

ESCAPE FROM DEMON POSSESSION

Jonathan's Taylor Personal Testimony

I would like to briefly introduce Jonathan to you. -Seth

Jonathan is my twin sister's son. He worked part time in the past for our ministry. He was preparing to leave for Guam as a missionary and my father Vance came to me with a very concerned look on his face. Daddy proceeded to basically tell me that Jon needs to stay and work here, we do not know the future and if something happens to me Jon could run the ministry. My reply was that it would be good for him to go and do some missionary work for now. I am so glad that he did. He found a wonderful wife in the process and has now come back to help us here at the ministry.

Jon and Rhyann are very dedicated to the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy. The Lord has blessed Jon with ability to research and write. I know daddy would be so happy if he knew Jon is taking up his mantle and carrying on the work. You will be blessed with future articles by him. I know you want to know more about this ministries new writer so, here is his story.

I was raised a Seventh-day Adventist and grew up in Tennessee. When I was young we had morning and evening worship every day, including singing. Each worship was close to an hour long. We went to church every Sabbath; my mom was a Sabbath School teacher and my dad was head deacon. Though the churches we attended varied through the years, these same positions were often held by my parents. I went to private SDA schools for the majority of grade school. For the rest of my education, I was homeschooled. I have an older brother and a little brother and sister. My hobbies as a kid included kayaking, fishing, hiking, cooking, and cleaning (yes, I enjoy housework). I was born with Cutis Aplasia Congenita (a very rare congenital disorder that causes the absence of skin at birth, mostly on the scalp but also on any part of the body) and had close to 20 surgeries before the age of 12. The cause, for newborns, is unknown at this time; even more research is needed to solve this issue. I refused pain medication as early as two years old. At 12, I decided I would rather wear a hat for the rest of my life in order to cover my extensive scars from the sun than to continue surgeries. I still despise going to the doctor, but I will for life-threatening conditions.

My addiction to video games and worthless forms of entertainment began one Christmas when my dad

bought a PlayStation 2 (a home video game system) for my brother and I. My love of this grew over the years, from ages 10–15, and took full control of my life after I moved in with my dad around the age of 15. I would play it for 10 or more hours a day, immersing myself in fantasy in order to hide from reality. My heart was filled with sadness and emptiness that had begun to fester since my parent's divorce. Many things shaped my life choices. I love both my parents and believe they did their very best in raising me, but they are human. I have no desire to focus on their mistakes. It is sufficient to say that Satan has thousands of years of experience destroying Christian homes.

By 15, I had stopped reading the Bible, but I still loved God, or at least I had nothing against Him. I had an intense hatred of women in my heart that lasted into my early twenties. I began to listen to music—really dark music. I stopped going to church after I was reproved by an elderly lady for talking to one of my friends who I had known since she was born (I was 17 and she was 12). I had just entered the church and began talking with the young girl, when the elderly lady interrupted our conversation in order to tell me that my friend was underage. The insinuation filled me with such disgust and anger that I left before even going inside to hear the sermon. I say that I stopped going to church; but the truth is, I hadn't been to church in more than a year before this experience. Instead I stayed home and played video games with my friends. I never worked on Sabbath because it was a connection to a happier life I had not experience in years, but I certainly didn't keep it holy.

I graduated from high school with a GED a month after turning 17; then I enrolled in the technical program for HVACR (Occupational profile: heating, ventilation, air conditioning, and refrigeration). HVACR is a skill that is needed in homes, apartment complexes, office buildings, hospitals, and retail stores. Virtually every building that is standing uses some type of HVACR system. I graduated with a technical degree and took nearly enough credits to graduate with an associates degree, then dropped out of college at 18. I didn't care much about grades; my priorities were video games, and I didn't know what I wanted to do with my life. I got a job working with my dad, making tomahawks and knives shortly after turning 18. I excelled in my work without much effort because of the traits of character my parents had instilled in me

from childhood. An article about me was published in “KnifeNews” (a media platform our company wanted to be featured in) because of something I made as a joke. I wasn’t present for the interview because nobody realized it was an article about me until the interview began.

Around this time I began separating myself from my video games on Sabbath and visiting my grandparents on my dad’s side. I would spend the day window-shopping at antique stores with my uncle or fishing with my grandpa. I enjoyed the opportunity to leave and think. I would often stop at an overlook and contemplate my life. My grandfather died of a sudden heart attack a day after I went fishing with him in the mid portion of my 18th year. It was devastating to me because my grandparents were the only other link I had to happy memories of the past other than Sabbath. I continued to visit my uncle and grandmother every weekend, but I generally just read Manga (Japanese Comics) or watched TV with them.

