

Val Shannon - FINAL

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SPEAKERS

Mike Stone, Val Shannon



Mike Stone 00:00

Hey, thank you for joining us. It is a new season at Behind the Mike: Conversations of Hope. If you're new welcome. Our goal is to share conversations of hope from guests with amazing stories that will encourage you and point you to Jesus, even in the darkest times. Hey, thank you for joining us. This is Behind the Mike: Conversations of Hope. And I'm Mike Stone, if you're looking for or if you need a story, or conversation of Hope, this is it. This is like if you're looking for a story that hits the bull's eye with Hope. This one is it. And so I want to introduce to you a friend of mine, Val Shannon, Val, thank you so much for being with us.



Val Shannon 00:58

Yeah, thanks for having me, Mike. I'm excited to share my story and just what Jesus has done in my life.



Mike Stone 01:03

Yeah, very cool story. We met actually, I was doing a video for the local women's resource center here in town. And you were someone that they recommended speak on that. And when I heard your story, I was a lot of emotions, captivated. Heartbroken, hopeful. It was. It's just it's like a movie. It was great. It was such a great hopeful story in the end. And I love what God's doing with it right now. So without any further ado, I want to jump in. So I guess we're really talking about life here. We're talking about all of us have things in our lives that we wish we could do over I think I guess one message I want to share is that we often don't get the chance to start over with things and redo things. And and I think in your case, I'm not going to speak for you, I'll let you tell me. But I almost think that maybe you wouldn't want to change anything, because the end of your story is beautiful. And so with without revealing anything, I'm gonna start, I'm just gonna start by asking you to share your story with us. And I'll probably jump in and cut you off like I usually do so. So share us. Yeah, so share us with us. Your story which starts back you grew up in a Christian family. Is that correct?



Val Shannon 02:35

I did. Yeah. I grew up and my parents were divorced. So I did grow up in a Christian family but with that, it was obviously a little just looked a little bit different. But I was your typical, you know, I went to church camp memorize verses got saved, got baptized, sang solos at my church, which I will never do again. Wow. But right. No more that was like nine year old girl. But yeah, I was from what you would expect just like your typical young churchgoer. And I think that how things progressed and change would probably surprised a lot of people.



Mike Stone 03:15

Yeah. I think there are a lot of stories like yours in the sense that we all start out that way if we're if we're in from a Christian family, we all start out that way we go to church, we grew up in Sunday school, we know all the stories we know all the key verses we know most of us know how to when we get out of the car, but smile on our face because usually the saw the yelling between getting in the car and getting to church. I think that's pretty typical. But um, but yeah, so your story as a as a young nine year old girl singing solos in church, what transpired from there as you continue to grow up and go into high school.



Val Shannon 03:55

You know, I can't pinpoint like an exact moment where I said, I don't believe in God, because I did get to that point where I, I mean, I would argue with Christians on I would have said I was an atheist at that point, or probably agnostic, I guess. But I argued with Christians, I got into debates about that once I got into college, but I think once I hit middle school is probably when I really started just to doubt my faith. And I don't think I had the firm foundation and in apologetics truly and training of, of what my relationship with Christ was what that faith meant. Yeah, I might have memorized my books of the Bible and some verses, but I didn't truly have that. Just that full understanding that I needed. And I thought that I did. I mean, even looking back, I have looked back I've shared before diary entries from when I was in like fifth grade of how much I love Jesus. And you know, I was on fire for Jesus and I wanted to just walk so looking back at that I truly was a girl who loved Jesus and I did have a relationship with him. But I couldn't answer those questions and people would come to me and, and maybe argue against that, or, or asked me to prove my faith, that's kind of where I fell flat. And so as I got into high school, I just began to just have a lot of self self doubt. I would say I was a, I didn't do a lot of things that other girls in my class were doing. But I also, I was partying a lot, I started drinking at a young age experimenting with drugs. And obviously, in that world, you just, I kind of lost all hope for myself, I had no self identity. And so I was just searching for just acceptance and joy. And, you know, I thought I had this freedom of living this life. And I know now that I was so enslaved, and I was not, I was not free at all.



Mike Stone 05:52

I think I'm pretty accurate in saying that most of us around middle school, struggle with our identity, who we really are what we really believe. Truly, like, what what am I here for? I think we all struggle with that identity crisis. Some of us get through that relatively unscathed.

Others kind of start in a direction and then begin getting to, to get into a tailspin. And and that's kind of what happened. If I understand your story. I don't know a whole lot about your story. But I if I understand correctly, that's kind of where you were, as you began to start that tailspin. Did you? At some point, did you become rebellious toward God? Or did you just kind of throw your hands up and say, I, I just don't believe this anymore?



06:49

Yeah, I think I was always looking for ways for God to prove himself to me, which I know now there's, that's not necessary. He's proved so much through just sending Christ for us. But he's proved everything really through that. But I was just looking for proof. And I wanted a black and white answer. And I finally think I, again, I just couldn't explain myself and I just refuse to accept I knew the truth, I knew that he sent Christ. And that was it was rooted deep in me, though I didn't believe it or accepted at that point in my life. To me, there was just no evidence of that. And I think the fact that I was going through such a hard time and, you know, dealing with depression, and doing all these worldly things that I thought, like, there's no God, if there was I wouldn't be going through this, and I wouldn't, you know, be living this lifestyle. And so yeah, I think that just, it was, it was a slow progression. But it was certainly I got to a point where I was definitely rebellious against God and just very defiant, toward really all authority, especially God. But on the outside. I mean, I got really good grades in high school, I was a cheerleader. I was involved in sports had friends. I don't know that anyone would have looked at me. And thought, like, yep, that's the girl who's out, you know, partying on the weekends. Or doing all these things, until I got later into high school when I didn't even care if people knew really, I got to a point where I was okay with being rebellious, and I didn't care that people knew. And so that's, I think, when things once I got to that point, and I truly just lost all self respect, and had no respect for myself for my body, for the things I was doing. And that's when just really, I started going downhill.



