

by **Tommy Hanrahan**

My name is Tommy and I am the lead elder of [Firebrand Christian Church](#) in Ireland. I came to know Jesus about 17 years ago after having had a fairly colourful childhood, including being a victim of abuse, which set me on a course for my life to be quite crazy. At the age of 11, I was already doing things I shouldn't have been doing. I always felt like I wasn't wanted or needed, never feeling accepted. My parents loved me and gave me so much, but I was always a bit of a loner because of what had happened to me at a young age.

At 15 years of age, I found myself at a crossroads in my life, I was into sports and I had two sets of friends. One group was into sports too and the other was into robbing cars, sniffing glue and taking drugs. At the time I chose to go with the second group of friends and within a year I was locked up in a juvenile detention centre. From there on out my life spiralled out of control. At the age of 17, I was shot at point-blank range with a shotgun, it's the first miracle I saw in my life. At the time I didn't recognise it as God but now looking back I see the hand of God all over it. I was shot from a foot and a half away and it's safe to say that it's impossible to miss from that distance but it was like the hand of God smacked the bullets away.

I, however, didn't learn my lesson, I kept on going, landing me in hospital seven times because of extreme violence. By the age of 31 I found myself at the hands of another gunman and this time it was really bad and I ended up in a coma for 4 months. I died about four times whilst in hospital, again I had been shot at point-blank range. I knew I was dying, teams of paramedics were around me, but I knew I needed to call out to God – and He saved me. His grace got me through that but I still didn't learn from that lesson. After that, I ended up hooked on coke (cocaine) and I ended up in a really dark place. For three years I was crazy and so full of fear, I didn't know who had shot me so I was fearful of them coming back for me and trying to kill me again. I didn't sleep for three years at night time, I'd just nap during the day. I was hooked on cocaine, heroin and all the things that go along with that lifestyle. One night I found myself in a car park on my own, New Year's Eve. I had loads of money and loads of cocaine, but I just felt empty and I started crying. I ended up telling my friend that I wanted to end my life and he just laughed it off and told me to go and sleep, but four days later I had an encounter with Jesus that changed my life.

A little while later I was at a Christian friend's home and I was watching this documentary on a lad who was a part of the paramilitary in Ireland. He spoke of how nothing enabled him to be the man God wanted him to be, who he wanted to be until he picked up the bible. At that moment something happened, it was like I had a vision of Jesus on the cross looking down at me on my knees crying...and all I could do at that moment was ask Him for forgiveness. I just started screaming, 'Jesus, Jesus, Jesus please forgive me'. At that moment all I could see was my own sins that had put Jesus on that cross, and that I deserved to be condemned, but all I saw in Jesus' face was compassion and mercy. I got off the ground, I'd fallen to my knees as a hopeless heroin addict and I got up off the ground a brand new

person. I didn't have any withdrawals, that was 17 years ago, and my life has never been the same since and it's all to the glory of God. I had been around Christians many times, but I had never grasped what it meant that Jesus had died for my sins, I couldn't comprehend it. All I asked God for was forgiveness, and He gave it to me, but along with that, He gave me everything... I just want to praise Jesus!

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Tommy, otherwise known as 'Hammy' is married to Brenda and together they have three grown sons. Tommy leads Firebrand Christian Church in Dublin and is passionate about evangelism and seeing the church reaching into their local community.

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