

## Tim's story

Tim was a fun guy to be around. He always had a great story to tell, and people were drawn to his sense of humor and energy. At any gathering—whether social or professional—he automatically became the center of the party.

If you weren't paying close attention, you might miss the fact that Tim always had a glass in his hand. You might not notice that his stories became more outrageous and funny as the night went on.

You might not see how many times his glass was replenished, or how quickly the liquid disappeared.

For many years, Tim felt pressure to “perform” for his friends and co-workers. They had come to expect it of him, and he didn't want to disappoint anyone. He was afraid that if he didn't have at least one drink, he couldn't be entertaining—he felt so fearless and funny when he had a drink in his system.

But, one drink wasn't really enough. And he found himself drinking even when there wasn't an “occasion.” A quick stop in a bar on the way home from work would end hours later, with a very careful, slow drive back to his house. A Sunday afternoon watching the game alone demanded a 12-pack of beer.

Following one office party, his boss pulled him aside the next morning and told him he was worried about Tim's drinking. He said that he had seen a change in his behavior over the past few months, and that a number of people had commented on it when Tim wasn't in the room. Even though it hadn't affected the quality of Tim's work, his boss made it clear that he considered it only a matter of time before it would.

Tim was shocked. He didn't believe that he was an alcoholic. He didn't have a drinking problem. He was fine. But... what if he wasn't fine? What would he do?

The Celebrate Recovery ministry talks about “hurts, habits, and hang-ups.” Hurts are defined as “an emotional reaction to another person's behavior or a disturbing situation.” Habits are “an addiction to someone or something.” And hang-ups are “negative mental attitudes that are used to cope with people or adversity.”<sup>1</sup>

It's easy to see, looking at these definitions, why we often say at Christ Church that everyone should stop in to Celebrate Recovery on Friday nights. After all, who doesn't struggle—at some point in life—with one or more of these issues?

But sometimes a habit strengthens to the point that it does damage to our life, and to the lives of people who love us. The addiction can take over our life, to the detriment of everything else we used to love.

Healing from an addiction can begin anytime. The challenge is that it can be difficult for the person to recognize the addiction when he or she is still “coping”—when the person is still managing to hold on. Often it isn't until the consequences become so severe that a person is willing to reach out for assistance: losing a job, a marriage falling apart, serious health issues, hospitalization. This is often called “hitting bottom”: when we reach the lowest point we can imagine.

Recovery from addiction is not an easy process. It takes commitment. It takes time. Part of the recovery process is a recognition that God deeply desires for you to be a whole and healthy person. God will give you the strength you need to manage and overcome your addiction—but you must give God permission to do this in your life. God will never force you to make a decision, will never force you make changes that you're not ready to make.

But when you are ready, God will be there for you. And so will your church community—just take the leap, and reach out. Your life will never be the same.

<sup>1</sup> From the Celebrate Recovery informational brochure.