

## He quit misusing opioids after professional help

**Josiah:** My name's Josiah, I served in the Army from 2005 until 2011. My unit deployed '07-'08 to Iraq. I eventually was hit by an IED. That day we were basically just on a pretty routine foot patrol walking down the road and an IED went off and my life definitely was changed forever.

My biggest challenge was due to the nature of my injuries, you have a guy who has serious injuries and has serious pain and was prescribed serious narcotics. I think I was still in such shock from the whole situation, that I never really thought about the pain medication and after I got out of the hospital, they prescribed me Oxycontin. For me, whether it was the addictive nature in myself, I don't know or what the right and wrong answer is I don't know, but I became very, very chemically dependent on those narcotics. I took full advantage of that situation and abused pain medication for some time.

I got to a point where I was so separated from life itself and from God and from my family that, I mean everyone around me obviously knew what was going on and didn't know how to deal with it. But I remember just thinking to myself, "Is this really the life that you want for yourself?" One of the biggest things that got me is I remember thinking "Here you are, a decorated Combat Veteran, who served honorably and now you're a junkie." And that was something that broke my heart.

I went to rehab and actually attended Narcotics Anonymous meetings for some time, and that helped. Probably second to that would be the Veteran's small group at my church, and yes, it is a religious thing, it is a Christian organization, but at the same time, it's a group of Veterans who understand each other. And for me, that was paramount, because dealing with specifically combat-injured Veterans, but even Veterans in general, when it comes to getting them help, it's a hundred percent based off a relationship. So, being in that environment and being around other Veterans and doing service work in the community with those Veterans was kind of my first re-introduction back into society and it was kind of my first glimpse into thinking, "I'm okay in society, like I do belong." As many times as I thought, "Well, I should have just died," the truth is I didn't and so I'm here for a reason and I have things to contribute and I am worthy.

I still have bad dreams. I just process them differently. I still keep people at a distance, I just am quicker now to suck it up and let them in. For me, that really originated in my faith and talking to friends of mine that were pastors and eventually being a part of an all-Veterans small group is something that completely changed my life and it's funny because, now here I am around a decade later after this incident, I'm 32 and by the grace of God and some willingness on my part, my life is really just coming back together now.

I would tell somebody who was struggling that I love them and that I need them, and that society needs them and that they have a lot to offer. I would strongly encourage them to seek help and somebody very wise, much wiser than me told me once that I didn't have to let everybody in, but I needed to let somebody in.



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