

ONLY

GOD

COULD SET

ME FREE



THE AARON MARTINEZ STORY

**"GOD, IF YOU ARE REAL,
THEN HOW COME YOU'RE
LETTING THIS HAPPEN TO ME?"**



I say the short prayer as I wipe the blood from my face. I turn away from my mom to hide my piss-soaked jeans, while she hands me a towel. My dad leaves the kitchen to watch TV, his alcohol breath still lingers in the air. I change my pants to join the family in the living room. No one talks.

At least he didn't touch my mom or brother or sisters. Maybe it's best he beats me and not them. I'm just 12, but I'm tough. Maybe I deserve it.

I join my sisters on the couch. They don't look at me. They don't see my face swell. They are too afraid to notice. It is just another Saturday night at the Martinez house.

And tomorrow we will all go to church.

My dad is a big man, a lowrider, a street fighter who can back down most men with just a look.

He's loyal to his family, works hard, and loves his wife – until he drinks. Then all that is good about him goes down like a shot of tequila. My older brother says he used to beat my mom. I've never seen him touch my sisters. I think I would kill him if he did.

My sisters can't stop him from hitting me, but they scream and cry. I guess you could call me the “black sheep” of the family. Occasionally he hits my older brother, but he leaves his best “work” for me.

Our house is small and it is always thick with tension. He's like a bomb ready to explode. Everyone tries to please him, keep him happy, hoping to pass the day in peace. It rarely happens. My dad is an alcoholic. I think he takes drugs too, but what do I know? I'm just a kid.

I dream that my dad was like one of those television dads, always loving and forgiving. Isn't that the way dads are supposed to be? He falls asleep in his chair and I curse him under my breath, as I leave to go to bed.

I'm a teenager, getting bigger, but the beatings continue, only worse. I count the scars on my body, but can't count the scars inside me. Body wounds heal, heart wounds not so quickly. But after every beating, something inside me dies. Sometimes I feel strange, but most of the time I'm just numb. When no one sees me, I cry.

I stopped asking God why. He's never answered. Today as we sit in church, I notice my dad with his head bowed and eyes closed. Is he praying? Would God answer him and not me? The minister talks about a loving Father that we can feel safe in His arms. I only wish I could believe that.

I've decided to tell others about the beatings. Why not? What's going to happen, more beatings? I tell my friends, my teachers, even the youth pastor at our church. But they all are afraid of my dad.

CPS (Child Protective Services) came to my house today. Maybe someone got some courage, or maybe the neighbors are tired of the screaming. But my parents lied to them, told them we were one big, happy family, so they left. Afterwards, they warned us all that we'd "better keep quiet or they'll take you all away." Good. I hope so. I'm telling everyone I can.

Nothing happens. Nothing changes. It never does. I'm losing any hope. I just need to survive.

There are two things I now love to do: make people laugh and smoke pot. One makes me feel good about myself; the other makes me feel nothing at all. I'll say anything for a laugh in class, even if it gets me kicked out of school. I'm in my third high school now, and when I turn 18 I'm an adult and gone. What's my dad going to do? Beat me?

I look forward to leaving my house. I'm so tired of nothing changing and everyone pretending. What is normal? Because I sure don't know.

And church seems like such a waste of a good Sunday. I'd rather be drinking. Can't believe after everything with my dad, I drink; but somehow it makes me feel alive. But I seem to be a "happy drunk," at least compared to my dad. I wonder why booze makes him so angry. I just want to party with friends. He just wants to be left alone.

Wish he'd leave me alone.

SURVIVAL

I'm 18 and out! I've moved in with some friends and it's one big party. I've stopped smoking a lot of weed, but my drinking is over the top. I like how it makes me feel. Somehow all those feelings inside seem to come out better when I drink. Why I feel like a better person when I'm drinking, I don't know. And everyone seems to like me when I'm drunk.

Picked up the cigarette habit – a pack a day. Have parties 24/7. Girls over to our apartment all the time. And I'm getting fat. But I don't care. Getting high is really all I care about. Occasionally, things get out of control and things get broken.

FREEDOM

After living with my girlfriend, Katie, we had a son and then a daughter. Tried to quit smoking, but can't. Katie's best friend just died of cancer. Maybe I'll try again. A pack a day for nine years – it's tough.

When I moved out at 18 I weighed 175 pounds. Now I'm tipping, or better, ripping the scales at 330 pounds. But I still don't care. A few drinks, actually 18 beers later, a few shots of whiskey and tequila, and I'm good.

I know I have a big problem. It's sinking in. I hate to look in the mirror. Wish I could talk to my dad, but no thanks. I feel so old for 25 – high blood pressure, high cholesterol, swollen liver, and borderline diabetic. My doctor wants to test my heart, but I quit going. Who needs more bad news?

