

me, and who I would come to see as my spiritual father, started coming around speaking about Christ and what He looked like in the lives of men behind bars. He was persistent but very tactful with his approach, encouraging me to read my Bible and share any questions or thoughts I had about the scriptures I read. Boy, did I - and I had some crazy ones! Through his faithfulness and the Holy Spirit's guidance, I was given the true meaning of Romans 10:9-10: "If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved." Like David in Psalm 17:1, I cried out to God with a whole-hearted confession of His Son Jesus, and I was redeemed! Complete, unmerited redemption!

My life had just changed, never to be the same again. It didn't magically become some fairy-tale; I have had my "bumps" in the road, I have stumbled - but He is always there to pick me up. He has surrounded me with a group of brothers that have stood shoulder to shoulder with me through all my ups and downs. Christ has truly shown Himself to me in my brothers here at Buena Vista Correctional Facility (BVCF)! My mentor has continued to instruct me, and by example show me how to live a peace-filled, Christ-centered life of servitude for the Kingdom of God - just as Paul and his brothers in Christ did behind bars (Col. 4:11). Hallelujah! I am a new man, fully righteous and redeemed (2 Cor. 5:17).

Since the day of my redemption I have continued to study the scriptures, pray, and be mentored - not only by my mentor, but by all the true, God-fearing saints who make up the body here in BVCF. I have completed an apprenticeship program through the Colorado Correctional Industries Trout Farm. I'm in the choir, and I facilitate a weekly prayer meeting where my brothers and I fulfill our God-given responsibility regarding prayer (1 Tim. 2:1-2). The Father has given me a heart set towards prayer and its vital importance in the body of Christ. I am working with our chaplain to structure a hygiene

program which would provide hygiene products for indigent and needy prisoners here at BVCF (as our brothers have done in other facilities). I strive daily to pick up my cross and follow Christ as His disciple (Luke 9:23).

I have lived most of my life not being who I really was. Through the grace of Yahweh I am the man I am today. I strive to serve Him in a manner that testifies to what Christ has done in my life.

Who am I? His!!!

Brothers and sisters, the enemy would have us never know our true identity. Not who we think we are, or who others think we are, but who God would have us be. There's never a place so dark that Christ's light can't shine (John 8:12). He is the light of the world. Things are never too bad for Him to forgive, never too big for Him to handle, never too small for Him to care about. There's nothing in the world that matters more to Him than you (John 3:16)! Don't waste your life searching for who you are. Start living as who He created you to be.

*"...that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, for "In him we live and move and have our being..."*

*(Acts 17:27-28)*

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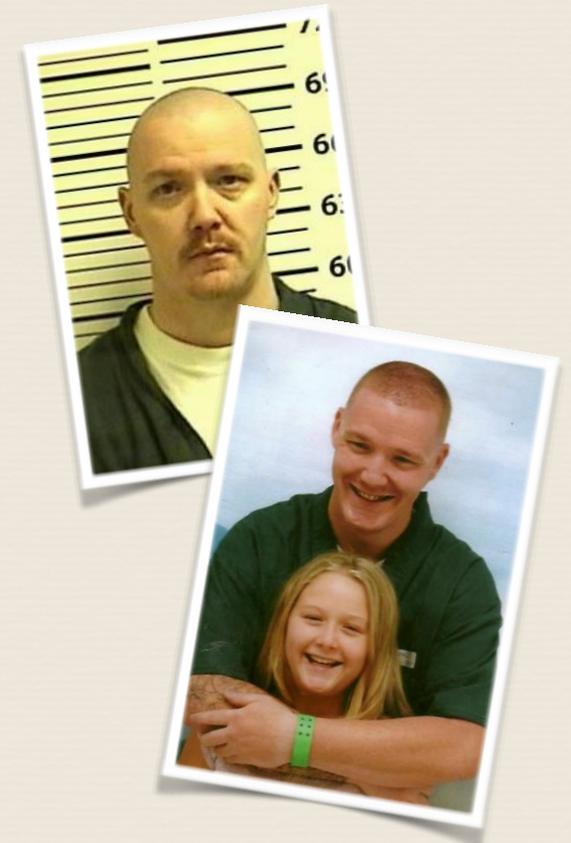
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*"The word of God is not imprisoned." – 2 Timothy 2:9*

# WHO AM I?

*When he came to the end of himself, he discovered his true identity in Jesus Christ*



Who am I? It took me thirty-five years to answer that question. As one of my favorite songs puts it, "Because of whose I am, I know who I am."

