



Rob & Misty Rogers and family

ROB'S STORY

At 12 years old, I began asking some big questions: What is the meaning of life? Is it really that you go to school, work hard, get into college, work hard, graduate, get a job, work hard, provide for a family, send your kids out to live their own lives, keep working hard, retire, and then wait to die?

By the time I was a teenager, the emptiness of life coupled with neglect, no boundaries, no structure, and no real relationship with my family led me down the road of addiction.

The question was always, “What’s wrong with Rob? What’s broken in him that’s causing him to do all these things?”

At eighteen years old, I realized, if something doesn’t radically change, I’m gonna die.

I talked with my folks, and they sent me to a wilderness therapy program in Washington state. I was there for a year—and clean for a year. Two weeks after I got out, I was back doing the same things as before.

That winter break I came to visit a friend in Nashville, Adam, who I’d bonded with at the wilderness program. I would have

considered myself either atheist or agnostic. Adam was a Christian and would pray for me.

Adam was living with some friends, Bill and Stacy Spencer, when I came to visit him in the winter of 2003. The night I met Bill and Stacy, I arrived at their house and said, "Hello. It's good to meet you. Where's your rest-room?" Then I used heroin in their bathroom and passed out in their guest bedroom for about six hours. That was our introduction.

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I woke up thinking, *Man, these people aren't going to want anything to do with me. I just burned another bridge.* When I came out, I was expecting that level of response because they knew what I was doing.

Sitting around the dinner table, Bill, Stacy, and Adam said, "Hey, pull up a seat. Here's some dinner." They brought me a plate of food.

I don't remember a lot from that night except two things: Bill looked at me and said, "Rob, if you're ever in trouble and you need a place to stay, you have a place in our home." Later that evening he said, "Rob, I don't know why God brought us together, but I know He brought us together for a purpose. If you'll be patient with me, and together we'll be patient with God, He's gonna reveal that in His own timing."

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Nobody had ever talked to me like this before, so I was intrigued. A couple of weeks later I dropped out of college, took them up on their offer, and moved in.

Over several months, I watched how they lived. The generosity they displayed toward me was absurd. They gave me a job they never would have hired anybody to do, writing music for their software company. They gave me a way to make something of a living—and a free place to live. The risk they took on me and the grace that they showed to me didn't make sense.

After a couple of months of living and working with them and watching how they treated Adam, me, their employees, and complete strangers, I said, "Guys, look, I don't know what it is you have, but I've never seen it before. I want to know. I want to learn what it is."

Early on, Bill and Stacy asked Adam and me: "What do you want to do with your lives?" We were twenty-year-old punk kids with no idea what we're doing.

We said, "We would love to offer to other guys what you've done for us."

They said, "Well, you need to understand that we believe there's no such thing as true recovery without Christ at the center of it." This was before I was a Christian.

My response was, "Okay, you guys handle all the Jesus stuff, and we'll handle all the outdoor stuff."

They looked at me and said, "Yeah, that's not gonna work."
That was when we started studying Scripture.

DISCOVER A LIFE THAT MATTERS



Adam Stoner, Stacy Spencer, Bill Spencer & Rob Rogers

I had been through heroin withdrawal probably thirteen times—trying to get clean, then relapsing. I wasn't using after I moved in with them, but I had multiple cravings, maybe ten to twelve times a day, where I wanted to use. The moment we opened the Scriptures and started studying the truth of who Jesus is, all my cravings disappeared. I had tried to conquer these cravings for years on my own. Jesus did that for me.

Eventually, I sensed God saying to me, "Rob, you haven't even given Me your life yet, and this is what I can do for you. Imagine what I can do if you surrender everything to Me?" I wasn't quite ready to admit it yet, but from that moment on I was all in with Jesus.

April 14, 2004, I sat on Bill and Stacy's couch and asked them what I had to do to become a Christian. Bill looked at me and said,

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"If you're asking that question, you already are one." I was nineteen when I showed up at Bill and Stacy's house. About two weeks after I turned twenty, I gave my life to Jesus. Maybe a month later, two other guys came to live with us. Bill and Stacy said, "Here are two other guys who need some help. Why don't you disciple them?"

I was a brand-new believer; I barely knew the difference between the Old Testament and New Testament. I knew God loves me and that I was an addict. Yet God loves me despite my addiction, and He loves you too. I guess we'll start there. The Great Commission doesn't tell us to wait until you're an expert and then make disciples. It just says to make disciples.

As word of mouth got around, we had guys showing up on our doorstep. Within nine months, we had nine guys living in Bill and Stacy's 1,200-square-foot home. They see in other people what others don't see in themselves.

I'm totally baffled at what God has done through Narrow Gate. Bill, Stacy, Adam, and I were four people who had no clue what we were doing. We didn't have a plan; there was no strategy. We were just praying, "God, if You want to use us for something, we'll be along for the ride."

It's amazing what God can do through a handful of people who are willing to be used by Him. And eighteen years later, it's just still unbelievable.

I worked at Grace Chapel in the youth and young adult areas from 2006 to 2010. In 2011, Misty and I married. We spent our first year of marriage in Pittsburgh and worked at my dad's leadership development company.

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Then God called us to plant a church in Bellingham, Washington, one of the most unchurched areas in the United States. We planted and pastored a church there in 2012, which grew to about 300 people. We hired Brady Rector, a Narrow Gate graduate, as a pastoral resident.

We were praying about Brady and a team around him to plant another church out of ours. It was around that time that I reconnected at Grace Chapel and started conversing about what it would look like for me to come back and explore succession. There were several confirmations that this was what the Lord wanted us to do. Brady and his wife, McKenna, were a better cultural fit for pastoring in downtown Bellingham than Misty and I. Rather than sending them to go plant, we asked them, “What if we pass the baton to you and we get sent?”

I came back on staff at Grace Chapel in January 2019 as associate pastor and moved to teaching pastor, lead pastor, and in the fall of 2021, senior pastor. I’m excited for where God is taking us in the future—it’s a privilege. It’s the first church I stepped foot in, and now, almost twenty years later, God called me back to pastor it. That’s cool.

When I look out into the congregation, I see the Narrow Gate guys, sitting where I used to sit, and I think to myself, *You guys have no idea what God’s going to do. It’s going to be awesome, and it’s going to be hard, and it’s going to be wonderful and beautiful and painful. And God’s going to be with you through all of it. He’s going to grow you through it. You have no idea what’s in you, but God does. It’s going to be good.*

—Rob Rogers