My addiction to video games peaked after I moved out of my dad’s house and into an apartment I rented with some friends, when I was nearly 20 years old. I had a God sized hole in my heart, and I tried to fill it with socially acceptable addictions. One day I played video games for a full 24 hours, only pausing to use the bathroom. At the end, I remember thinking that, if I had played a different game or if I had played for 25 hours instead, I would have found what my heart longed for. I averaged 1200-1500mg of caffeine daily, once even exceeding 2500mg, resulting in a caffeine overdose with all the symptoms. I now know 2500mg is around the range discovered to be lethal to humans. Just for reference, an average cup of coffee has 80-100mg of caffeine. If two to four cups of caffeine (250mg of caffeine) is known to reduce cerebral blood flow by 22%-30%, I shudder to think of what 10 times that amount would do!

At 20 I was depressed, addicted, and empty inside. I did evil I would not have dreamed of as a child. I became desensitized from my games even though I had tried to protect my ability to empathize with sick and unfortunate people when I was younger. I had taken a CNA course, but dropped out because a nurse told me that my problem was that I cared about the patients too much. (CNA training courses are designed to provide students with the knowledge nursing assistants need to provide basic care for their patients.) Now at 20 and only a year after my CNA class, I did the most violent things video games would allow, which is rather extensive these days. I was very good because of my dedication and mindset: I played for fun, not to win. Even in highly competitive games, I had immense patience and a good attitude. Patience is very beneficial to have even when pursuing a course of evil. I was significantly better than my peers, but I understood that this was simply because of the time I had put into each game. God has blessed me with a mind that can grasp and understand details in a

split second, and truly my success was because I was wasting His blessings.

I knew something was wrong, but I expected my life would change for the better at 21. I thought maybe alcohol would fill the void in my heart. I was in no rush to try it, but it was my last hope. I often wondered if what I was experiencing was all that life had to offer. I had gotten a tattoo of a dragon on my arm, to commemorate the death of a friend who had committed suicide. That friend had asked me if there was anything in religion, and I had told him “Nothing but snakes and hypocrites.” One night shortly after telling him this, he said he wanted to play a specific game with me (the one the dragon is from). I told him I was too tired, and we got in an argument. He was drunk and said something along the lines of “You don’t care about me. I should just kill myself.” I responded that maybe he should, then I went to bed. He sent me a message that was obscure (not readily understood or clearly expressed); the subject is unfit to be recalled here. That was the last time I spoke to him. The guilt was almost unbearable. I had a dull sense of what I had done; no doubt, my friend is eternally lost. Not only had I turned him from his only Saviour, I had encouraged him to end his life. He died believing he would be reincarnated into another world as a hero like the Anime (Japanese cartoons) he watched.

I started drinking after I turned 21, but only for a month. My best friend took me to a bar to celebrate my birthday. It was the first time I had actually gotten drunk; I drank way too much. The experience was so bad that I swore to God that I would never drink again, an action I took very seriously even as a heathen. My experience left me confused. Why could I not enjoy the things other people did? How could anyone want to drink again? I concluded that people only enjoyed drinking because they had never lived or because they couldn’t remember the experience. This to me was complete ignorance. I had tried everything and found my experience lacking. I felt the words of Ecclesiastes 1:14 keenly: “I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and, behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit.” My addiction to video games did not waver, but my experience did. Video games simply could not give me any form of satisfaction. I began to seek God, sometimes going, on Sabbath, to places I went as a kid.

My music choices had gotten much darker, the bands I listened to were blatantly satanist, the games I chose were filled with occult references. As a child, the shadows on my walls had sometimes taken life and tried to speak to me; at the time I had hated them. My fear of such things had dulled over the years; now they would speak to me in indirect ways—flashing images in my head, always designed to keep me out of trouble while I did evil. I often knew things others didn’t and used the knowledge to my advantage. I began seeing things while doing certain sins, vague shapes that became more pronounced. I never intend-

ed to do evil; as is said, the road to hell is paved with good intentions. Those who sin cease to be in control of their own lives. The day you decide to resist lust, all that control is just a mirage that suddenly fades.

After my experience with alcohol, I became very depressed, but I never showed it. People always thought I was happy because I laughed and joked and always smiled, but they were very mistaken. My best friend was a tattoo artist. He had done the dragon tattoo, then he called me to ask if I would like to have the first tribal tattoo he had designed on my arm. I didn't really care; he needed the practice, and I didn't mind being a guinea pig. After all, it was free. This time, the tattoo experience was different; my heart had felt so empty. When the tattoo was half finished, my heart suddenly ceased to be empty and became very cold. I found it hard to breathe because of the cold. The experience reminded me of a book I had read about a man having an Ice demon sealed in his chest. The experience passed without much more thought.

