

I can dream again

By Jimmy Jack

Jimmy Jack grew up the youngest of nine children in a household devastated by drug abuse and violence. The world labeled him an outcast, but God had a better plan for his life. After several life-threatening experiences, Jimmy and his wife, Miriam, entered Brooklyn Teen Challenge and graduated in 1985. They completed ministerial degrees at Central Bible College in 1989 and established a Teen Challenge coffee house outreach (Freedom Outreach) in Long Island, N.Y., to reach others whose lives have been ravaged by drugs and alcohol. From this outreach Long Island Teen Challenge was established. Today, the ministry includes seven residential homes for men, women and families. In 1994 Jimmy and Miriam, with their pioneer team of Teen Challenge graduates, expanded the coffee house outreach and founded Freedom Chapel, a church birthed out of compassion for the hurting. The following excerpt is taken from Jimmy Jack's recently published autobiography.



One Tuesday night, I needed \$200 and asked my sister Dianne for a loan.

“Jimmy,” she said, “this is church night and I’ll make a bargain with you. I’ll give you the money if you’ll come to church with me.” I did my best to get her to change the terms, but she stood firm.

After church that night, Billy Laan and I went to the Lower East Side of New York to cop four bags of heroin. That was all we could afford. Billy was my best friend, but even more, he was like my twin brother. We parked near Norfolk and Houston Streets. I snorted one of the bags, and then we cooked the other three bags so Billy could inject the dope into his vein.

I helped Billy tie off his upper arm with a belt, and he frantically searched for a good vein. I held his bicep to get a vein. He finally penetrated a usable vein and then shot the three bags of heroin into his arm.

Within seconds the very thing I always feared came upon us. Billy looked at me in panic and utter shock as he said, “Jimm-...!” He fell out of the van before he finished getting my name out. I realized he had overdosed. The bags we bought must have been uncut, pure heroin.

Billy was on the street turning blue; he wasn’t breathing.

We were in Lower Manhattan with no help, and I thought my friend was dead. I sobbed hysterically and began to cry out to God, “Please don’t let Billy die.”

I looked at Billy’s lifeless body one more time when, out of nowhere, a paramedics van pulled up. I still have no idea where they came from, but the older of the paramedics asked me coldly, “What’s going on here?”

Their question was short, and my answer was even shorter as I screamed, “Heroin overdose!”

I lifted Billy’s limp, lifeless body into the van with all the strength I had. The paramedics began to run fluids into Billy’s body and pumped oxygen into him. After a short time they shook their heads like he was gone and there was nothing else they could do. I stood by the side of the van and got serious with God.

I will never forget that moment as I screamed and prayed. I remembered the God of my mother, the God of my sister — Jesus Christ.

“God, please! Don’t let him die!” I cried. After I prayed I began to bargain with God. I promised Him I would do anything He wanted me to. I would stop smoking. I would never drink again. I promised I would never do drugs again or steal again. I made so many promises and I was completely sincere — because I was



(From left) Jimmy Jack, Miriam Navarro and Billy Laan

I can dream again

Jimmy Jack preaches to 10,000 young people in Santiago, Dominican Republic, during the 2007 Rock the Block Tour.



desperate. "I'll become whatever You want me to be, God. Just don't let Billy die!"

I turned my head and looked inside the van, and Billy's blue eyes opened — at first blankly, and then he looked at me. Resurrection power came into his body, and he jumped up. He pulled the needles out of his arm, then jumped off the stretcher and out of the ambulance.

Suddenly, I heard the voice of God in my spirit say, *I showed you*. God brought me right back to the church service earlier that evening. When Pastor Joe Cedzich prayed for me, I had asked God, "If You are real, please show me." And show me He did.

As I drove home, I was trembling because of all of the promises I had made to God. I could hear my own words, "If you bring Billy back to life ..." God had done what He had promised; now could I keep my promises? I knew deep inside that I could not honor all the promises I had made to Him. I felt like I had hustled God big time.

After that night, my life went lower and lower. One night at midnight, I was on an intense drug run and ended up in the projects at my friend Barry Baugh's apartment. Barry was introducing all of us to smoking free-base cocaine. I parked my unlocked van in front of the apartment complex with the keys in it.

