

“From the Bottle to Belief” – Story of the Month

My name is Jake, and I’m an alcoholic.

I didn’t always believe I was one. In fact, for a long time, I was the guy who said, “*I’ve got it under control.*” My drinking started like it does for many—casual, social, fun. I was the life of the party, the funny guy with a beer in hand, the one who never said no to another round. I was in college when I had my first blackout. I brushed it off. Everyone drank like that, didn’t they?

Fast forward ten years, and I was drinking alone in my apartment at 9 a.m., telling myself I needed it just to “function.” My hands shook when I didn’t have alcohol in my system. I lost jobs, relationships, trust. I wasn’t the funny guy anymore. I was just a shell—tired, angry, and ashamed.

The bottom didn’t come with flashing lights or a dramatic intervention. It came quietly, on a Tuesday morning, when I woke up on my kitchen floor in a puddle of vomit with no memory of how I got there. I didn’t cry. I didn’t scream. I just felt... empty. That was the moment something shifted. I didn’t want to die like this.

I picked up the phone and called my sister. I hadn’t talked to her in over a year. I told her I needed help. She didn’t lecture me. She just said, “I’ll come get you.”

That night, she took me to my first AA meeting. I was terrified. Everyone seemed so calm, so put-together. I thought, “*There’s no way they understand what I’ve been through.*” But then someone shared. And for the first time, I heard my story in someone else’s voice. The details were different, sure, but the pain, the shame, the loneliness—they were the same. I wasn’t alone.

That meeting didn’t cure me. I wish I could say I stayed sober from that day forward, but the truth is, I slipped. Twice. But each time I came back, I was welcomed without judgment. People shook my hand, looked me in the eye, and said, “Keep coming back.” And I did.

What changed for me was surrender. I stopped trying to do it *my way*. I got a sponsor. I actually read the Big Book. I started working the Steps, even the ones that scared me. Especially the ones that scared me.

I learned that my problem wasn’t just alcohol—it was me. My thinking. My pride. My fear. Alcohol was just the Band-Aid I used to cover up deeper wounds I didn’t want to face.

AA gave me the space to face them. It didn’t happen overnight, and it wasn’t always pretty. But as I kept coming back, something remarkable happened: I started to change. Not just my habits, but my heart.

Today, I’m a different man. I have over three years sober. I show up for people. I make my bed. I listen more than I talk. I pray, even when I’m not sure who’s listening. I sponsor others, and they keep me honest. My sister and I talk every week, and last year, I got to walk her down the aisle at her wedding. She said, “I’m proud of you.” I used to cry when people said that. Now, I smile and say thank you.

AA didn't just save my life—it gave me a new one.

If you're reading this and you're where I was, I want you to know: you're not alone. You don't have to keep living the way you're living. There's a chair waiting for you at a meeting. There are people who've been through the fire and made it out. We're here, and we'll walk with you until you can stand on your own.

Just take that first step. You never know where it might lead.

Thanks for letting me share.

— *Jake M., Sober since June 12, 2022*