Saturday, December 15, 2018, was the day I realized I was a slave. The realization was not perfect, but it was there. I had decided to visit the place where my family had gone every Sabbath, but this time I took my Bible. I was unable to read it. Every time I tried, I saw two transparent hands covering my eyes instead. It was a cloudy day; and, as I looked at the sky, the thought I had was, if God really saw me and cared, He would give me a sign. I imagined the sky opening up and a beam of light shining on me. And that is precisely what happened. In the midst of the thick clouds, a hole opened and a beam of light, the only one in the entire sky, shone around me in a 10-foot circle. It did not move on, but after a minute or two, the light disappeared. As I watched, I said out loud, "I don't believe you." My reading plans had been prevented. I tried to leave, but I was struck with a powerful desire to fulfill a secret sin. I refused and got in my car, intending to go home. As I drove away and the further I drove, the more I felt a hand close around my neck and tighten until I thought I would die. Only then did I turn around and obey. But my heart became filled with anger. I tried to think about the situation. But every time I recalled it in my mind, I was overwhelmed by the thought that nothing strange had occurred. My mind was so clouded by the caffeine I drank that I eventually agreed with the thought.

Now I will relate what happened in the next 13 days. I became incredibly depressed. Somewhere, in my mind, I understood I was not in control of my life any longer and that I had not been for a long time. One day, after I came home from work, I sat on my couch and turned on my gaming system; then I felt very strongly that I had reached a crossroads in my life. I turned it off. There I sat, with my energy drink in my hand, the touched up tattoo work still healing on my arm, and the guilt of the eternal loss of my friend on my shoulders. The dark songs fighting for supremacy in my mind were stilled. I was presented

from outside my mind with four choices, and I understood whatever I chose would be permanent. Kill yourself, continue the life you are living, start doing drugs, or seek God. I ruled drugs out immediately; I could obviously see that was not a key to a better life. I ruled out continuing in my life next. I had already been doing that, and nothing worthwhile had come of it. This left suicide; I looked at a knife that I had helped make hanging on my bed and thought about the experience of using it. I then thought about all my friends that would miss me, and my parents that had sacrificed so much to give me a normal life. I determined I was not selfish enough; I would rather live in secret misery than make those who cared about me sad. I made up my mind that I wanted none of these. I was left with the choice to seek God. I decided I might as well try. I got my Bible and opened it. I prayed that God would come into my heart and bless my reading. This time there were no hands, but the book might as well have been shut. I didn't comprehend a word, so I prayed again. I tried again to read, but still nothing was understood. My attention was drawn to my life, to my music, and to my diet (though I was raised vegetarian, I didn't even made the distinction between clean and unclean. I ate everything), and to my recent supernatural experiences. I wondered to myself if maybe God couldn't come in because something else was living in my heart. I thought about all the things that result in possession from a book I heard as a kid. I still vividly recalled them. I had done all of them; they were even habitual. It must have been God who gave me the measure of faith I needed. I never doubted that He heard me, and I never doubted that He had the power to do what I asked. I did doubt that, after everything I had done, He would answer. I had forgotten that He died for me just as much as He died for my friend. I thought, in His justice, my case had been decided. I deserved to have the same response from Him that my friend had received from me. Imagine my threefold surprise when He answered my prayer before I had even finished and cast out the demon that I wasn't even sure was in my heart. No sooner had I begun the prayer, "Please come into my heart and cast out the demon," than the demon was dragged from its house (in me). My skin tingled, the tattoos on my arms felt like they were on fire, my tongue moved on its own, saying "No, no, no" and I was struck with indescribable fear as if I were standing at the bar of God. I knew, in that moment, that God had seen everything I had ever done and that He was looking at me. Instead of repaying me with justice, He granted me mercy. I couldn't move for a minute, and it was five or 10 minutes before I could stand up. The shaking was so bad, but I was sustained through all the fear by the thought that God had answered me. At the time, I didn't understand why He had answered, but I was beyond curious. That night, the demon returned many times. I could feel it reaching into my soul, trying to climb in. I would beg

