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campus life

God Used My Painful Past

When Ryan opened up about cutting and suicidal thoughts, I understood. Now I wanted to help.

by Molly Horn as told to Krishana Kraft

As I walked into the youth room, I immediately noticed a new guy. He definitely looked different than any of my guy friends. He wore black eyeliner with streaks of black running vertically down each cheek. His hair and clothes told me he'd probably call himself emo. Since I like to make new people feel welcome, I went over and introduced myself.

He told me his name was Ryan*. He was really pretty easy to talk to. Before long, we were chatting about music. I hadn't heard of his favorite bands, but I told him about Hawk Nelson and Stellar Kart, two bands I like.

He seemed to enjoy youth group that night and continued coming back, although at times he seemed kind of distant. As we spent time together on Sunday nights, he slowly opened up about his struggles with cutting and suicidal thoughts. I understood. I used to struggle with both problems.

One night our youth pastor, Tad, used the Hawk Nelson song "Zero" to discuss the topic of suicide. The band wrote it after a friend of theirs took his life. We listened as the song played:

Your life dreams are shattered/You've gone away/We've cried here for hours, and the hours turn to days/We know you regret this, leaving us here/With portraits and memories that we've held so dear.

The lyrics reminded me of the emotions I once felt. The song affected Ryan, too. He even pulled Tad aside during one of our games to talk. Tad asked me to join the conversation.

Here's what I said to Ryan: "A couple of years ago, I was depressed and thought no one cared about me. One night I began cutting, and it became an addiction. I would do it when anything bad would happen. I'd think to myself when I cut, You don't deserve to live. Everyone would be better off without you.

You're the one who causes all the problems in your family."

Ryan looked straight in my eyes, which was unusual for him, as I continued to talk.

"Then I met Tad, who asked me some unusual questions. One was: 'If you died tonight, do you know where you would go?' Ryan, do you know how you would answer that question?"

"I hope heaven," Ryan answered softly.

"But if you had to give God a reason why he should let you in heaven, what would you say?" I asked.

"That I tried to live a good life," he said.

I told Ryan that this was also what I had thought, but I wasn't sure my good works would really get me into heaven.

Ryan's eyes looked watery and really sad.

"Tad told me that Jesus died for our sins so we could have a relationship with God," I explained. "By believing Jesus is God's Son and accepting him as my Savior and Lord, which means giving him control of my life, I'd get to spend eternity in heaven. Living a good life will never get me there—it's only through Jesus Christ."

Ryan thought for a minute and then simply said, "Wow."



"Ryan, when I accepted Christ my problems didn't disappear," I stressed, "but I found a strength I never had before. Christ helps me with my struggles and has even removed some of them completely." He remained quiet for a while. It seemed like we sat there forever, but I was certain Ryan was just taking in everything he'd just heard.

Finally, he said, "I'm ready."

I was amazed he was ready to make a commitment to Christ. After all, he'd only attended youth group a few weeks.

Tad and I led Ryan in prayer and he accepted Christ that night. While earlier he'd seemed so sad, he suddenly couldn't stop smiling.

It's been months since that night and Ryan continues to grow in his faith. He now plays guitar with our youth band and has become a big fan of the Christian rock band Skillet. I can tell he's more confident. He says he no longer cuts or thinks about suicide.

One night after my youth group attended a Skillet concert, Ryan came up to me to say goodbye before heading home. He simply said, "Thank you for being my friend. It means a lot to me."

I am thankful God used my story and struggles to bring Ryan to Christ. I'm excited we'll be in heaven together.

Molly, a sophomore, received evangelism training from Dare 2 Share, an organization dedicated to helping Christian students witness to their friends. Learn more at dare2share.org.

*Names have been changed.

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