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The **benefits** of getting caught

I sped through a red light, the accident was my fault, and it changed my life. I was driving drunk. My blood alcohol level was two times the legal limit. I do not remember the accident because I blacked out. I nearly killed three people. Fortunately, no one was physically injured but me. I was taken to a trauma unit at Riverside Hospital because of three fractures in my pelvis.

Waking, I felt terrible guilt and said over and over, “Did I kill anybody?” When my wife and family came to the hospital, they were appalled and hurt and confused. I felt so much guilt and shame I nearly despaired. There was no where to hide my sin now. I had hid it all over the house, in the garage, in the closets and in the rafters. But now it was uncovered and exposed. What I did was wrong.

Yet I can now say that it was good for me to get caught.

Getting caught helped me confess my sin. I was like David who did not confess his sin until he was caught by Nathan. For almost a year David lived in denial, and he wrote about the painful period prior to his confession in Psalm 132:3-5.

When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer. Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the LORD'—and you forgave the guilt of my sin.

I identify with this psalm. There was a two-year period in my own life where I lived in denial and God’s hand was heavy on me; my strength was sapped; my bones were broken and I was lying in the hospital; I groaned all day long because of the guilt of my sin. I was caught, but
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Jeff Garrett



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Twelve Steps

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable
2. Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood him
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others
10. Continued to take personal inventory, and when we were wrong promptly admitted it
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, praying only for knowledge of his will for us and the power to carry that out
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs

Source: *Courage to Change: One Day at a Time in Al-Anon II*

Jeff Garrett

it's the best thing that could have happened to me because it made confession easier. I didn't have to weigh my words, fearing rejection. My sin was exposed all at once, and it just made it easier to go ahead and confess the rest.

Getting caught made me want to stop. Prior to getting caught, I didn't want to change even though I hated what I was doing to myself and family. I really didn't want change until I experienced so much pain that I couldn't stand it anymore and I had to stop. People had told me, "Don't drink anymore," but I didn't listen to them. One OMVI was not enough. Not enough pain. But when I had that accident there was so much physical, emotional, relational, and spiritual pain that I wanted to change. It was either change or die. I changed when the pain of staying the same was greater than the pain of change. Getting caught helped me come back to my senses and stop sinning (1 Corinthians 15:34).

I believe getting caught helped me avoid more serious consequences. Was this what Jesus was talking about with the man by the pool of Bethesda? "See, you are well again," Jesus told the man, "Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you" (John 5:14). Jesus' words motivate me because I don't want something worse to happen to me.

My consequences were serious. I spent thirty days in jail, paid expensive fines and court costs, and had my driver's license suspended two years. This compounded the relational and emotional consequences of my lies to my wife and family. I betrayed my best friend by wrecking his car, making him financially liable and exposed to a law suit. I remember a preacher in jail who made a statement about the consequences of sin that I will never forget. He said, "Sin will take you where you don't want to go. It will keep you longer than you want to stay and will make you pay a price that you don't have to give." I discovered the truth of the preacher's words while I was incarcerated.

God has been very gracious to me and has saved me from self-destruction. Getting caught helped set me on the road to recovery. The twelve steps were my road to recovery. I completed intensive outpatient treatment for alcoholism at Mary Haven. I went to Alcoholics Anonymous meetings, read the big book, found a sponsor, and worked the steps one by one. I recommend them as a road map to recovery for those desperately on a destructive road as I was. Since you may not struggle with alcohol, you may substitute the word "sin" for "alcohol" and "Jesus Christ" for "a Power greater than ourselves" because Jesus Christ is my Lord, and I want him to be yours. In the column to the left are the twelve steps we use in recovery.



These are the steps I took (steps 1-9) and steps I maintain (steps 10-12). I feel and live so much better today because getting caught set me on the road to recovery.

Getting caught helped me understand the importance of relationships. The devil did not want me close to anyone. If Satan can keep you away from other people, he can destroy your marriage, your relationship with your children, your family, and friends. Mine were nearly destroyed because I isolated myself from the people who loved me most and made alcohol the center of my life.

Today, I know how much I need my wife, Kim. I've put her through much pain and frustration, and I am grateful she stayed with me. My three daughters are precious and dear to me. Recently, I told them my story on a family trip at a park in Ohio. Early on after the wreck, I cautioned others not to question or make comments to my children about the wrong that I have done. I wanted to protect my children from this. But now Amberly, Tori and Shayna know my story and have forgiven me. They are my biggest cheerleaders.

It is also important for me to have close relationships with other men. My best friend Phil, whose car I totaled, has forgiven me, and he is a great encouragement. I also have close relationships with three other men. My sponsor, John, and one of my shepherds, Jay, keep me accountable. I also have a friend, Earl, who challenges me every time we talk. If I do wrong or when I am tempted to do wrong, I reveal it. Exposing my sin to these trusted men has helped my walk with the Lord.

My relationship with extended family has also played an important role in my recovery. Frequent phone calls to my mom, sisters, and brothers-in-law have kept me from falling. I have a wonderful family, and I cannot express enough gratitude for what they have done for me. My sin was against everything my parents and sisters taught me. But they forgave me the day they found out and loved me through it all. Kim's parents have been very supportive of Kim, our girls and me, and I am grateful for them.

My relationship with my church family has been vital in my recovery. We went back to the church I had preached for, because we love the people and they love us. Some of them came to see me while I was in jail, and they helped us through it all. I shared my story with my church family one Sunday, and they praised God with applause and tears of joy. They were so happy about what the Lord did for me.

I am much more open than I used to be and I share my story openly now. Some have tried to convince me to keep it secret, but I promised God that if he would changed me I would tell others what he has

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done for me. We are as sick as our secrets. Secrecy gives power to sin. Keeping secrets is how I got into trouble, and it will get you into trouble. So build relationships with trustworthy (same-gender) friends. Learn to tell on yourself. This is one way we can “carry each other’s burdens, and . . . fulfill the law of Christ” (Galatians 6:2).

I want to tell people what the Lord did for me when I was caught. I don’t want to keep this a secret, because God gets glory out of it. I am a trophy of his grace. He snatched me from the flames and saved me so that he could change me. I am not perfect, but I have made good progress and I give God all the credit. Getting caught led me to a greater understanding of God’s love and forgiveness. David wrote,

The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever; he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him; for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust. (Psalm 132:8-14)

God wants to forgive us more than we want forgiveness. God does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. You have never and will never do anything to make God stop loving you. The woman who was caught in the act of adultery discovered how much Jesus loved her (John 8:1-11). After silencing her condemning accusers, Jesus told her to leave her life of sin. She staggered out of the court yard stunned by the love and forgiveness of Christ.

If you have been recently caught in sin, don’t give up. God will forgive you just like he has forgiven me. This is the way he forgives and loves all of his prodigals. So don’t stay in the far country. Run home knowing that the only feet faster than the feet of repentance are the feet of forgiveness. Acknowledge your wrong doings and stop sinning so that you may avoid more serious consequences. Set your feet on the road to recovery, make relationships a priority, and experience the love and forgiveness of God.

If you are struggling with alcohol or illicit sex or greed or some other vice, don’t keep it a secret. Confess your sins to God and a trusted friend and you will be healed (James 5:16).

Don’t worry about losing your reputation. I’m glad I lost mine. Now that I lost my reputation, I can let God restore my soul. 