My name is Richard, and this is my journey to redemption. I am 37 years old and the son of Rick and Ruth. I'm the father of two beautiful daughters, Tiana and Mikayla, and a son Kayden. I have spent 14 years behind bars, and am currently serving a 24 year sentence for burglary.

My mother worked a lot when I was growing up to support my brother and me. We never had a lot, but she never let us go without. It was during our time home alone that I began drinking, smoking, and getting high. That led to sneaking out late at night and doing the same. I began drinking and getting high somewhere around 14 or 15 years old. It wasn't long before I found myself incarcerated in a juvenile "training school" (a juvenile detention facility). I remained there until I was 18.

Before I was 21 I enlisted in the United States Army. When I was discharged from the Army my life really began to spiral out of control! I found myself in and out of jail because of my drinking and drug use. I was given chance after chance, until I was finally in so much trouble that there weren't going to be any more "slaps on the wrist." I knew I was going to go to prison for a federal gun charge. So I ran from Virginia Beach, VA to Colorado, where I continued to drink and get high until I was finally apprehended, convicted of burglary, and sentenced to 18 years.

I spent 10 years in the Colorado Department of Corrections, where I continued to get high and hide from my feelings, my fears, and the reality of what my life had become, by popping pills. I spent as much time as possible inebriated. I was truly a lost soul. I didn't know who I was. I didn't fit in with any of the groups in prison. I didn't "bang" and I had no other affiliations, so I had to stand alone. I found myself at one point practicing witchcraft, just so I could belong to a group. I stuck to the dos and don'ts that kept me from being labeled as "no good," but I was alone and I felt it. I hid from it in a drug-induced stupor.

I have very few lucid memories of my first seven years in prison. In 2007 I was transferred to Sterling Correctional Facility, where I immediately landed in segregation for being drunk on hooch. While I was at Sterling my younger brother and his wife introduced me to the love of my life. After years of corresponding and visits we were married, and for the first time since being discharged from the Army I began to entertain the possibility that I could actually have a good life. That I could truly be happy. My wife was a ray of light in the darkness that had become my life.

In 2010 I was granted parole. After almost 10 years I was going to be a free man. Life seemed to be looking good for me...until I went back to drinking and using drugs, and in no time was out of control all over again. Over the next year I spent time in jail, in a drug and alcohol treatment program, and finally went back to prison on a parole violation for a domestic violence charge. I did a 180-day turn around in Cheyenne Mountain Re-entry Center, and then I was back home again. I found myself unemployed with bills a mile high, and what seemed like unreasonable demands placed on me as I tried to meet the requirements of both parole and probation for the domestic case. I was also homeless. Parole wouldn't let me stay at home because I couldn't afford to pay for a domestic violence class, and because of the possible threat I posed to my wife and daughter due to my drinking and getting high. To top it all off, my wife was pregnant with my son Kayden.

In my despair I did what I always did - drink! Intoxicated, I committed another burglary and wound up back in prison - this time for 24 years. I lost everything, including my wife, my daughters, and my unborn son. Out of concern for our children, as well as herself, my wife divorced me. The proverbial "rock bottom" had become a reality for me. Up until this point, as out of control as my life was, I lived in the deception that I could handle it on my own. Looking back now, Paul's words to

the Galatians ring true to me: "For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself" (Gal. 6:3). My whole life had been lived in deceit. I deceived my family, my friends - everyone! But I deceived none more than myself.

This reality, along with the weight of losing my soulmate and my children, was a burden I thought I could not bear. So once again I tried to run away from dealing with it. I found myself contemplating ending my own life. I couldn't imagine living with this great burden weighing down on me. I just wanted it all to end - the pain, the shame, the heartache, the hopelessness. I made the decision to take my own life, to get out from under the weight of what that life had become. As I look back now I see the bondage of emotional chains that the enemy had wrapped around me. It was the craziest moment of my life.

I knew what I wanted to do, and had set my mind to do it - but I found that I just could not! I couldn't see it then, but now I know that it was God's holy hand of grace that stayed me in a moment of despair. His hand was steadfast and faithful, as I spent a couple of years thinking that I would end it all the moment I got the nerve. For all that time, God's grace stayed my hand. Hallelujah! Praise Yahweh. "The Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. The Lord is good to all, and his mercy is over all that he has made" (Ps. 145:8-9).

One day a non-believer encouraged me to watch an archeological show on the Christian TV station. When I went to watch it the show wasn't on. Instead, I found a program where a pastor was giving a message about the elect being brought to Christ from all different kinds of worldly lives. I went to sleep that night entertaining the thought that, just maybe, I could still have a life. Maybe my long-awaited plan was not the answer.

The very next day, the man who would later mentor