Everyone in the 'hood knew me, and I never thought anyone would steal my van. I was a makeshift carpenter at the time, and all of my tools

were in the van along with my wallet and license. It was not much, but it was basically everything I owned.

After smoking some cocaine with Barry, I went outside to roam the streets. To my amazement, the van was gone. I found a screwdriver on the ground and stuck it in my pocket in case I found the thieves who stole my van. I called a friend who was an on-duty cop. He picked me up in the squad car, and we drove around looking for the van but could not find it. So I told him to drop me off at a bus stop so I could go to Dianne's place where my girlfriend Miriam Navarro and I were staying.

The bus dropped me off about 10 blocks from Dianne's house, and I had to walk the rest of the way.

I saw the Brown Derby, a gun-slitting, knife-throwing bar that I would never go to in my right mind. But that night I was out of my mind.

I clearly remember guzzling the vodka down, frustrated because I felt my life was over. Darkness surrounded me, and I knew something desperate was going to happen.

Through the cigarette smoke and blaring music, I glanced down at the end of the bar and saw this crazy dude looking at me. I started to go after him with the screwdriver. In the providence of God, at that same moment, Georgie Delgado, an addict hustling on the streets, walked by the bar and saw me through the window.

Ironically, just two weeks earlier, Georgie had stayed at Teen Challenge. It was only for a few days, but long enough to learn that our only hope was Jesus. In a split second Georgie saw my predicament. He stormed in and jumped in front of me.

"Jimmy, stop!" he commanded. "Don't do anything. There is Someone who can help you."

"Who, Georgie? Who can help me?" I asked, looking at him hopelessly.

"Jesus and Teen Challenge. They can help you, Jimmy," he answered.

When Georgie spoke those words, I threw the screwdriver to the floor. My heart opened, I looked down at my hands, threw them up in the air as a sign of surrender, and started

to cry. I felt like my hardened heart melted out of my eyes.

I said, "Georgie, call Dianne. She'll know what to do with me."

Dianne and Miriam brought me to Brooklyn Teen Challenge at 1 a.m. At first, I was anything but a willing candidate. But the guys who had been in the Teen Challenge choir at my sister's church were there. Some comforted me and others prayed for me. Finally, I slipped into a restless sleep as Dianne and Miriam left.

At 4 a.m., I awoke and did not know where I was. I suddenly felt trapped and heard something telling me, "Run. Get out! Get out!" I ran out of the house and immediately started hustling money for beer and drugs.

I am so grateful that God's power overcame the power of hell again as God drew me back to Brooklyn Teen Challenge.

There are two very spiritual places people pray — in a church sanctuary and in the back of a police car. I remember my own prayers when I got busted. But the prayer I prayed that next morning in the chapel was different.

I wanted to live. I wanted God to truly forgive me. I desperately wanted to change, and I did not want to be dirty anymore. I wanted to be free, and I wanted God to save me.

When I got up from that place of prayer, I felt like my sins, bondage and all my vices stayed in that chair. I was free. I knew instantly that I was a new creation. I was forgiven. All the men stood in a circle holding hands and praying. I was filthy, stinking like a gin mill and wearing grimy, ripped-up pants and clothes, but for the first time in my life I realized I was clean — *really clean*.

I committed my heart, soul and life to the lordship of Jesus Christ that day. On November 4, 1984, God restored the dream, and the miracles began. **tpe**

From I Can Dream Again: The Jimmy Jack Story by Jimmy Jack (Jimmy Jack Ministries and Freedom Publishing, 2007).

E-mail your comments to tpe@ag.org.



"So, you're saying Christ died for me...?"

More than 4,500
unreached people groups in Eurasia
need to know
Christ died for them.



EURASIA

Visit our community online at www.iamnotatourist.org | www.eurasiacommunity.org

When Jesus said, "God so loved the world," He was including the Arab world. When He told us that we were to be His witnesses to "the uttermost parts of the world" He was including the Arab world. So, why is it that most Arabs have never heard that Christ died for them or met one of His followers? The Eurasia Region of AGWM is serious about changing this. Join us as we work together to take the gospel to some of the world's least-reached people, the Arab world.