

# S1:E1 - My Story of Addiction and Finding Love and Self-Acceptance in Coming Back to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Ashly Stone

00:14

Hi everybody! This is my first Ppodcast, episode one [small laugh]. So, I feel very new to this, but hopefully you can bear with me as I learn how to be a podcaster. I really never would have sawseen myself as a podcaster. I noticed a common theme, when I started coming back to the church, that there ~~was~~ were little miracles that would happen from Heavenly Father that were pushing me and guiding me in that direction. And I started to listen to other people's stories ~~with~~ after coming back to the church. And wWhat I found was, that many people had these similar experiences where they felt like they were witnessing little miracles guiding them back to the church. This podcast's purpose is really to highlight those stories ~~of~~ and the experiences that people have coming back to the church. It could look like anything; we're open to any and all experiences, but I just really wanted to put that out there. I think a lot of people today are leaving the church, and they're very loud about it. And sSomeone who's been a good example in my life and guided me in so many ways is my dad, and h He's amazing, and everybody loves him. If you're from Southern Utah, you probably know my dad, because he's famous, and he's a really great guy. So, anything else you want to add to that introduction, Dad?

Greg

01:52

No, I think you're exaggerating, but jJust know I'm glad that you're excited to do this. And I think it's very necessary.

Ashly Stone

02:06

So, a little bit about me, like I said, I'm in recovery from a heroin addiction. ~~It wasn't not~~ only heroin, ~~but pretty much any other substance under the sun, there were also many~~ other substances. Growing up, we were raised in the church. ~~m~~My parents—~~they~~s were active church members. I had a testimony at a young age of the gospel. When I was in middle school, I started to stray away from the church, and I started to go my own way. I was experimenting with drugs and alcohol which led to me losing control with that. I went to a adolescent facility when I was 16. I was there for 15 months, and I didn't really reestablish a spiritual connection. I kind of did, but not really. Just shortly after, I was addicted to heroin. ~~And~~~~I~~ was in jail, I was in rehab. Rehab after rehab. It led me to living in a house in Arizona. It was a drug house. There was a family that lived there. ~~m~~My boyfriend, ~~and~~ his parents were using and selling drugs, my boyfriend's brother, the whole family was on drugs. That was my life. ~~just using~~Using drugs, ~~and~~ finding ways to get drugs. That was what my whole life revolved around. ~~And~~~~f~~Finally I got sick of living that life and I called my dad. ~~and~~ I said, "Dad, I need help. Can you come get me?" ~~And~~~~h~~He drove down to Arizona and he picked me up from this drug house. ~~And~~~~w~~We had a hard time after that. How long was that after you picked me up?

**Greg**

03:53

It was probably a good week before we ended up getting to where we were going. ~~which~~~~w~~We didn't really know where we were going. ~~B~~, but eventually we went where we needed to be.

**Ashly Stone**

04:06

I ended up going to the Salvation Army in Fresno, California, after being in Mesa, Arizona through all my years of buying and using drugs. Why the Salvation Army? How did we get to that point? How did we get there?

**Greg**

04:25

Well, we'd been to multiple rehab facilities and every time you go to a rehab, obviously they want a huge deposit. You ~~got~~ have to work out all of the logistics of how you can get admitted. This time was a little bit different. To be honest, I didn't know if you were going to live or die. [emotion in his voice] But I do know [long pause]

**Greg**

05:13

[stronger emotion in his voice] that we were guided by the Spirit, and by your testimony of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

That's one thing that I've always been amazed by. I just know that you have one of the strongest testimonies. You know the Savior is real and you know the Atonement is real. ~~And y~~You understand that the church is not the people in the church, but it's the love that our Savior has for each of us. It's ~~h~~His desire that we go down the road that would make us the happiest, and I know that you understood that. ~~But~~ I remember getting in that car, not knowing where we were going to go and trying to leave Phoenix, Arizona multiple times. ~~Just the different connections that you had there~~You had different connections there and when you would disappear, ~~and~~ we would stop, ~~after which sat~~ seemed like ~~after~~ a full day. You would disappear and call your friends, and you would think "just one more time, I just need to get high one more time." Then you would get back in and we'd start over again. ~~But~~ I knew that if we just listened and prayed, ~~and~~ followed the Spirit, that Heavenly Father wanted what was best for all of us. ~~And a~~At that time, I didn't know how it would turn out. ~~But~~ I think that your love for our Heavenly Father and our Savior is what propelled you to do ~~what is~~ one of the most incredibly difficult things on this earth. That led to the point where you are now. ~~That's t~~The hard thing, I guess, ~~in any venue like this, is, is~~ is to relate to people that it is about why we want to be a part of the gospel of Jesus Christ on this earth. ~~And~~ I think the way that people feel, what they perceive as being judgments that other people have about them, which I've grown to learn ~~about~~ over the years. It's sad, ~~because t~~The beauty of the gospel and the love of our Savior is that the happiness that He wants us to have is bigger than any of the things that we ~~as individuals~~ feel that we're being judged on. ~~Because~~ I honestly believe that people, if they judge, it's just because they're people. The Savior's church is here on the earth, and He wants us to return to Him and to be happy. ~~And~~ I think that He's done everything for us. We just need to realize that if we just give him a little bit of our time, ~~then~~ we can get to know Him, ~~and~~ we can return to live with Him again.

