

Now what?

'Now What?' is a question which many people might ask themselves when in police custody, as they think about the likely outcome of their arrest. Many may also wonder what the future holds for them.

Now What? records what went through the minds of Trudy, Rod and Gram when they were in police custody. For them, life turned out far better than they could possibly have imagined; their lives were totally transformed through faith in Jesus.

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Now what?

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// Introduction

All sorts of thoughts can fill your mind when you find yourself in police custody. It will depend on why you are here – and whether you are actually guilty of any offence.

If it's your first time in custody, you may be thinking ...

I never thought I would find myself here. Am I going to jail?

I am such an idiot; why didn't I listen to the warnings?

Will I ever be able to forgive myself for what I've done?

What will my family say? What will my kids think?

And if you've been here before, even many times, you may be thinking ...

I really thought the last time would be the last time.

Will my family finally give up on me?

Is this going to be my life for life?

In this booklet you will meet three people who found themselves in just this situation: would a chaotic life, on the wrong side of the law, be their life – ‘for life’?

But for Trudy, Rod and Gram things turned out quite differently. They all encountered Jesus Christ – some after many years – and life for them has never been the same.

Jesus always triggers a new start in life – in fact, a completely new life – for those who desperately want it. And if you think you’ve messed up too much, think again: God is full of mercy towards everyone who turns to Him.

If you are willing to consider that you can leave your past behind for an entirely better future, read how Jesus totally changed Gram, Rod and Trudy. And read Jesus’ story too.

**...God is full of mercy
towards everyone who
turns to Him.**



// Trudy's Story

// Trudy's Story

In the early hours one morning in May 2006 in Bristol, I was booked in by a custody sergeant in one of the city's police stations. I had been arrested for indecent exposure while working the streets; it was my way of making money to score my drugs. The police soon discovered the several outstanding charges against me and the fact that I was wanted for breaching my bail.

As I lay on the thin blue mattress in the cell, I felt restless without any drugs and knowing that it would be a while before getting any medication. There was a mixture of relief and regret; relief from the hopelessness, and relentless pursuit of trying to get high, and regret at having got caught and facing imprisonment once again.

As I lay on the thin blue mattress ... There was a mixture of relief and regret



And yet, there was not the same sense of hopelessness as on previous occasions. Six weeks earlier, whilst on bail in a rehab, I attended a Christian meeting and heard about Jesus being the Son of God and being sent to die for us – even for people like me. I heard that He had died to take the punishment for our sins, so that God can forgive us and we can begin a new life centred upon Jesus.

I heard that He (Jesus) had died ... so that God can forgive us ...

I desperately wanted that new life but the temptations of my old way of life were too strong; I succumbed and ran off. And now, after just a couple of weeks back on the streets, I was in police custody and destined for another spell in prison.

While on remand in prison, stripped from every other distraction, I began to realise that something had changed in me. I was drawn to read the Bible verses on a wall calendar in my cell. As I did so, a passion and joy started rising inside me. I was unaware at the time that the

Bible was no ordinary book and that every word had been inspired by God. As I read, I recalled my prayer at that Christian meeting when I invited Jesus into my life. It was bizarre at the time. Now I know that it was God's Holy Spirit living in me that caused my spirit to get so excited about what the Bible was saying.

While on remand in prison ... I began to realise that something had changed in me.

Three weeks later, I was back in the rehab on bail and there I finally realised that everything I had been searching for was found in God: love, acceptance, security, belonging, forgiveness, and hope, through His Son Jesus. I was overwhelmed by His love. And, at last, I was willing to admit that I had made a mess of trying to do life my way. I was desperate, and yet powerless, to change myself and completely worn out trying.

Down on my knees, I felt the room was full of love. Again I asked Jesus into my life and asked Him to forgive me. This time it was personal.

I more fully understood what He had done on the cross and I was willing to trust Him to help me with my whole life. I was instantly released from my 18-year addiction to drugs and free from guilt and shame. And my fear, restlessness, anxiety, and depression were replaced with peace, hope, and joy.

... my fear, restlessness, anxiety, and depression were replaced with peace, hope, and joy.

That was fifteen years ago. From being an addict, I began working with addicts, and ran a rehabilitation centre. From being in prison without hope, I began visiting others in prison to bring hope. From being without any qualifications, I gained a degree in Church Leadership and Applied Theology.

