

# DARKNESS WILL NOT OVERCOME

ONE PERSON'S STRUGGLE AND RECOVERY FROM OPIOIDS

RITCHIE HALVERSEN



**Pacific Press**<sup>®</sup>  
Publishing Association

Nampa, Idaho | [www.pacificpress.com](http://www.pacificpress.com)

# CONTENTS

Foreword	9
Chapter 1 The Beginning	13
Chapter 2 A Downward Spiral	16
Chapter 3 The Con	23
Chapter 4 A Visit to Church	27
Chapter 5 Trouble at Kmart	30
Chapter 6 Twin Falls	40
Chapter 7 Connecting Flight	49
Chapter 8 Upside Down on a Bridge and in My Marriage	53
Chapter 9 Christmas Alone	58
Chapter 10 Gooding, Idaho	61
Chapter 11 The Crucible of Withdrawal	71
Chapter 12 The Ropes Course	75
Chapter 13 Family Day	80
Chapter 14 Give and You Shall Receive	85
Chapter 15 Graduation	91
Chapter 16 Reunions	97
Chapter 17 Recovery	102
Chapter 18 Judgment Day	107
Chapter 19 Making Amends	114
Chapter 20 New Life	119
Chapter 21 Preacher Man	122
Chapter 22 The Darkness Will Not Overcome	126

## CHAPTER 1

# THE BEGINNING

Do you want to be a preacher like your father when you grow up?” The old lady smelled of mothballs and peppermints. The light coming in through the stained glass obscured the woman’s face. She stood in just the right place for the outline of her head to glow like a little sun.

The church service had just finished. My father had assumed his usual post after preaching—standing at the door shaking hands with people as they left the sanctuary. Being the son of a pastor comes with drawbacks, particularly that you’re always on display. It seemed as though the *appearance* was more important than the *person*. They wanted you to be the model family—whether you were that or not didn’t really matter. The appearance was all that mattered. At least, that was how it felt sometimes. After each service, we had to stand near my father to receive or respond to the various comments and questions that would be directed our way. People tended to ask the same questions, uninteresting questions that really didn’t want a response: “How’s school?” “How is your year?” “How was your summer?” and the most popular one I got: “Do you want to be a preacher when you grow up?” They didn’t treat other kids like this—just the pastor’s kids. As if we’re supposed to be model kids, from model families, made available

## DARKNESS WILL NOT OVERCOME

for them to gawk at like some sort of holy exhibition. At a young age, I realized that many of the people who asked me questions weren't looking for my answer; instead, they were looking for the answer they thought I should give. So I gave them the answers I thought they were looking for. All the people weren't fake. As with anything, there are good, genuine people in the church, and there are those who may mean well but are not genuine.

Being a pastor's kid wasn't all bad. In fact, for years, I loved it. I loved being a part of something that seemed bigger than me. It was exciting to feel a sense of mission. It was a life that, at times, seemed larger than the usual situation of working a job, buying a house, having a family. There were many success stories in the church, stories of people's lives that had changed for the better.

The old lady continued staring at me. She gave me the look old ladies like to give adolescent boys—the kind of look they give you right before they reach out and pinch your cheek. I was fourteen—certainly too old for the old-lady cheek pinch—but I could tell she was thinking it.

*Do you want to be a preacher like your father when you grow up?* Her question echoed in my mind. My answer to that question up until a year or so previous would have been an enthusiastic yes, but now it had become an energetic no. The spell of wanting to do whatever your father does when you grow up had dissipated. With age and an increasingly cynical outlook, I came to resent the question. I wanted to be my own person. I didn't want to be God's property or the church's property. I wanted to be my own property. I wanted to do my own thing.

"I don't think so." I forced a small smile.

"Well, that's too bad. If you're anything like your father, that would be a real waste." She walked away. The stained-glass halo disappeared with her. The smell of mothballs and peppermints stayed behind.

*Yeah, well, no thanks,* I thought, with a plastic smile on my face as I watched her leave.

## THE BEGINNING

I held back from the large group accumulating near where my father was and started moving toward the back of the church, where I could slip out one of the side doors undetected. My feet moved as quickly as they could on the wine-colored carpet. I could feel the eyes of the stained-glass Jesus staring at me as I walked by. He was keeping watch over His stained-glass sheep—but I was positive that He was looking at me, too, His expression a contradiction of gentle indifference. It haunted me. It was a look that cared—just not enough to do anything about it. To me, it was a look that said, “You better get your act together, Richie, and hurry along with the rest of the sheep.” But I didn’t want to be a sheep. Sheep are stupid. Sheep are unoriginal. Sheep seemed so insignificant. I wanted more!

I breathed a sigh of relief when I reached the dark hallway in the back of the church. The unease of the stained-glass stare dissipated. The exit sign beckoned to me through the darkness, inviting me to escape. I would wait for my family at the usual spot, under the giant oak tree where our car was always parked. That was my refuge after church. For the past year, I had escaped to that spot as soon as services were over. Or as soon as I thought I had made enough of an appearance not to get a lecture from my parents when we got home. Once I got to the giant oak, I could breathe a sigh of relief. I no longer felt like I had to perform. I could just be myself—sitting on the grass with my back against the big tree, daydreaming of what my life could be.