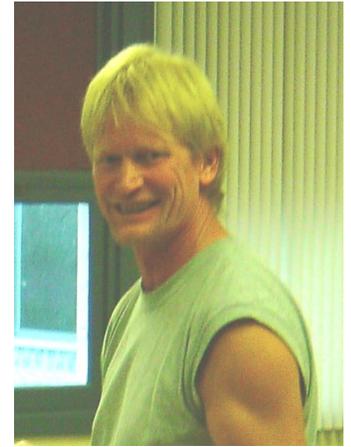


I'm Randy, a resident of the Mustard Seed Program at Clear Waters Life Center. I've been given this opportunity to introduce myself and give a short testimony of the way of life that brought me here. I also wish to use this opportunity for one other purpose which is to express my gratitude.



From a very young age, I learned the effects of alcohol and have struggled with addiction. I learned how alcohol could take away my worries, fears, inhibitions, and loneliness. I learned how alcohol could help me establish bonds with people, enjoy my surroundings, and help me deal with my troubles. It became a personal friend to me, something to rely on. It picked me up when I was down, it would fill me with great joy, it would make me warm inside and make my body tingle. I could see why this was so important to so many. It made me feel great. I fell in love with it. I grew dependent on it. It became my first thought in the morning and the last of my thoughts at night. Then, it turned on me. After just one drink nothing was more important than the next.

I grew up hearing Bible stories on Sunday. Mom would drop my brothers, sister, and I off for Sunday school. We got bits and pieces of God and Jesus and tried to make sense of them on our own. There really was no learning; neither did it have much effect on me. Sunday school was something we did because Mom said it was important. Church was something we rarely did as a family; so it seemed to hold very little purpose at all. The things that seemed to be most important to my folks always centered around and with alcohol. There is no way to visualize the scale as to how much time, focus and energy was spent on drinking, and how little of the same was spent on spiritual growth. I naturally followed what seemed to be most important and fell away to the wrong spirit.

Without me knowing, I was deceived. Alcohol became my savior and redeemer. I knew way more about it than I did of Jesus. With all my weaknesses and troubles and downfalls, I turned to it to lift me up. My story goes many directions with many ups and downs. I was blessed so much in life by God: a home, family, talent, healthy children. While following this great deception, my eyes were closed to His gifts.

The ultimate path that brought me to Mustard Seed Homes was at times very ugly. Alcohol turned from a deception to the great destroyer of my life. It kept taking and it never gave back. I kept giving in, until I had nothing. No family. No home. No job. No self-respect. No hope.

Today, with my eyes open to the almighty power of God and His grace, I am beginning to understand how it was so easy for me to rely on this deception. There is no blame toward my parents. They were following the same great deceiver that I was. Instead, I am grateful that they planted the seed of God's Word in me way back in Sunday school. Through that seed, I called out to God in prayer and He answered. I've learned through His word in Lamentations 3:57 (NLT), "You came when I called; you told me, Do not fear." Lamentations 3:31 tells me, "For no one is abandoned by the Lord forever." Through the prayers of my own and others, God has brought me to Mustard Seed Homes and the communities of Clearbrook, and Gonvick. He has blessed me with you as neighbors. It's through your support and belief in the Clear Waters Life Center and its staff that I have been given hope. Through your loving kindness and God's blessing, I have come to know the true God and His most precious gift to us – His Son, Jesus Christ.

The thought of my suffering and homelessness is bitter beyond words. I will never forget this awful time, as I grieve over my loss. Yet, I still dare to hope when I remember this: "The faithful love of the Lord never ends". His mercies never cease. Lamentations 3:19-22