Trudy (Makepeace) has published her story in Abused • Addicted • Free. Trudy can be contacted through her website: trudymakepeace.com



// Rod's Story

// Rod's Story

I remember that moment as if it was yesterday. I had just been arrested for smuggling class A drugs into Guernsey. I was in a custody suite down by the harbour and being watched 24/7 by customs officers. They were certain I had more drugs on me – they were right. The reality of what I had done, the life I was living and the people I was hurting hit me like a ton of bricks. I hated the person I had become.

I hated the person I had become.

I asked one of the officers for a pen and some paper. I started to write letters to my loved ones to say sorry for the pain I had caused. I remember tears streaming down my face and dripping on the paper as I wrote to my Mum. She was going to be devastated, as was my Dad and the rest of the family. It's true, isn't it? Our loved ones always have to live out the consequences of our choices, whether good or bad.



Filled with regret and remorse, I really didn't know what the future held. My stinking thinking was on overdrive.

I couldn't see how things would or could change. I was a heroin addict, a known drug dealer and a pathological gambler. People had written me off. But I really believed there was hope for me.

... I really believed there was hope for me.

I was brought up in a Christian home but wandered away from the spiritual path my parents had taken. At 17, after living a sheltered life, I started to experiment with drugs. At 24, I was a heroin addict, having been addicted to methamphetamine and crack cocaine also. I dealt and smuggled drugs into Guernsey and gambled tens of thousands of pounds in the bookies. A four-year prison sentence in 2002 came as no surprise.

I've now been clean for almost 20 years. I'm in my right mind. I've been married 15 years and have two beautiful children. I have a job that I enjoy and my story has helped many people change the course of their life.

I've now been clean for almost 20 years ... and have two beautiful children.

The change began while in prison. Was it really true what I had been taught about Jesus as a child? I started reading stories of people whose lives were apparently transformed by Jesus Christ – gang members, addicts, dealers, prostitutes etc. I asked myself, 'Is this Jesus really the real deal? Did He really die on the cross so that I could be forgiven and have a brand new start?'

One night in June 2002, I got down on my knees in my cell and cried out to God. I asked Him to forgive me. I asked Him to reveal Himself to me. He did. That night I encountered the living God. Things began to change. I experienced peace and hope about the future.

I asked Him (God) to reveal Himself to me. He did.

It wasn't a smooth ride from that day. But with God and with the right people around me, I was

able to break free from the things that had held me back. Gradually I got my life back – and I have never looked back. And it has been a great privilege since that time to share my story with many people, encouraging them to take that path which I discovered.

Rod (Williams) has published his story in The Real Deal.

Rod can be contacted through his website: therealdeal.org.uk



**// Gram's story
& Brian's story**

Gram's Story and Brian's Story

// Gram

Brian and I are great friends. We didn't become friends when we first met – when Brian arrested me! That was in 1995. Remarkably, 10 years later in 2005, I baptised him.

My most vivid memory of being in police custody was when I was arrested in connection with a murder in Middlesbrough in 1989. I was 25 at the time. Triggered by my alcoholism, paranoia set in whilst in the cell. I really began to think that I did murder the guy and would be getting a life sentence.

I really began to think that I did murder the guy ...

My life was in a complete mess. I had been to prison several times on counts of violence and football hooliganism, fuelled by my addictions. But for once I was arrested for something that I had not done and no charge was brought.

In 1996 there was every sign that my life was drawing to a close. For three years my home had been a bench. I had really come to hate myself and I assumed that everyone else did too; they had every reason to. I decided not to bother attempting suicide as I had previously. I thought I would drink myself to death and die 'happy'. I was close to it.

I thought I would drink myself to death and die 'happy'.



But one night some lads approached me on my bench and began to tell me that Jesus loves me. Swearing, I told them to get lost. But they kept coming back. Over the coming months they spent endless hours each week, just chatting and showing genuine care.

The day that I had been expecting – when I would die – seemed to have arrived when I was found unconscious. In intensive care I was diagnosed with hypothermia, pneumonia, septicaemia, severe malnutrition and dehydration. My liver was also starting to shut down. Five days later, now in a coma, my kidneys began to fail. But my Mam refused to have the life support turned off.

... my Mam refused to have the life support turned off.

