

## Lost at Sea: Wilson's journey from addiction to sobriety

*Wilson's alcohol addiction interfered with every aspect of his life, including his occupation.*

*After being fired from a fishing vessel, his life began to spiral out of control leading to more substance abuse.*

*Landing in the ER, Wilson had an epiphany about where his life was going and decided to pursue a serious relationship with Christ through the assistance of The Salvation Army.*

*Below is a transcript of the video edited for readability.*



**Wilson:** There's something about being out on the ocean, that intensity of Mother Nature, the exhilarating of catching all that fish. I started at an early age, 8 years old and it just became a part of me.

When my grandparents adopted me they were my parents. Then I just followed my grandfather everywhere. I remember going to church, falling asleep on his chest when I was 4 years old. So we built that father-son relationship. He was my mentor and my teacher, pretty much my world.

I started drinking at the age of 12. I was drinking pretty regularly with my brothers. I thought that's what all kids do. I was at this friend's trailer and we were drinking and the state troopers found me, and he goes "You need to call home. There's bad news. Your grandfather passed away."

I didn't know how to respond. I just said, "Okay, okay." It was just a lot of pain and I remember sitting in the middle of the floor crying. He was...It really hurt. And I think about it right now—a lot of memories come back and so. I drank a lot and my alcoholism really took up.

This captain said, "Wilson, we just can't have you when you're drinking," and he fired me. We got rid of the family boat and I was homeless. I had no direction in life.

I kept bugging these employers about mining and they said, "We have a job." And I said, "Yes." I lost some good friends under the ground. My self back then—very close to death. That kind of lifestyle, a lot of drinking, a lot of drugs, sleeping with other wives, and it was just a really dysfunctional lifestyle.

I was an alcoholic for 30 years. I struggled so hard with my addiction—living that kind of lifestyle—and I said, “You know what? I worked so hard, been through so much danger, I deserve to drink.” I was drinking almost half a gallon every two days. I was smoking crack. I just got introduced to heroin.

One night about 3 in the morning I panicked, I didn’t know where I was, I needed something to drink. I remember drinking a whole bottle of wine and two drinks. That calmed my nerves. About 6:30, my brother was taking me to my job. I was still intoxicated and I could start to feel I was trembling.

That’s where I hit my rock bottom emotionally, and I looked at him and I said, “Can you just take me to ER?” At that moment I decided I’m going to commit myself to sobriety and I took it very serious.

I felt so relieved. Like I was released from bondage. I thought about all the ugly feelings and I never ever want to feel that way again. I remember the peacefulness from it.

I reflected waking up on Sundays, going to church. I was thinking I grew up in The Salvation Army, so I went to it and I really felt the Holy Spirit in me and I was just overwhelmed. I did start to cry and I was just so happy and I said, “I really love you, God.” After that I was different.

**Lt. Lance Walters:** The first Sunday that I remember him coming in, he came up to me afterwards just very upfront and asked for our help. He began to show up for Sunday mornings and he wasn’t just somebody that came in and wanted to sit down in the service. He was asking me, “What can I do? How can I be a part of the ministry here?”

**Lt. Dana Walters:** The mission of The Salvation Army has always been to reach out to the people who are struggling and maybe at the lowest point in their lives. And in Alaska we are number one in the nation in alcohol abuse. So for Wilson to come out of it and be able to give back and reach out that’s exactly how it should be. We get healed and then we bring that healing wholeness to the world.

**Wilson:** Every day of my life I wake up so happy. I’m not drunk. I’m not shaking. I’m not in that despair. I just love the new life.

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