God for protection, and He would send it just beyond the boundaries of my house. I would then go to sleep, only to be awakened a few minutes later. The next day, I was a different person. I was determined, in my heart, to return to where I last was spiritually. I no longer cursed, I was vegetarian, I didn't play video games, and I didn't drink caffeine. I began reading my Bible with the same dedication I once gave video games. While I was driving to work I called my uncle Seth Ferrell and told him my experience. He was the only person in my family I felt would believe me. God always leads us one step at a time. Seth invited me to GYC (Generation of Youth for Christ); someone had canceled, and my hotel and ticket were paid for. The day I drove to Seth's home to leave for GYC, my car had serious mechanical issues. I was halfway to Seth's, entering a town where I could stop and repair the vehicle so I could make it to work the next Monday, or I could drive it all the way to Seth's place and possibly ruin it. I knew if I stopped in town, my car would be fixed, but I was terrified that I would go back to the way I was before if I missed GYC. I knew God was calling me. I decided I would rather follow God's way, whatever the cost to myself; if He saw fit, He could give me a new car or repair the one I had.

On the 13th day I was at GYC. During the Friday night plenary appeal, I heard the speaker call me by name. I had no desire to resist; I found Jesus' cross at the foot of the stage and left my burdens there. Someone in the audience was moved as they watched me cry. I was returning to my seat when a young man with tears on his face hugged me. He welcomed me and said he wanted to see me in heaven. When I returned from GYC, my car started up without any problems—an undeniable miracle. Satan did not give up. My heart has condemned me; I have almost fallen into fanaticism; I have thought I committed an unpardonable sin; I have slipped; I have found myself a false accuser, an evil surmiser, a hasty fool. Demons have demanded that I bow down and worship them. I have looked into the eyes of a demon and seen its hatred for me. I have seen a weak reflection of their hatred on friends and even on pastors' faces. I have failed God many times, though I may have overcome many of my sins. I am more guilty now than I was when I gave my life to God. But God has not failed me; He has always been faithful. He continues to forgive me and calls it justice in 1 John 1:9. He has given me cars, houses, family, my wife, hope, and a future. All I have been able to give Him is my heart. I see little good in my life. All my hope is centered on what Jesus has done for me. What is the sum of my understanding? Everybody in the world is looking for the fruits of the Spirit, but they are looking in the wrong place. They are not our enemies; however, the demons who control them are. God is fishing for them, and we are supposed to be the bait. Instead of being bait, many have been repellent.

To close, I would like to share the two verses

that have meant the most to me, with the addition of a quote. "All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me; and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37).

If we are willing to go to Jesus, we are given by Father to Jesus and Jesus will not cast us out. We must go to Him in a spirit of humility, confessing our sins. I believe this is one of the most powerful verses in the Bible. Often people are turned away because of appearance or reputation, but Jesus looks only at the desire of the leper. Even now, after almost 2,000 years, His mighty right arm has not weakened. He is still making people whole. There are no hopeless cases with God. Those who observe these things will understand the lovingkindness of the Lord. "Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world (1 John 4:4). Those who are of God overcome the wicked one. God is greater than Satan; He could destroy him as easily as you or I could pick up a pebble and cast it into the ocean. His temptations are limited by the power of Jesus Christ. All can be overcome through the strength of the Holy Spirit. I once shared my testimony at a church on Thanksgiving. When I was finished, an elderly gentleman approached me and asked for prayer. He told me that he was struggling with diabetes and that he could not have much sugar, but he loved ice cream. I told him that I knew God could give him the power to stop eating it. He laughed at me, and I will never forget what he said: "I don't want to stop! I just want to eat less." This is the key to Satan's success in the church. Many who profess to fear God (defined in Proverbs 8:13 as the hatred of evil) don't actually hate evil; they are uncommitted to God but are also uncommitted to sin, lukewarm, and adulterers, part-time sinners. Here was a man willfully destroying his body, the temple of God, disobeying the prophet's warning, and asking for the strength of God to skirt the consequences so he could sustain his chosen path. God doesn't dwell in our hearts, so we can tame the dragon; He dwells there, so we can overcome him. When God is in our hearts, our danger is only imagined.

"Remember this. If you have made mistakes, you certainly gain a victory if you see these mistakes and regard them as beacons of warning. Thus you turn defeat into victory, disappointing the enemy and honoring your Redeemer" (*Christ's Object Lessons*, 332).

When God views the mistakes we have made, He considers the ones we have learned from as victories. This is who God is; only God can bring victory out of defeat. He looks upon all who have overcome and sees only success. Why? Because God desires us to have a perfect character, so we can dwell with Him eternally. It may have caused Him untold pain; but as we learned to hate evil, we were warned and transformed. Truly, God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. —Jon