## Ashly Stone

08:39

You said that you think that ~~when~~ people ~~talk about~~ judging, it's what they *perceive* as judging. We also have in our family, my sister, Aubrey. I got her permission to share this, but she was 16 when she got pregnant. She was a student at the high school where my dad taught ~~at~~, and that ~~was~~ a challenging thing to overcome. ~~A~~ ~~challenging thing~~ to have in your life as a teenager, obviously. ~~w~~ We have seen that turned ~~ed~~ into an amazing miracle. That little baby that she was pregnant with, ~~he~~ is 16 now, and he's just the best addition to our family. We could never imagine life without him. ~~But w~~ When you were going through that ~~with Aubrey~~, with a daughter who ~~she~~ had a teen pregnancy, you ~~also~~ ~~haved~~ a daughter that ~~s~~ ~~was~~ very rebellious. I ~~also~~ was at the high school, Snow Canyon High School in St. George, where my dad taught, and I was just about as naughty as you can be for a high school student. ~~Just~~ ~~I was~~ ditching class, and drinking, ~~and~~ getting caught drinking at school, all kinds of stuff. I'm just not really proud of who I was back then. ~~But d~~ Do you feel like you faced judgment from people in the church when we were going through all of that stuff as a family? What was your experience with members of the church? ~~or just~~ ~~What was~~ your experience in church in general at that time?

## Greg

10:20

~~I wouldn't say that I didn't have at that time that I had the strongest the strongest~~ testimony ~~at that time~~. I had a testimony, but it wasn't anything even remotely close to what it is now. It was a difficult time. I know that your mother didn't want to tell me that Aubrey was pregnant. She was worried ~~with about~~ the way that I would react. She was completely wrong because I just wanted her to be happy. I was sad that she missed out on a lot of the experiences. When you're going through something that difficult, at that age in life, it ~~just~~ makes you grow up really really quickly. ~~But~~ I don't think I ever felt any judgment from anyone. I ~~Q~~ ~~only~~ ~~felt~~ the desire ~~people had~~ that ~~everybody~~ ~~we~~ get through whatever decision we would make. I never felt anything but support from friends and from teachers. To this day, I have some of the greatest friends, they know all my children, and they love all my children. ~~And t~~ They always ask me how you're doing—all of you. ~~But t~~ They have always been like that. ~~And~~ I just think that too often ~~that~~ we perceive one thing when the complete opposite is ~~what is actually taking place~~ ~~true~~. I think generally speaking, most people don't have time to be judgmental, ~~and~~. ~~a~~ ~~All~~ they

want to do is live their lives and be happy. It's taken me a lifetime, up to this point, ~~obviously,~~ I'm almost 60 years old, to realize that all the gospel has ever taught is for us to be happy. The things that we think make us happy ~~often times~~ often don't make us happy. ~~But~~ Heavenly Father, through His very inadequate servants on the earth, have told us to do certain things ~~that~~ so we can be happy. ~~But~~ I know that nobody is perfect. ~~Only~~ The Savior was the only perfect person that was on the earth. ~~And~~ I truly believe that if we could just give the Savior what He's asking us to give him, ~~that~~ the then the love and happiness that we could have, ~~it's~~ is incomparable to anything on this earth. ~~And~~ That's one thing that I have learned. When ~~Y~~you and your little sisters were going through all your struggles, ~~and your little sisters~~, it was a tough time in life. ~~But~~ I just know that this life was not meant to be easy. It was meant to have challenges and trials. ~~A,~~ and those trials make us better people.

## Ashly Stone

13:22

You ~~have~~ had this ~~prime~~ perfect situation to be judged by people in the church. You ~~ve~~ had ~~got~~ a daughter who's ~~was~~ a heroin addict, ~~and you've had got~~ a daughter who's got pregnant in high school, ~~we did~~ We did not fit the mold of a perfect church-going family. What advice would you give to somebody that's going through a similar situation? Maybe they have a child that's gay and they feel like they are being judged ~~by~~ about that, ~~or m~~ Or maybe they have a child that's transgender? ~~Or m~~ Maybe they have a daughter that's pregnant or a heroin addict daughter {small laugh} or whatever? What would you say to families that feel like they need to distance themselves from the church because they feel like people just don't ~~get it~~ understand them in the church or they feel judged? What would you say to those families?