

MY PRISON STORY

Being sent to prison saved my life. I hear daily how many so inmates complain, and find fault in everyone, and everything but themselves for being incarcerated. I see that my lesson is not the same as most women in prison. Many of the women, in my unit have drug, and alcohol addictions, and are trying to change their own lives for the better.

I am in the Therapeutic Community Program. We are a tight- knit community, dedicated to staying sober, and learning how to recover from drug, and trauma abuse. I, myself, being a drug user, have found that I was on a total path of destruction. I was addicted to opiates and I used other drugs to cope with, the many demons, I had in my life. I came from a family of drug addicts, and that in itself, seemed normal to me. I became a functioning addict.

I have been married twice, have four grown sons and three amazing grandchildren. I worked a full-time job, as well as went to school while raising my children. I actually thought I was living a normal lifestyle. All the while, I was using and abusing pain pills. While I was experiencing the ups, and downs of life, I became immune to what I was taking. I began needing more and more to achieve the feeling that I had grown accustomed to. I eventually started using crack cocaine to obtain a new high.

The chase was on for my next drug of choice. I had become wreck-less, and now my apartment was under surveillance by the drug task-force. I was now living with a well- known crack dealer. The police busted down our door, and I was later charged with possession with intent to sell seventeen grams of crack cocaine.

By this time in my life, I had already lost the trust of my sons, their fathers and most of my family and friends. I looked in the mirror and did not recognize the woman looking back at me. I could not see anyone I knew in her. This was my first time ever being forced to face my addiction. I had managed to make my own nightmares come true.

I went back and forth to court until I was placed on state probation for eight years. The fact that a felony was attached to this probation hung over my head. I honestly thought, that I could manage to be on probation, and do drugs, without violating. I was, so blind to being, a full-blown addict.

By this time in my life, I was on the needle and using meth. I knew exactly when I had to visit my probation officer, so I would be able to plan when I could use drugs and they not be detected in my urine. Let me just say, being an addict sure does make your thinking distorted!

I had managed to achieve my first violation for a positive urine-test. I spent three months in jail for a violation of my probation. My second violation, came for leaving the state and going on the run for two years. This caused me to get six months in jail and put on Community Corrections. All the while, I was still using drugs, trying to keep from feeling the pain of the life I had managed to wreck. I, actually managed to make it through the Community Correction Program and went to rehab.

I stayed clean for over four years for the first time in my adult life. I was able to get somewhat on my own feet. I was still on state probation, and thought I had a grip on my life and situation. I began using Subutex without a prescription. I made the excuse to myself that I wanted to see how it made me feel before I tried to get my own prescription from the doctor. Just like any substance that I used to change my own way of thinking or feeling, I was wrong. I began abusing it and never even made it to the doctor to obtain my own prescription. My probation officer made a surprise visit and called me in for an immediate drug screen. I failed for Subutex, which I knew I would. She actually told me that my best bet would be get into a rehab and she would do what she could to not violate my probation. She stated that it was totally up to her boss. I was able to get into rehab and stayed for twenty-eight days.

I honestly started to take my recovery seriously and prayed to my higher power for guidance. On my next visit with her in the office, she wanted another urine specimen was clean and knew I could pass but my body would not cooperate. I tried a multiple of times to urinate for her and to no avail, I could not. She became very irate with me and decided that I was declining to produce a drug specimen and failed me. I was totally devastated. For once in my life I was clean and could not prove it. I begged her to take my blood, a mouth swab or just give me a little more time that day. I was given a summons to appear in court. I talked to my attorney and was ready to face whatever punishment the judge was going to impose. I prayed that whatever was Gods will, let it be.

I was revoked to serve the eight-year sentence in the Tennessee Department of Corrections. I was taken immediately into custody and put in my local jail. I kept praying that what God wanted from me, please show me! Many of the women, awaiting to go to prison from my county, had been waiting for up to a year. I only had to wait three days. I arrived in Nashville, at what was at the time called the Tennessee Prison for Women. I had to be classified, so they could determine, what, and where, I could best serve my time. Needless to say, I was scared out of my mind. I learned, from the get-go, to keep mouth shut, eyes open and to do what I was told. I felt so alone but I also knew that God was always with me.

I went deep in my Bible, started doing as many Bible Studies as I could to learn every aspect of the bible. For once in my life, I had faith that no matter what came my way, it was all in God's hands. I actually had hope in the future. I was sober, happy and began to find my true inner self! As time went on, God began to show me my true identity, and help me to realize my own potential. Gods' grace had come to me just at the right time.

I got my classification in December of 2019, and was headed to West Tennessee State Penitentiary in Henning. This prison had a well-known drug and alcohol program. I felt like I had been given the best outcome because of my charges. The program had a long waiting list, and most of the women, were being mandated to it by the parole board. TCOM, also know as Therapeutic Community, in a 128-bed program unit that was at least nine months and up to twelve. I had not at this point, been given a parole date, much less had the chance to be mandated by one. I simply would, just have to be patient, and wait until I could get a chance to go up for parole.

I continued to do my bible studies, and even signed up for every class that I was eligible to take. I was determined to stay busy, and prayed daily for God to show me where he wanted me to be. I worked hard at everything I did, and was finally given a parole date in December 2020. I had total faith in God, if it be in his will for me, then I would make parole. I knew that, I needed, and wanted to stay clean and sober, no matter what the outcome was from the parole board. I went up for parole, I was told that, I could be released upon completion of the TCOM program! That was a true blessing! I received my final papers a few days later, and to my surprise, was taken on over to the unit for admittance. On my final decision from the parole

board, they had recommended that I would need to go to a half-way house when I complete the program.

I have been in the Therapeutic Community for five months now and will graduate in September,2021. I can honestly say, that when I look in the mirror, I see a strong, intelligent Christian woman, with a promising future, looking back at me! God is my rock and without him I am nothing!