

## **PART II: MY STORY—ADDICTION IN THE HOME**

### **Denial**

I never had the desire to experiment with tobacco, alcohol or drugs, nor did my husband David. Both of us were raised in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and followed the “Word of Wisdom” that was the health code for our church. We had been taught well by our parents, and we thought we had also taught our children well to avoid these addictive substances.

From time to time, we would smell cigarette smoke when Jonathan came home at night, but he always denied that he was smoking. He always made up some type of excuse for the smell and why he was getting home past his curfew. While his behavior had been confrontational for years, and there was great conflict in our home, we sometimes excused his behavior and assumed it was all part of being an adolescent. Other people who knew Jonathan suggested to us that he might be on drugs, but we didn’t want to believe them. We didn’t think he would reject the religious teachings we tried to live as a family. We were in denial.

Late one night—when he was supposed to be home because he had been grounded once again—he disappeared. After many frantic phone calls for hours trying to track him down, we received a call from one of his friends.

This friend informed us that Jonathan was with him and that the two of them wanted to come over and talk to my husband and me together. We agreed to have them come over despite the lateness of the hour. Jonathan didn’t say anything, but his friend said, “I’m sure you don’t want to hear this, but you need to know that Jonathan is addicted to drugs and alcohol. I know what he’s going through because I’ve had problems in the past, and I know he needs to get help—right away.”

These words from his friend stunned us. That night was the first time we had ever smelled alcohol on Jonathan. We couldn’t believe he was really addicted—although his behavior had been spiraling out of control for the past few years. We asked Jonathan if what his friend was telling us was all true. He sadly nodded his head, “Yes.”

We then asked him if he thought he really needed to go into a rehab right away. Once again, he slowly, dejectedly nodded his head, “Yes.”

Early the next morning, I began in a panic to try and locate the best adolescent rehabilitation center in the area. Unfortunately, the one I decided on was located an hour away from our home. Little did I know that this one major decision I was hastily making was going to change our family’s life forever.

### **Rehabs and Relapse**

I later learned that much thought and prayer should be used in making the difficult decision of what rehabilitation program to use. I did not do this. I was seeking an immediate transformation of Jonathan’s life, and I was much too emotionally distraught to really listen to my husband’s point of view. At my insistence, we quickly made a plan. That same day, David took time off work, and we drove Jonathan up to the rehabilitation center to have his initial evaluation, and he

was admitted. After three weeks, I was upset with this program and rashly pulled him out and put him into a much more intensive program that didn't allow smoking.

At the time, I was 36, my husband was 39, and we had nine children ranging in age from 6 months to 16 years old. Like many of the other families in the program were asked to do, we agreed to volunteer our home as a “host home” for the clients—even though we lived one and one-half hours away in Londonderry, New Hampshire from this rehabilitation center in Massachusetts. This was a real challenge and a huge sacrifice for our family, but I was willing to do anything I could because I thought it was going to help save Jonathan's life.

Perhaps my passion for producing my *Wings of Glory* album, writing this book, and developing my self-help programs for recovery, prevention, and high self-esteem began as a backlash against this long-term drug rehabilitation program that our family dedicated our lives to for those two years. The longer we were involved in the program, the less we liked it, although we cherished all the teenagers, over 100 of them, all of whom we came to know and love because of the program. We learned over time that the program itself was not based on correct principles and was causing severe psychological damage to the clients.

Through the constant use of manipulation, intimidation, humiliation, coercion, and conditional love, the program eventually achieved compliance from many of the clients. However, “recovery” was being maintained through external control instead of internal desire, which made relapse obvious in many cases when the program structure was no longer there—leaving an aftermath of devastating, emotional turmoil.

As we participated in this highly invasive program, and gradually became aware of what was going on, I kept saying to myself, “There must be a better way. There must be a better way.” Although I didn't know what the alternative way should be, I knew over time that this program was definitely wrong. I felt in my heart that if a recovery program would ever bring long-term success it needed to be based on correct principles of unconditional love, accountability, and trust.

Of course, we didn't know it was going to be as bad as it was. But, being naïve and trusting, we kept going along with the program, not understanding that it would be the two worst years of our family's life.

### **Producing the Album *Wings of Glory: Songs of Hope and Healing from Addiction***

As I agonized over Jonathan's pain from addiction, I sought answers as to how he could ever be free. I also sought for ways I could somehow help him and how we could heal as a family. I didn't really know what to do, but I found that new song lyrics and melodies kept coming into my mind. While I didn't know it at the time, my spiritual impressions to write down my ideas for these songs was going to be part of the answer. I continued to feel that someday my music might have a positive influence on Jonathan's life.

With the help of my son, Ben, and several of his musically talented friends at Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah, my dream of producing an album to help people heal from addiction became a reality. With a lot of faith and prayer, and all the musicians, arrangers, and engineers working for little or no pay, everyone combined their positive energy in hopes of

making a difference in other people's lives. It seemed that everyone who worked on this project knew someone who was suffering from addiction.

The *Wings of Glory* album is about sorrow. It is about hope. It is about healing. It is about creating a life for yourselves and your loved ones that is filled with faith, love, and real joy. It is a message I share with enthusiasm because I know the ideas taught through these songs are correct principles that can transform lives.

### **Writing the Book *Wings of Glory: Addiction, Recovery, and High Self-esteem***

After our first album and book came out, I received many letters from people who were touched and inspired by our message of hope. One question I was frequently asked was, "Can your music and book be used for overcoming other types of compulsive addictions or compulsive behaviors such as pornography or gambling?"

My answer was an emphatic, "Yes, of course!"

I believe that people who have any type of addictive or compulsive behavior suffer from the same basic issue—low self-esteem. To find complete healing in their lives, everyone must follow a similar path. My desire in writing this book was to help others find a path that really works.

I have had many blessings in my life. I have also had to endure many overwhelming challenges and experiences. Writing this book has been an opportunity for me to share my blessings and experiences as I was once counseled to do.

This book has also been a way for me to express my gratitude to my loving Heavenly Father and Savior, Jesus Christ, who have sustained me during my most difficult times. I am also grateful for the comforting influence and guidance of the Holy Ghost.

This book could not have come about without my family and friends who were always there for me when I needed them. Even at times when my own hope and faith in Jonathan's recovery began to waver, our extended family's united prayers and faith in God kept me going. In every family prayer, my son Matt always prayed for his brother's recovery.

One day, after struggling for so many years, Jonathan did a complete turnaround. This time, he was determined to not only stop using alcohol and drugs, but to turn his whole life over to God. He started carrying the Book of Mormon with him wherever he went and read it frequently throughout the day. He asked me for another copy of *Wings of Glory*, and he started listening to it once again. He accepted the fact that he would never be able to stay clean and sober without Jesus Christ in his life.

As I saw Jonathan's commitment to God, I thanked my Heavenly Father for answering my prayers, touching Jonathan's heart, and helping him catch a vision of his real potential and purpose in life.