We're in debt. Big debt. No money, no problem; just swipe the credit card. And Katie is pregnant again. We just moved into a new apartment across from a church.

I think Katie and I will get married. I wonder if she still loves me. I wouldn't blame her if she didn't.



We're starting to go to that church across the street. It's called Free Chapel. I go when I feel like it. I need the motivated speaking. I need to make changes in my life. But I'll be honest; I'm still getting drunk. I hate being a hypocrite, so I won't give it my all. It makes the wife and kids happy, so I sit and listen.

HYPOCRITE

Today, Katie came home from church and told me that the minister wanted everyone to go on a 21-day fast. Fast? 21 days without food, or worse, not drinking? No thanks! Katie says she's going to do it with or without me. "Cool, go ahead," I tell her.

I'm getting sick of the "party" life. Maybe I will join her.

It's Day 21. I haven't had a drink. It's so strange, but I don't have the desire to drink again. Something is also happening to my body. I feel clean. My mind is clear. Hope is visiting me for the first time since I can remember. Things have changed.

I wonder how my dad is.

Katie just told me that her prayers during her 21-day fast were for me – to stop drinking. I'm blown away. I realize my desire to not drink is a miracle. Maybe God is real. I am so very stubborn, it's as if God reached down and decided to change me. He must care, like a father should.

My older brother has been telling me that my dad has also changed. I've hated him for so long; but if God can change me, maybe also my dad. The physical scars are faded, but the pain inside still burns. I need to see my dad and decide if this change is real.

**"GOD, YOU MUST BE REAL,
YOU'RE LETTING THIS HAPPEN TO ME."**

My life is radically changing and it's God who is doing it. Yes, I'm choosing to let it happen; but the peace, joy, even love that replaced the despair, anger, and hate continues to amaze me. I'm learning about God and the Holy Spirit. God is pouring Himself into me. Once the alcohol filled my mind, but now it's the Spirit of the living God.

Jesus. I've heard about Him my whole life, but it all seemed like a children's story. Jesus is alive and now we are getting to know each other. The more I grow in love with him, the more I love myself, my wife, and my children.

I'm also forgiving my dad. I need to see him and tell him I love him. But some pain is hard to let go of.



I called my brother today and wanted to hang out with him and my dad. I told him to meet me at my grandparents'. My grandfather used to beat my dad after drinking. I wonder how many generations we've been cursed. My kids will never know that pain, in Jesus' name.

Seeing my dad, I thought I had completely forgiven him, that time and distance would take care of everything – it didn't. I have been carrying unforgiveness for so long; but seeing him, talking with him, I also realized that God had healed my heart. I didn't need an apology, because I too have hurt my Father in heaven and He forgave me when I didn't deserve it or even ask.

I found out later that my dad didn't know what to expect when I asked to meet him. He wasn't sure if I'd come to try and hurt him, physically. He even had family waiting around the corner to see if I tried anything.

Wow, we've both come a long, long way, and only by the grace of God.





TODAY...

It's been a few years since my dad and I reconciled. We've both grown in the Lord and have a deep love for each other. Our families see the difference; a generational curse has been broken.

I've written this for anyone struggling with family pain, anger, bitterness, and yes, alcohol and drug abuse. There is hope! But the hope is only in God. The God who made us loves us more deeply than we can ever know. He wants to be in every part of our lives – even those dark, secret places when we hide from the truth. In fact, Jesus said, “You will know the truth (Jesus) and the truth will set you free.”

Who doesn't want to be free of addictions, hate, and violence?

There is freedom in true forgiveness – forgiving those that have hurt you, forgiving yourself, and most importantly, receiving forgiveness from your Father in

heaven. When I received God's forgiveness, He made it possible for me to forgive my dad.

Don't let fear or pride stop you. You can take that first step to a new life where you can really know love and be respected by those around you. The battle you're facing right now has already been won. It was won by Jesus on the cross. He died for our sins. He resurrected so that we might live with Him on this earth and forever in eternity. All you have to do is surrender to Him. Start by confessing with your mouth that Jesus Christ is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, and you will be saved. (Romans 10:9)



PRAY SOMETHING LIKE THIS...

“Dear Heavenly Father, I know I’m a sinner. Forgive me for my sins. I thank you for loving me so much that you would send your only Son to die on the cross for me. I believe in you and ask you to come into my life, my heart, to lead me, guide me in the way I should go. Teach me how to love and see others as you do. In Jesus’ name, amen.”

This booklet is dedicated to my father, Pastor Anthony Martinez, a true man of God, who serves Him daily. I love you, Dad!

If you need prayer, a Bible or other materials to grow in your new faith, contact me at **info@testifyclothing.faith**.

I will be praying for you. Please pray for me.

If you're a struggling father, please feel free to contact me, Pastor Anthony Martinez at **pastoranthony@testifyclothing.faith**.



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