

## CHRIS MAYHEW'S STORY

I was born in England to a Catholic family and although brought up as a practising catholic and even going to a catholic school, I was always aware of a spiritual hunger deep inside that was not satisfied. As a teenager I developed an interest in eastern religions and the occult. I came across some books about a Mexican sorcerer who used mind-altering drugs as a gateway into the spiritual world. These books had a profound effect on me and as I teamed these up with my interest in 1960's music and hippy culture it was no surprise that when I later encountered drugs in my circle of friends I was happy to try them.

### DRUGS

At the age of 15 I was smoking cannabis and soon after began experimenting with hallucinogenic "magic" mushrooms. I left home at the age of 17 to pursue my quest into an alternative lifestyle of seeking enlightenment through taking drugs, but what in reality was just one wild party after the next.

By the age of 19 I was in a relationship with a man and had two babies, both girls. Although we tried to work out the relationship it failed so by the time I was 22 I was a single mother of two children. I continued in my cannabis smoking and occasional mushroom tripping but things started to get really bad for me when I began to inject amphetamines or speed. I quickly became a regular user and my life became all about drugs. I lost loads of weight and was literally wasting away. After a year of this I had a moment of clarity where I was able to see the state my life was in and I stopped injecting the speed. (I put this down to God working in my life even then, protecting me before I even knew Him). I saw some of my friends end up in prison or going mad with speed induced psychosis and even one man who killed himself while high.

### THE SEARCH

As I contemplated my life so far now at 23 and my children 3 and 4 years of age, I decided to leave my home in search of a better life. I had heard that there were networks of hippy style communes still around so I decided to try some out. After travelling to Amsterdam and then London I found a commune in Wales and settled into life there with 14 other people. What at first seemed like an ideal life of shared meals and running a small farm soon turned into another round of endless parties as everyone there took drugs. Later when a band of "New Age Travellers" camped on our land for an extended stay it just got wilder and wilder until social workers became involved. I was afraid that they might take my children so I left for Ireland as I had a friend there who had invited me.

When I came to Ireland I soon adopted alcohol into my diet of drugs. I got into such a state that I was spending all my money on drink and drugs and relying on friends to feed me and the girls. We spent almost every day in the pub. A crisis point came for me when I had an accident at a party and I cut myself badly and had to get stitched up at the hospital. When I got back home to the girls they said "mum you could have killed yourself" and it was like a light going on. I realised what a mess I had become and knew I had to do something about it.

### THE OCCULT

During all this time I had kept up my interest in the occult, tarot cards. I Ching and various different New Age "isms." With a close look though even I could see that my high ideals for a spiritual life and enlightenment were not really coming to pass in my life. I had had some moments of "bliss" through magic mushrooms but by the day after when I was back to normal I was no better for the experience, only bad tempered, tired and unable to carry this bliss into my real everyday life. I could see I was failing in my quest to become spiritual because I was no better a person for all my efforts in fact I was a worse one.

### A FRIEND

The only thing I could think of was this friend of mine who used to hang around the Galway hippy scene telling everyone about Jesus. We were on completely different paths but he used to fascinate me as he talked about Jesus, the presence of God and the power of the Holy Spirit as if they were real things. The Jesus I had been brought up with was only a baby in a manger or a long haired teacher on the shores of Galilee 2000 years ago. He had no relevance to me at all. However I thought, seeing as I had tried everything else I may as well give him a shot, so I agreed to go to a "prayer meeting" with my friend.

This was the turning point of my whole life, the spiritual awakening I had been searching for since my teenage years. As I walked into the prayer meeting I could sense that these people had something I lacked. They looked so happy and their eyes were shining. I received prayer in this meeting as I knew I needed help to change my life and under their guidance I asked God to forgive my sins through Jesus and then I received prayer to be filled with the Holy Spirit. At that moment I experienced a power that I had never encountered before. I felt fire travel through my body and my knees buckled under me as the Holy Spirit filled me. I was filled with the most incredible love and peace and in that moment I knew without a doubt that Jesus was alive! I was dumbfounded that in the last place I expected, I had received a real genuine spiritual encounter with God and He was Jesus.

Even still this was not the end of my journey to the Light. It took a major crisis yet again in my life before I came to the place where I realised that I was on this road with Jesus forever. I went through rejection and homelessness before I found the place where I could start to rebuild my life. I found Galway Christian Fellowship in 1990 and there met Graeme and Fran Wylie. I was taught how to live my life in a living relationship with God. The partying and drugs and alcoholism became a thing of the past as God stripped away these things from my life.

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## ***THE CHANGE***

The change in me was so dramatic that my old hippy friends used to stop me in the street to ask me what had happened to me! A few years later God gave me a husband and I have been happily married with five wonderful children for the past 16 years.

I began writing songs of thanks and praise to God for all He has done in my life since first becoming a Christian and I am currently in the process of putting my first CD together. Thanks be to God I know now that I have a bright and exciting future ahead of me. I cannot thank Him enough for the brand new start and second chance He has so graciously given me by the power of His Holy Spirit living in me. He has given me more than I could have ever dreamed of and now I experience daily real spiritual fulfilment through knowing Him.