

## Saving Face

*Jesus said, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. 24 For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it. 25 For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself?" Luke 9:23-25 ESV*

*Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. 8 For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. 9 And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. Galatians 6:7-9 ESV*

Matt's parents had one young son and hoped to have more children. They adopted twin babies, Matt and Drew. From the beginning the two boys were always in competition. Even in the playpen Matt would push over his brother. The two boys fought over everything. Drew said that early on they were very different. Drew always cared about doing things right. Matt didn't care. He was always a little rebellious.

What were you like as a child? What are you like now? Do you care about others?

Matt was bored with school and found more excitement being with the kids who weren't the good kids. Traditional success in school and sports didn't mean anything to Matt. When Matt was confronted about his behavior he could always talk his way out of things. He always had very good reasons to give his parents. Matt said, "We learn from others. If you hang around good kids you learn good things. If you are hanging around bad kids you're going to learn bad things. You can't just tell someone 'just don't get in trouble' because it happens before you know it. I never planned to get in trouble. It just happened."

Matt said, "I know how easy it is to be bad. I know how easy it is to make the wrong choice." A girl gave him a gun because she didn't want to have it in her home. He took it with him when he went out with his friends. They decided to stop someone on the road and steal a car. Matt's friend pointed the gun at the driver and shot him. Even though Matt didn't shoot the driver he was part of the robbery and had supplied the gun. He went to an adult prison when he was 15 years old. He had no remorse for his crime.

Have you ever been involved with someone else and got in trouble even though you didn't do anything?

Although prison life was difficult Matt learned how to survive and even thrive. An older prisoner gave him a knife and Matt earned the reputation of a creeper, someone who was to be avoided because he would sneak up and get revenge when it was least expected. Matt started business ventures in prison, making wine and gambling which were very successful for him financially. He was good at being bad.

What are you good at? What kind of life are you making for yourself?

Matt said, "I was emotionally detached. Bad decisions made other bad decisions easier." When Matt hit another inmate over the head and ended up in solitary confinement, he found himself feeling remorse for what he had put his family through. It was a new feeling for him and he wasn't sure how to deal with it. For the first time in his life he had the emotion of sorrow. He began to read the Bible that his father gave him.

Have you done things you are sorry for doing? Have you ever hurt someone else by your behavior?

When Matt read the Bible he realized that he had become a violent person and that he needed to get his life together. Matt realized how much love he had received from his family. He also realized that he hadn't given love to them. He wrote letters to tell them how sorry he was for the past. His heart was changed and he knew that God was giving him a second chance.

Have you ever been given a second chance? Have you given someone else a second chance?

*Dear Lord, thank You for second chances. It is so easy to make wrong choices. Please take the mistakes of our past and use them to make us better people. Transform us from the inside out. Fill us with love for You and love for each other. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.*