And then the Christian guys discovered where I was, turned up and asked if they could pray for me. They prayed in the Name of Jesus. That evening, I opened my eyes for the first time in six days. When I was told what had happened, I could not believe that God (if there was a God) would answer a prayer for a scumbag like me.

They prayed in the Name of Jesus ... I opened my eyes for the first time in six days.

That day was the beginning of a journey, which led me to accept that there is a God and that He loves us so much – even people like me – that He sent Jesus to die for us. My life was soon to be totally transformed; it happened on 9th November 1996.

Not only was I set free from my addictions but I stopped swearing – I lost so many words from my vocabulary!

Crucially, Jesus had saved me again. He saved me from God's wrath; my sins were now forgiven. I started telling everyone about Jesus and I have been doing that for 25 years now.

Gram (Seed) has published his story in One Step Beyond. Gram can be contacted through sowingseeds.org.uk

// Brian

Gram and I first met in 1995. I was a police officer and we were not meeting for a drink! I was more than a little nervous when the 6ft 7in bodybuilder snatched my baton from me and was menacingly tossing it from one hand to the other. He growled, 'How do you use this thing?' and I cheekily said, 'Well, gimme it back and I'll show you.' Unbelievably, he did; I chose not to enlighten him on how to use it!

Shortly after this, I charged Gram with theft and public order offences, and he went to prison.

I next saw him in 1996; he was a different man. All his muscles were gone and he was pale and thin. But there was an even more noticeable change; there was a glow about him. He even sounded different. Gram told me he had become a 'born-again' Christian; he explained that he had been restored to life by prayer whilst on a life-support machine and he had encountered Jesus. I didn't have a clue what he was talking about and wasn't sure whether to believe him. Obviously I hoped that he really had changed and encouraged him to stay on this new path.

Gram told me he had become a 'born-again' Christian ...

Around the same time, one of my best friends, Keith, also told me he had become 'born-again'! He had an overwhelming conviction that the Bible was true – and that God was real – when he received dramatic answers to prayer.

Again, I struggled to understand and really didn't know what to believe. But I started to pray myself and experienced many answers to my prayers, including instant healing. And yet, I still had no desire to go to church.

It was almost ten years later – in the spring of 2005 after an undeniably supernatural experience – that I finally decided that I had to really get to grips with Christianity. And that meant church. I chose one about fifteen minutes' drive from home, confident that I would be far enough from my neighbourhood not to meet anyone I knew. I planned to sneak in the back unnoticed.

But I was spotted even as I parked my car – by Keith's wife, Cath. And inside, not only did I see

Keith but also a 6ft 7in guy – unmistakably Gram, of course. With his wife, Natasha, he was praising God with his hands in the air, with their two little boys running around his feet.

After about six months of hearing the Gospel, I finally accepted this was the absolute truth; Jesus died to give us life, hope and a future. At last, I knew what it truly meant to be ‘born-again’!

I finally accepted this was the absolute truth; Jesus died to give us life, hope and a future.

I asked to be baptised, in obedience to Jesus’ command. For me, baptism symbolised ‘dying’ to my old life and being raised to a new life as a follower of Jesus. And, yes, you have guessed it – it was Gram who baptised me. Only God could have planned that.



// Jesus' Story

// Jesus' Story

Now here is Jesus' story. You may already be familiar with it. As you would expect, there is no other story like it. After all, He is the Son of God. Contrary to what many people think, He has always existed. Not only was Jesus there when the world was created but He created everything.

But just over 2,000 years ago, He left heaven to come to earth. He had the humblest of beginnings on earth, born in a stable to a virgin.

There was nothing special about Jesus' childhood or His early adult life. Then, at the age of about 30, He chose twelve men to train to be His 'associates', known as disciples.

For three years Jesus drew crowds as they travelled around Israel. He performed healings and miracles and taught the people how God wanted them to live. He always had time for people, especially the sick, the poor and the outcasts of society.

But He didn't have much time for the religious leaders, who were self-righteous and looked

down upon others. Jesus saw them as hypocrites, observing lots of petty rules but lacking genuine love, compassion and care for others.

Their dislike of Jesus turned to hatred and they plotted how they could get rid of Him. Eventually, they had Him arrested on false accusations of blasphemy, resulting in His most brutal and horrific death by crucifixion. It was the greatest miscarriage of justice in history.



