



Celebrating '97!

The year I became a Christian.



1997



2009

and the start of

toon in'...

In 1997 I smoked a lot of weed and drew tons of cartoons. At the pinnacle of my success, psychosis hit me. I felt sure I was going to die. It was at this point that I called out to God. I said, "God, if I am going to die, lead me to die like one of Your sheep." A feeble prayer that God has honored, for I did not die and now I've become one of His sheep. Only months later did I go to Church, join a Bible Study, and find out about His salvation and the tremendous sacrifice Jesus made for me. He took the punishment for my sin and gave me His righteousness, which now slowly inhabits my whole body, mind & soul. This gift He offers freely to anyone who will ask, and His gift is eternal life. There is but one thing He asks: believe in the Name of God's Son, Jesus Christ.

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What should I do next year?

Decisions, decisions...



**Graphic
Design**

(go back to school)

or



Carpentry

(work as carpenter's assistant 1 year)

Pros

- 1. I would enjoy it.
- 2. \$15~\$20/hr later.
- 3. Mentally stimulating.
- 4. More creative.
- 5. Could stay on disability until degree is done.

Cons

- 1. I'd need training.
- 2. I'd get no exercise.
- 3. Couldn't balance budget while in school.
- 4. I'd need the right boss.

Pros

- 1. I would be good at it.
- 2. \$10~12/hr now.
- 3. I would lose weight.
- 4. No experience needed.
- 5. Money towards school.
- 6. It would soothe bipolar.
- 7. It's a useful skill.

Cons

- 1. It might get boring.

Further analysis reveals that if my spending patterns remain the same, I could save roughly \$6,000 by working 30 hr/wk in carpentry. However, my disability would be compromised. Analysis on the Graphic Design front reveals that, if I worked 20 hr/wk at T.J. Maxx while in school, I'd be \$400 in the hole each month. Time budget studies reveal that if I returned to school full-time, I'd spend approximately 46 hr/wk working & studying. I've learned that this is too much for me. However, if I go part-time, my hours would be 34 hr/wk, which is doable. I wouldn't lose disability benefits and I'd end up with a lucrative career sooner. My mind always changes, but right now I think Graphic Design, straight, no chaser, is the way to go. Stay tooned!

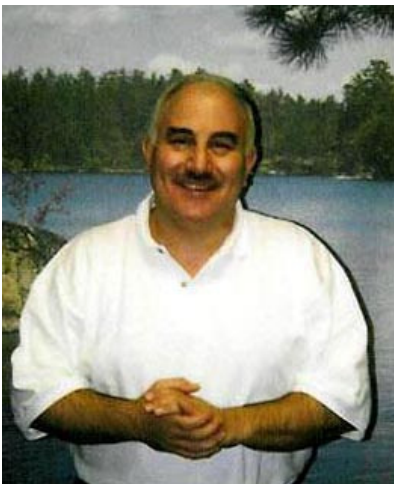
I read a website, ariseandshine.org, about how the "Son of Sam" killer became a Christian. In 1976-1977 David Berkowitz, the Son of Sam, murdered many people with a .44 caliber gun. He terrorized the city of New York. He had sold his soul to the devil. But God rescued him from the depth of his sin and now he is a vital and alive Christian! I encourage you to watch his testimony video. When they captured him, one police officer asked him, "Are you glad it's over?" And he said, "Yes." He went through a ten year period of depression about his crimes and then someone gave him a pocket Bible. He read Psalm 34:6 which says, "This poor man called, and the LORD heard him; He saved him out of all his troubles." And he prayed and prayed and God did save him! Not from the temporal consequences of his sins, but from the eternal consequences of depravity. Although I never murdered anyone, I can relate to this man because, in my former life, I lived in the dark. I did what I wanted and lived the lie that told me I was god. But now I am alive also!

As I write this, I listen to The Hand That Feeds by Trent Reznor (Nine Inch Nails). I must confess: NIN is one of my guilty pleasures. This man sings of his hatred in a way that is very inviting and powerful. I pray for people like him, because if this is the power of music he makes for depravity, how wonderful could his music for God be! He is very creative. I pray the same thing for Björk. Her music captivated me while I was in the throws of self-idolization. Now I recognize I heard what I wanted to from her music, and it led me astray. I can't listen to much of her music anymore, for the things that led me to sin still hold that power of hurt. I pray for her too, though, because she is so wonderfully creative and I long to hear what she can do for Christ. I know I pray for wrong reasons (I want good music), but I do.



Son of Sam

+ **God** =



Son of Hope



Trent Reznor

or



Björk

+ **God** =



I took my first step towards mentoring youth today: I met with a single-mom friend and her 15 year old son who has bipolar disorder. We had lunch and went for a walk in the woods. It was hard to develop meaningful conversation, but I did get him talking about movies and things like that. I hope to meet with him again. It was easier than I thought. This begins my Big Brother in Christ efforts. Mt. Calvary calls it "Inside Out", I believe. Though unrelated to my efforts, the Big Brother Big Sister website states that a Little Brother who has been mentored one or more years has a substantially increased chance to graduate high school, attend college, show respect to more adults and avoid alcohol, drugs and violence. Furthermore, the child who comes to know God's love sooner avoids more problems later, a lesson I've learned from my own direct experience.

Keep the faith, and keep on toonin'!

Love, Jim Bures, V.P.
Etoonin' Incorporated

toon in'...

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