

**NO
ADDICTION
IS TOO
STRONG**

LIFE AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL

BY CHRISTINA QUICK

NOTHING'S TOO HARD FOR GOD

NANCY sat on a toilet in a cheap rented room and held a razor to her wrist.

It was the third time in less than a week the 30-year-old mother of two had tried to end her life. After the first two attempts, she got sick and threw up the pills she'd swallowed. This time, she intended to finish the job.

Nancy watched, detached, as the razor sliced through a thin layer of pale flesh. At that moment a phrase entered her mind, jarring her from her suicidal trance: *Remember, God loves you.*

They were the words of her sister-in-law, Marie, a Christian who had offered prayer and encouragement a few weeks before.

Nancy started shaking so violently she could no longer hold the razor. Wrapping her bloody arm in a towel, she collapsed on a nearby mattress and drank vodka until she drifted to sleep.

Difficult journey

In many ways, Nancy's life seemed stamped for tragedy from the beginning. Parental bickering and drinking were constant backdrops in her Omaha, Neb., home.

Though there were few opportunities to attend church, Nancy went with a friend to vacation Bible school and accepted Christ when she was 8 years old. At the end of that week, parents were invited to attend a ceremony for the children. Nancy stood alone to receive her certificate because no one from her family came.

When Nancy was 12, her mother divorced for the second

time and took a night job waiting tables. With no adult supervision in the evenings, Nancy's teenage brother John started having parties in the family home. Nancy soon joined in the drinking and pot smoking.

One night when Nancy was 14, she and a friend went to a party at a park. That evening, Nancy was attacked and raped by three older men.

"That event pretty much



Nancy Dickerson

changed my life," Nancy says. "I gained weight and began using drugs not just for a good time, but as a means of escape."

Nancy's schoolmates grew distant as word spread about the rape. Feeling alone and traumatized, she sought friendship and acceptance among other troubled youth. The new peer group influenced her to remain sexually active and experiment with increasingly dangerous drugs.

Nancy's failing grades and rebellious behavior put a strain on family relationships. She frequently argued with her mother, finally moving out at the age of 16.

The following year, Nancy married a drug user and soon became pregnant. A second

pregnancy followed before their divorce.

To cope with the stresses of raising two boys alone, Nancy again turned to drugs. She dated an older man who was willing to give her a steady supply of cocaine. Within a matter of months, she developed a \$1,000-a-day drug habit and was again pregnant.

The boyfriend was physically and verbally abusive, once

pointing a gun at Nancy's abdomen and threatening to shoot her if she didn't have an abortion.

Nancy agreed to several abortions during the course of their relationship. She feared the man and desperately wanted to escape his control, but the addiction kept her dependent.

"I was getting more and more hopeless," Nancy says. "The only time things seemed OK was when I was high."

Nancy went from sniffing cocaine to injecting it, using makeup to hide the ugly scars on her bony arms. Her 5'6" frame had dropped to less than 110 pounds and her speech was barely coherent.

Her young sons, Seth and Eric,



had to fend for themselves much of the time. Some days, they were unable even to wake their mother. Eventually, they learned to do laundry and make their own meals.

Nancy once became so high she lost control of her body and started slamming herself against the walls in her bathroom, her arms and legs flailing involuntarily. Her head felt like it was brimming with molten lead. She knew she was slowly destroying herself and her children, but the situation seemed hopeless.

In June 1987, Nancy decided suicide was the only answer. She reasoned her sons would be better off without her and took them to stay with her mother so she could

carry out her private plans. Tears welled as she watched the boys walk away, suitcases clutched in their small hands. She didn't expect to see them again.

A reason to hope

Waking up in the dimly lit room, Nancy realized the desire to die had somehow vanished. She wanted to live, but she knew she would need help.

Nancy talked with her brother, John, and his wife, Marie, the one who had spoken to her about God. Marie recommended Teen Challenge.

John, who was not a Christian, drove Nancy to the Omaha Teen

Challenge center and listened as a staff member talked about the hope and new life Jesus offers. Nancy tearfully prayed the same words she had spoken years earlier in vacation Bible school. John joined her in accepting Christ as Savior.

A few days after entering Teen Challenge, Nancy received the baptism in the Holy Spirit. That same week, she sensed God's healing during a worship service.

"This warmth just flooded my head," Nancy says. "It occurred to me God was touching me."

Seth and Eric visited that weekend and immediately noticed their mother was able to speak

with coherent sentences for the first time in months.

"There was evidence of the restoration that had taken place in my mind," Nancy says.

Over the next year, Nancy also received emotional healing for the rape, abuse and abortions.

"It was like the Lord took me back to the place where I was raped and showed me He cared about what happened to me," Nancy says. "I was finally able to let go of all the hurt."

New life

After graduating from the program, Nancy accepted a secretarial position with Teen

Challenge of the Midlands in Colfax, Iowa. She later became a teacher and counselor at the women's center there.

Free of her former addictions, Nancy became a devoted mother, even managing to homeschool her children.

While working at Teen Challenge, Nancy met Wade Dickerson, a fellow staff member. The two married in 1990, and Wade became the adoptive father of Seth and Eric.

Today the Dickersons work for the national Assemblies of God headquarters in Springfield, Mo. Nancy is a pledge specialist for AG World Missions, and Wade

works for AG Financial.

Nancy, now 50, says she is grateful to have good relationships with her sons and six grandchildren. She tells anyone who will listen nothing is too hard for God.

"God took a person who gave up on life and He gave back hope," she says. "Now I'm a grandma who can tell my grandchildren Jesus loves them. When they're old enough, I'll explain to them what He has done for me." **tpe**

CHRISTINA QUICK is staff writer for *Today's Pentecostal Evangel*.

E-mail your comments to tpe@ag.org.

NOTHING'S TOO HARD FOR GOD

I OPENING

Mohammed:

- Three years' education
- Prays five times a day
- Believes Jesus was a good Muslim
- No one has ever told him otherwise

Across the Middle East, North Africa and the Arabian Peninsula, Muslims are choosing to follow Jesus Christ. In some places they come by ones and twos - in other places by the thousands. Someone like you reached out in Christ's love to them. It's what we do almost every day in Arab lands where people have never really heard His story.

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