Surely God could have prevented it. So, what went wrong? Nothing. God sent Jesus to earth to die. Jesus willingly sacrificed His own life so that we might be 'born again'.

It was the greatest act of love ever; Jesus, who had never sinned, paid the penalty for our sin. The greatest ever miracle followed two days later, when Jesus was raised from the dead.

In his story, Brian explained that he is a Christian because he has been 'born again' – and that is true, too, for Rod, Trudy and Gram. 'Born again' Christians are not fanatics or extremists as some people think; they are just normal followers of Jesus' teaching. Jesus said that no one can enter God's Kingdom without having a new birth – a spiritual birth.

**Jesus' crucifixion –
the greatest miscarriage of justice**

**Jesus' sacrifice –
the greatest act of love**

**Jesus' resurrection –
the greatest miracle**

This new birth is necessary because we are all born with a sinful nature. And God hates all sin, whether it is jealousy, envy, lying, sexual immorality or serious crime.

We are all guilty before God and He demands justice, and that means there has to be a punishment for our sin.

By His death, Jesus took the punishment we deserve so that we don't have to; God forgives everyone who repents of their sin and follows Jesus.

Forty days after His resurrection, Jesus was taken up to heaven to be with His Father. One day He will return to earth to judge everyone who has ever lived.

People count themselves as Christians for a variety of reasons: some because they have been baptised or christened; some because they are committed churchgoers; some because they do their best to obey the Ten Commandments; some because they were born into a Christian family.

But the Bible is clear; only those who have received God's forgiveness will be safe from His judgment. And the great news is that spiritual rebirth is available to everyone, whatever their past – as is evident from the stories you have read.

... spiritual rebirth is available to everyone, whatever their past...

There will be no warning of Jesus' return; the Bible tells us that He will come like a 'thief in the night'. We must be ready for His coming.

Sin and Repentance

Sin is our rebellious and disobedient nature; it causes us to live our own way and disregard God's rules. It separates us from God.

Repentance means having a change of mind, leading to a change of behaviour. To repent of our sin means to be truly sorry for living our way and to decide to start living God's way.

The Bible tells us

Jesus answered them, '... I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.'

Luke 5:31-32

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

John 3:16

Jesus answered, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'

John 14:6

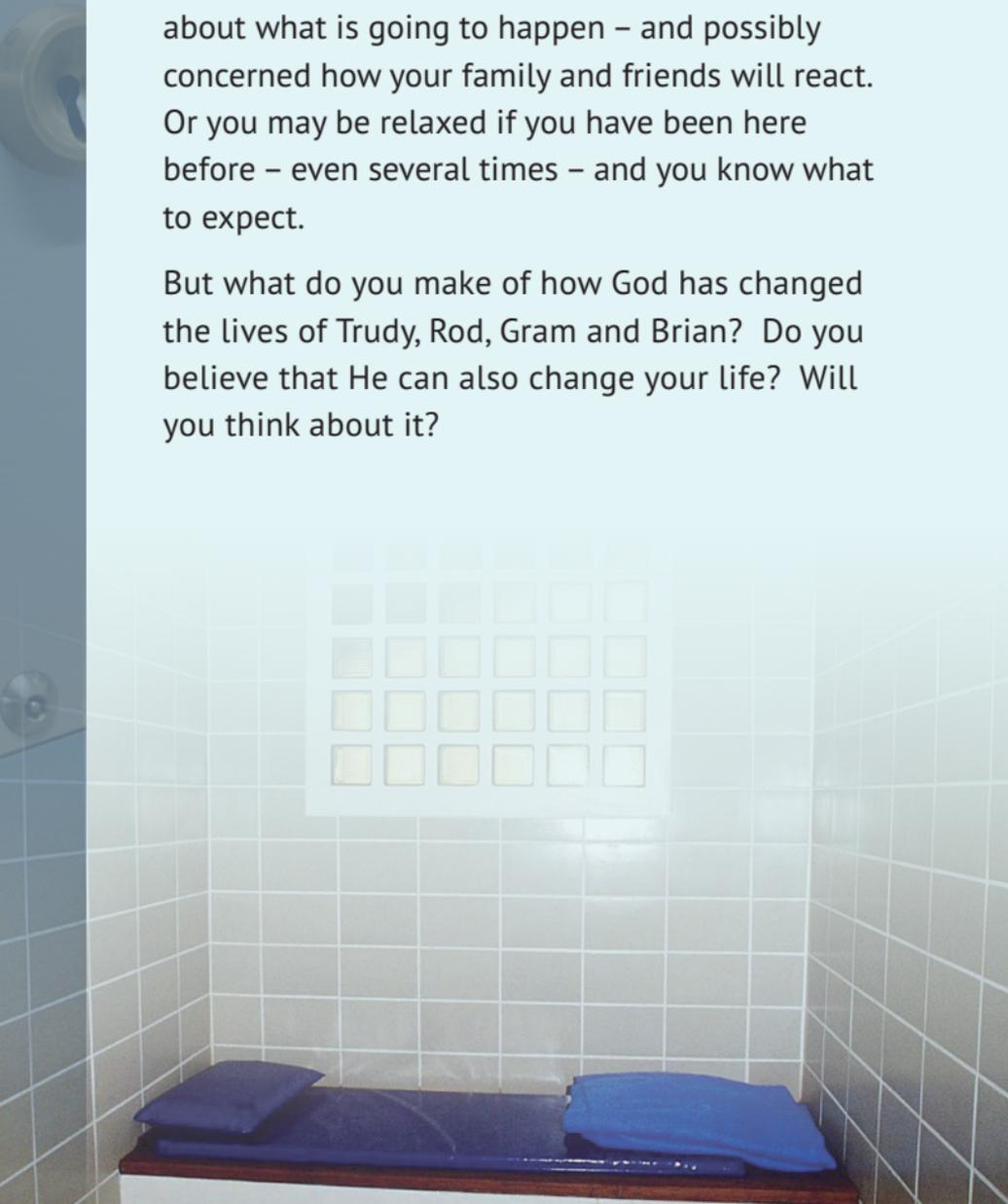
Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: the old has gone, the new is here! God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

