

Tommy's Story

Hello, friend! My name is Tommy. Would you please allow me to share my story with you? Thanks!

Living the good life

I was born in Denver, Colorado in 1968. My ethnic heritage is Mexican-American. My father left the family when I was two years old. My mother married again; my stepfather was a good provider, and was really the only father I knew. I was raised in the Catholic church. I was baptized, received my first communion and confirmed. But we rarely attended church. Yet whenever someone witnessed to me about Jesus Christ or God, I brushed it off and replied that I already knew God and I had my religion from the Catholic church.

In school I loved to compete in athletics and I loved to party. I lettered in football and wrestling. I was also a tough guy and a fighter; at 5'9" and 240 pounds, I could more than hold my own.

After high school, I married my sweetheart and started a job in a warehouse. We had three children: two boys and a girl. At age 24, I had a chance to move from the warehouse into the electrician's apprenticeship program. I was excited at the opportunity to learn a trade where I could take better care of my family. Things were looking good for me. I was quite happy with my life and felt I had all that a man really needed: a good job, a nice car, a house, a family, and all the sports I could handle. My philosophy of life was: as long as I was having fun, everything was OK.



Devastating news

But after only two weeks on the new job, I felt a numbness in my right arm. The doctor sent me immediately to an emergency room where I was diagnosed with arterio venous malformation (AVM) in my head. This is a medical condition where a blood vessel can rupture and leak. In my case, the leaking caused nerve damage. Then it went into my brain stem and formed a tumor. I was told there was nothing the doctors could do, and that I would die within six months!

I visited several other doctors but they all refused to operate because of the low chance of survival. Finally I found a doctor who would operate, but he warned there was a 50-50 chance I would not survive the operation. The day before the operation, I was very scared of dying. Even though my religion taught that heaven was a beautiful place, I had no assurance that's where I would go.

During the 7 ½ hour procedure, the doctor removed the tumor and made sure the blood vessel was no longer leaking. I died on the operating table but was quickly revived. I barely survived the operation. I was in a coma for two weeks and the intensive care unit for 45 days. I spent a total of 3 ½ months in the hospital.

When I was alone at the hospital, I could not fall asleep because I was so afraid I would not wake up. I still feared death. I could only sleep when my wife visited me and held onto my hand. It got so bad that when I fell asleep, she would place my hand on the bed rail so I would think she was still holding on. My love for my family was the only thing that kept me going through the worst days and nights. Those relationships gave me the strength and will to live.

When I went into the hospital for the operation, I had the numbness in my right arm but there were no problems with walking or talking. I came out in a wheelchair. Something inside my brain had been damaged and I suffered stroke symptoms. Today I still have cerebral palsy symptoms. My right side is

impaired (that's why I'm in the wheelchair) and I have a speech impediment.

Losing everything

When I left the hospital, I was moved to a rehabilitation home for three weeks. Afterward I finally came home to live with my family, but things would never be the same as before the operation. One year later, my wife divorced me. I was emotionally devastated by this and my will to get better was gone.

I was now all alone – no wife to care for me and no children around to lift my spirits. I also had no parents to care for me; before the illness came, my mother and step-father had died within two months of each other. So I moved in with my grandparents and started drinking heavily. Then I tried to pull myself out of it. I bought a townhome, moved into it and thought I was finally getting my life together again. But emotionally and physically, nothing had really changed. One day while I was working out, I realized that things were never going to improve. So I cried out to God for help and told him I couldn't do this on my own anymore.

Within a few weeks, out of the blue I heard from Jeff, a high school buddy I had not seen in two years. Jeff heard about my situation and wanted to help. He became my closest friend through his acts of kindness. He visited me often, encouraged me to work out, and helped me with my everyday affairs.

After high school, Jeff had become a born-again believer of Jesus Christ. He shared his faith with me and took me to church, but I resisted his challenges with that same old excuse: that I was a Catholic and I already knew God. I was thankful for Jeff's friendship and help, but did not want his religion. Jeff moved away for one year. When he returned to Denver, his family joined Woodside Baptist Church and he invited me to hear the preacher. I thought: OK, why not? If I go, maybe he will stop bugging me!

New hope for my life!

This time, I was really touched by the clear preaching of God's word. I realized that I was a sinner separated from God, and when I died I would spend eternity in hell. I was still afraid of dying, and for the first time I understood that my Catholic religion could not save me. I repented of my sins and by faith I placed my trust in the finished work of Jesus Christ. He died on the cross and rose again, so that God could give the gift of eternal life to me and to anyone else who believed in him. I was born-again and became a disciple of Jesus Christ. Never again do I have to fear death, because I have received the gift of eternal life!

I am no longer alone. God is now my father and Jesus Christ is my best friend. I also have a new family on earth, fellow Christians who love and care for me. Every Sunday and Wednesday, I have a great church to go where people are concerned about my needs and where I also have the chance to serve others and make a difference with my life.



Since I became a Christian, I have seen God provide many things for me and I praise him for everything I have. I am now able to live in my own apartment and attend classes at the

community college. God has also given me the ability to participate in several different types of therapy and exercise, all of which are very helpful to my recovery.

I don't want you to feel sorry for me. I have accepted that this wheelchair and my disabilities are the will of God for my life at this time. God uses my life as a way to tell others about the hope I found in Jesus Christ. God has also promised to give me a new body in heaven. That gives me great joy and purpose for my life. I want to live the rest of my life serving him.

What about your life?

It is my desire that you too will get serious about your relationship with God. But I pray for you, friend, that you won't have to go through the same terrible trials as me, before God finally gets *your* attention!

What does God want to do in *your* life? Here's what the Bible teaches.

God loves you!

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3:16

God has a wonderful plan for your life.

"I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." John 10:10b

But because of our sin, we are separated from God.

"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." Romans 3:23

The penalty for our sin is death.

"For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Romans 6:23

The penalty for our sin was paid by Jesus Christ!

"But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Romans 5:8

If we repent of our sin, then confess and trust Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, we will be saved from our sins.

"For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." Romans 10:13

"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Romans 10:9,10

Can you be sure that if you ask Christ to save you, He will?

"Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God . . . ; these things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life..." I John 5:1,13

If you are ready to trust Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, but not sure how to ask him, here is a prayer to help you:



"Lord Jesus, I know that I am a sinner. I know you died for my sins. Right now I invite you into my heart to be my Savior and Lord and I willingly turn from my sin and give my life to you. Thank you for saving me. In Jesus' Name Amen."

If you prayed that prayer and meant it, next you need to learn about the new life in Christ by joining a local church. I would be very glad to help you with that! Call Woodside Baptist at 303-322-5730, or visit us at 8500 E. Alameda Ave., Denver, CO 80231. If you weren't able to make that commitment yet and need more answers, go on the Internet to www.woodsidebaptist.org and click on the **Good News** button. You'll find a thorough and easy-to-understand explanation of what it means to be a Christian and to have the gift of eternal life.