader at Young Life, a Christian youth ministry, and asked for help. A few days later, Mom said, "I've signed you up for Young Life camp next week."

I said, "Excuse me? You're sending me to *church camp*?"

I tried to get out of it because I thought it would be really boring. But at the camp, everyone was so kind to me. I felt like I really met God while I was there.

At the end of the week, I sat on a lakeside dock and looked at the sky. The night was totally clear, the stars were out, and I was thinking, *God, if you're really out there, I need you in my life.* All of a sudden, it seemed like the moon got brighter and I just had a big sensation of peace. I think I cried for almost 45 minutes.

When I got back home, I told my parents I wanted to join a different church. They said, "As long as you're going to church, that's fine with us."

It was fine with me too. I kept growing in my faith, and I thought everything was going well. But that didn't last long.

spiritual seeker

A couple of years later, I met some Mormon missionaries. I thought I was Mr. Super Christian, and I tried to convert them. But they converted me.

But it wasn't long before I discovered some bad theology in Mormonism—especially their belief that people can become gods in the afterlife.

So I left the Mormon church and came back to Christianity ... for a while. I was working with the youth group at my home church when some bad stuff started happening, and it rocked my world. I can't really get into everything here, but let me put it this way: I pretty much turned my back on God and the church.

I started going to dance clubs and raves. And I got into doing—and dealing—drugs.

The whole time, my old friends at church prayed that I would come back. One of them made me promise to come to church one Sunday. But he didn't tell me that Teen Challenge was going to be there.

Teen Challenge is a Christian ministry to troubled students. They made a presentation during the worship service, and I was convinced I needed help. That night, I was on a bus to spend a year at a Teen Challenge facility, where they would help me get off drugs and back onto God. I kicked the drugs, but remained angry at God.

After finishing the Teen Challenge program, I started hitting raves again, sometimes working as a DJ, spinning the tunes. I also started doing drugs again—as a user and a dealer. I dealt mostly Ecstasy, LSD and Special K (animal tranquilizers that bring a brief high).

Some friends and I controlled about 40 percent of the drug profits in Western Michigan. In a good week, I made as much as \$10,000—but I blew most of it on my own drug habit.

About that same time, I turned to Wicca—just because I felt like I always had to be involved in something "spiritual." I knew it was wrong, but I did it anyway. My mind was really messed up.

But that was before Arise.

saved by a rave

Thinking it was going to be just another night of dancing and drug dealing, we went to a rave near Detroit called "Arise."

As soon as we walked in, I knew something was different: There wasn't any smoke in the air. And nobody looked high. The music was the same, and people were dancing, but there was a tangible difference in the atmosphere. There was a lightness, a joyful feeling.

I noticed the DJ list included some Christian bands. I thought, *This must be a Christian rave, but I've never heard of a Christian rave.* Then I thought, *Well, I've still got to make some money.* So I tried to sell some drugs.

I didn't have much luck; most people turned me down. I was starting to get uncomfortable. But I was like, *I'm going to try one*

more person. So I walked up to this girl and asked her if she needed any drugs.

She just looked straight at me and said, "I don't need any drugs. I've got Jesus. You need Jesus too, and you're doing the wrong thing." That cut straight to my heart.

I told her, "OK, I'm very sorry." I just turned around, grabbed my friends and said, "We can't be here," and we left. But her words stuck with me everywhere I went.

Even in jail. About two months after the Arise rave, I was sent to prison for violating probation. I had been on probation for credit card fraud, and was later sentenced to six months for writing bad checks.

While behind bars, I remembered the girl's words at the rave: "You need Jesus." So I cried out, "OK, God, I'm yours. What do you want to do with me?"

When I was released from prison, I spent another six months with Teen Challenge, getting my personal life—and my faith—in order. I finally came to terms with a lot of things from my past, and got rid of a lot of emotional baggage.

When I left the Teen Challenge program the second time, I felt like a new guy. I had indeed been reborn.

I was released from probation and got involved with a good church, where I now play bass for the praise-and-worship team. The church also has a small record label, so I'm involved with recording and producing as well.

no raves ... for now

I'm not DJ-ing any raves these days. I'm not even attending them—Christian or secular—because I want to avoid the temptation of going back to my old ways.

I want to make sure that if I go back to that scene, I'm ready for it. I know there will always be a temptation. I need people to hold me accountable, and I have that at my church.

But I know this much: I never would have gotten this far if it weren't for that one encounter at a Christian rave.

I was definitely headed for worse things, because I was getting deeper and deeper into the drugs. I was doing so much Ecstasy that I was never in my right mind.

I was on the road to self-destruction. But going to that Christian rave that night put me on the right path. That girl's words followed me everywhere I went, until I had no choice but to make a decision. It's been a few years now since I asked Jesus back into my heart, and I've been following him ever since.

Now that's something to rave about.



**He is not quiet; he is a CONVERSATIONAL MINIMALIST.
He is not stupid; he suffers from MINIMAL CRANIAL DEVELOPMENT.
He does not get lost; he DISCOVERS ALTERNATIVE DESTINATIONS.
He is not balding; he is in FOLLICLE REGRESSION.**

Does God really love me?

with Dawson McAllister

Dear Dawson, I wish I could say I believe in Jesus and that he loves me, but I no longer believe that. I've been through a lot of tragedy in my family, and now I find myself wondering if God even exists. If God loves me, why doesn't he show it?

I'm so sorry about everything you've been through. Your letter is so painful. I can't fully understand-and no one really can-how deeply you hurt.

You're caught up in three devastating feelings: hurt, abandonment and doubt. None of those things are easy to go through. But there's one thing very certain about what's happening in your life right now: All the pain you're going through will change you. For better or for worse, it will change you. During difficult times, you either get stronger in your relationship with Christ, or you get weaker. You never stay the same.

While you're in the middle of your agony and pain, it's hard to see things clearly. And sometimes when you're suffering, it's quite difficult to see God's love. I think about Job, a man in the Old Testament who went through extremely difficult times. He lost his whole family, virtually everything he owned, and went through terrible sickness. He felt like you do now.

Look at what Job said during his most painful times: "If I go to the east, [God] is not there; if I go to the west, I do not find him. When he is at work in the north, I do not see him; when he turns to the south, I catch no glimpse of him" (Job 23:8-9).

And now I want you to understand exactly what Job later understood: That no matter what you feel or what happens, God does exist and he

deeply loves you. No matter how awful things become, no matter what happens, we can never be separated from God's love.

God hasn't forgotten you. And even though it might not feel like it, he is still in control, holding you in the palm of his hand (Psalm 139:10).

God has a plan for you. So, even in the middle of all your heartbreak, tell God, "I'm going to hold on and wait for you to show me your kindness, your love, no matter what happens."

I want you to be able to say what David said in Psalm 27:14, "Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord."

If you do that, I know what will happen. You will come out of all the pain and be a much stronger person. You will say what Job said right after he voiced his doubts: "But [God] knows the way that I take; when he has tested me, I will come forth as gold" (Job 23:10).

So, hang on. I know you can make it! *Dawson McAllister is a popular youth speaker with Shepherd Ministries*