2 Corinthians 5:17, 21

// Now What?

You may be feeling anxious, or perhaps scared, about what is going to happen – and possibly concerned how your family and friends will react. Or you may be relaxed if you have been here before – even several times – and you know what to expect.

But what do you make of how God has changed the lives of Trudy, Rod, Gram and Brian? Do you believe that He can also change your life? Will you think about it?



It is not a decision to be taken lightly or for the wrong reasons. You will still need to face the consequences of your actions although God will help you overcome your fears. And He can help with the restoring of relationships.

But most importantly, with His forgiveness, you will be free from the guilt and shame of your past; you will begin a purposeful and constructive life; and you will be at peace, knowing that you will be welcomed into heaven when Jesus returns to judge us.

To become a follower of Jesus requires:

- accepting that you deserve to be punished on account of your sin,
- believing that only Jesus can rescue you from God's punishment,
- confessing the wrong things in your life and repenting of them, that is, turning away from them,
- deciding to live to please God as a follower of Jesus.

If you are ready to make a commitment to God that you will follow Jesus, you can do so by praying this prayer:

Dear Father God,

I am very sorry for everything in my life which is not right. I want to stop living to please myself and to start living to please You.

Thank You for sending Jesus to die in my place because of my sin, in order to save me from the punishment which I deserve.

So please forgive me and accept me as Your child. Please help me to live to please Jesus and to make Him the centre of my life.

Amen



If you have said this prayer and really meant it, God has received you as His child. All your sins – past, present and future – are forgiven.

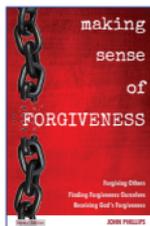
You will need support as you begin this new life. If you know someone who is a true follower of Jesus, ask them to help you. Alternatively, please contact us at BeaconLight.

But perhaps you are interested in what you have read though not yet convinced. Or you may not feel ready to make a decision to follow Jesus. Do get in touch. We will try to help you with any questions you have.



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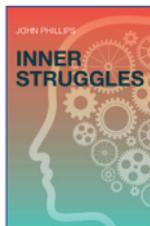
Other publications from BeaconLight available on request.



Making Sense of Forgiveness tackles questions such as:
What does it really mean to forgive?
Why should we forgive?
Why do we need God to forgive us?



Can I forgive myself? aims to help those struggling to forgive themselves.



Inner Struggles uses Bible verses as a means of offering hope and comfort to those who recognise their need of God's help in their struggles.



Now Free is a short booklet explaining how Barry Woodward became free from his addiction to heroin.

