

My Name is Carey and I am an Alcoholic

The Father Speaks by Rev. Dr. Guy Davidson

This is my son's introduction at the 12-step meetings he regularly attends – some of which I have visited. When I hear him say these words there are jabs of pain and pride – pain that his life was diseased by alcoholism and pride that he has a renewed relationship with God and he is living sober one day at a time. He and I, along with family and friends, have faced it with Carey and are united in winning the daily battle. He now inspires us.

We didn't know about our son's drinking in high school. However, by his university years, there was evidence of his bingeing. Brushes with the law and spacey phone conversations made us suspicious. When confronted he gave an absolute denial of problems and assurances that all is well making us believe that everything was under control. To us this was just a phase that he would outgrow as many kids do.

He moved to Denver to begin his career. A Good Samaritan found Carey lying by his car in a drunken stupor in a busy street. Another friend called to tell us that EMS had taken him to a hospital unconscious with acute alcohol poisoning. His admittance to his first 28day treatment program gave us hope that all would be well. And it was, for a while. It didn't last.

Behavior changes subtle

We had to face the shattering truth that our only son, a successful television-advertising executive by this time, was an alcoholic. The initial changes in his behavior were at first very subtle. Strained communication, answers avoided, truth compromised. The gap between us grew.

I have learned life gives no immunity buttons. Even a very successful ministry, a great youth group, a Christian home, does not insure we will have an addiction free life – or children. I could not make choices for my son. God gave us all free will. Satan attacks, the world tempts pastors' kids – and more than a few pastors.

Carey finally bottomed out. He was convicted for felonies related to his drinking and drug use and was sentenced to supervised probation plus long term rehab. He requested, "Please keep it quiet." And I honored this request until he was ready. He is now off probation, out of rehab, very involved, active in recovery programs and very public about the past – and so are we.

I was not embarrassed by my son, but I was gravely concerned. "What could I have done differently?" was the question. The choices he was making would shatter his life dreams and mine.

Brief control window

While he was sitting in jail, waiting to be sentenced, I was painfully revisiting the past and what I could have done and what I would advise other pastors and families to do and hopefully avoid this experience. Our window of control is brief – after 18 they are on their own, independent – even though they probably will need us to help rebuild their life.

For the "independent" child – which ours was – don't hesitate making an intervention quickly, intensive in house treatment or half-way house living. There are no short-cuts. Rehab starts the process of change. Then, as a pastor there are steps I should have taken in the church where treatment can be combined with spiritual input and growth and inner strength.

We need not look for hippies and VW buses, only to our left and right down the aisles of our church, our youth groups, schools – or as in recent history – even in the pulpit.

The disease of addiction strikes indiscriminately and without respect of persons, race or creed, denomination or location, economics or education. It hit my home. It is painful. It is treatable. Change is possible.

I had always dreamed of my son being in the ministry like me and my father before me. Now his ministry is to reach out through interventions helping others addicted to alcohol and drugs. It wasn't the way I thought it would be, however this is God's exciting play for Carey to enjoy a purpose driven life.

Carey knows the "ropes" of addiction and recovery – he has spent time on them! I am grateful in God, to all who gave him assistance – and proud of my son. His new life purpose proves a truth given to me after my severe stroke – "There are no wasted experiences with God!"