

Elaine was one of those people you quickly write off.

She was so far down the road to hell that you just gave up on her. She had been in prison and in hospital so many times that her family expected to hear the news any day that she had finally left the world for her “just rewards”.

On top of this, she was unpleasant to be around. When she first came to Hope Street, even Scott, the Director, secretly hoped she would leave.

No wonder Elaine didn't like herself. Nothing she did was right. Her selfish ways had caught up with her. She had hurt almost everyone she knew, and they were letting her know just how they felt.

But God had other plans for Elaine. His plan was to fill her empty soul with goodness and bless everyone that knew her. They would be amazed at God's ability to turn someone around that had done just about every bad thing a person could do.

Even from a young girl she figured that she knew better than her parents. Her father was a retired minister yet the home was not brimming over with love. Fortunately though, she knew that Jesus Christ was the Son of God and had died on the cross for her sins so that she could have eternal life. “But I never applied it. I let it go in one ear and out the other.”, she says.

So her wayward journey took her from shoplifting to partying, to drug use and all the wicked things that lifestyle takes you to. It showed. The young beauty quickly faded, pushed down by a bad self image from the things she had done. “I never looked in mirrors because I didn't like what I saw. I thought I was ugly.”.

Knowing that time was running out for her, she stayed in transitional living houses. These are places where drug-addicts live and receive a check from the State to keep them going while they try to overcome their addiction. “But everyone there was using drugs. The places weren't staffed or structured.”, she said. “You could collect your money and go and spend it on drugs. We weren't on the street, but we were still using (drugs).”.

She was ready to give up and go back to the street life when her sister got her into Hope Street. At first she grumbled and annoyed everyone. Then some illnesses slowed her up and gave her an opportunity to read the Bible. This time, instead of just reading the words, she tried to live them. Even though she wasn't perfect at it, she felt joy and peace...and for the first time in a very long time, she started to feel good.

Gently, God allowed her to see the ruin of her life. He also showed her that He was making something beautiful out of her. Everyday now she applies the words she reads in the Bible to her life. When thoughts tempt her to go back to the old ways, she turns those thoughts away and turns toward Jesus, her refuge and savior.

Now she can laugh. She can look in the mirror and see someone she likes. She is reconciling with her family. The last time she saw her daughter was at her graduation when Elaine stole the graduation gifts and sold them to buy drugs.

She owes much to everyone. And she knows it, gently asking for forgiveness and trying to serve where she can.

She joined a local church and visits seniors in nursing homes. She's good at it, helping them laugh and see God close at hand. "I never knew what real love was.", Elaine says with a big smile.