Mike Stone 08:54

So you said you were, you had friends, you were a cheerleader? You were into sports? That seems to kind of check off all the things on a kid's wish list to be popular to be accepted. But you were still empty inside you said depression. You were doing drugs, experimenting with drugs and alcohol.



Val Shannon 09:17

Yeah, I had worked. I worked two jobs in high school. I mean, I, I seemingly was just a normal, I was a hard working girl. And I just think I was missing something on the outside so deeply that I was willing to do whatever it took to figure out what that was. And I was so broken, but I refuse to look to Christ as that answer. And I know now looking back that God was just he was working in my life through all that. You know, all those verses and all those hymns that I memorized growing up, I never forgot. And even as I you know, as I am in church now and I have gotten saved since then. Those did not return void. I still remember those. And when I hear just things that I learned when I was a kid, and you know, that light bulb goes off of I never forgot that, you know, God never forgot me, even when I thought that he wasn't there.



Mike Stone 10:18

Yeah, that's a great testimony. Because I know that there are people who are still have strayed from the Lord. And they would tell you the same thing. I've had people tell me that, you know, I, I don't know that I believe in God. But I all that stuff is still in my heart. I still remember those scriptures. I still remember the things that I learned in Sunday school, there's still that place there. And I love that that God never turns his back on us. He never walks away from us. You're in? Was this like, maybe your junior year then when things changed fairly drastically? Can you tell us about that?



Val Shannon 10:57

Yeah, so the summer before my senior year, I found out I was pregnant. So I had went to the local pregnancy center, which you had mentioned before, that I'm now involved with and loved dearly. They were local pregnancy resource center. And I went there because a friend of mine said, Hey, this place has free pregnancy test. And you know, 17 year old me was not about to walk into Walgreens and buy a pregnancy test. So I was all about the free pregnancy test. So I walked in that day. And when I arrived, there was an intake form, where you know, you listed your information, health information, and I vividly remember one of the boxes questions was if you are if you do have a positive test, what would you plan to do, and there were three options, parent, the child placed a child for adoption, or have an abortion. And to me, I'm looking at these answers 17 thinking, well, this test better be negative. So I'm going to check all three, because none of them are good options at this point for me. So even though up to that point, I had considered myself, you know, an atheist or agnostic or whatever I would, was very far from God. I still believed in the sanctity of life and knew that life was precious. But at that moment, you know, in that situation, I still did I checked abortion as an option. And so, after I take the test, and I, you know, hand it to the woman, she pulls me in a friend had went with me that day and tells me I'm pregnant. And immediately, I just think, Okay, let's get an abortion, let's get this over with. That was my only option. Because for me, I just felt that that would take care of it. That nobody would have to know. And then I could still go on living how I was living, that was truly the selfishness behind it was that I didn't deserve to have, you know, I didn't deserve to be pregnant. It was something that had happened to me, it was something that I didn't deserve to go through. Because I had such a bright future. I wanted to go to college, I wanted to, you know, move away from Finley, and do all these things that I thought being pregnant would prevent me from doing. So I checked that box and the woman they had, I don't even know what was going on behind the scenes that day. But I know now that they had a, a woman come in who had had an abortion in college, and she I don't know if they called her if she was there, how that worked out. But she came in and spoke to me and just told me about her story of her abortion that she had had and just how that was such an immediate response to something that had a an effect on her that lasted, you know this well, I don't know how this woman was at the point, but it had it affected her her whole life. And so her telling me that story just kind of calmed me and brought me down and helped me to think a little bit more rationally versus just let's get this over with mindset. So I knew that it would be a permanent decision, but I still left that day. Not really knowing what I was going to do. I mean, she had kind of talked me off the ledge, so to speak of that abortion wasn't my only option. But I still left not knowing what I was going to do. I mean, I was 17 I was pregnant. I was very scared. And that was an option for me. And a very real option at that point.





Mike Stone 14:38

This, this was not in the plans. This was not supposed to happen. You're 17. 17 year olds don't think very far in the future period, let alone was something that life changing. You said this is a moment in my life where it's going to go this way or that way. And that's it. Um, I think it's interesting too, that you said that you really were very much pro life until reality sunk in. I think that, I don't know, I've never been in that situation to have to make a decision. But I would imagine that you're thinking, parents, friends, school, like you said, college after that, you're thinking of how this one decision is going to make repercussions through your life. And on the other hand, if you make that decision to abort, like you said, Nobody needs to know. You know, it's the people at the clinic, wherever you would go. And they can't talk about it, legally. So it really is just you, maybe another person or two, nobody needs to know life goes on. You shared to when you walked away, there was some you told me this, and it just kind of blew my mind wasn't far away from where you were, when you were at that center, that there was another option, kind of staring you in the face.



Val Shannon 16:15

Yeah, and I actually that this is a part of my story that I have, really until recently and not remember it. And that was 17 years ago, that literally a block away from this pregnancy center that I had gone to that day was a Planned Parenthood. And I was very familiar with Planned Parenthood, because they would come into our high school and, you know, hand out free condoms to people and talk about safe sex and that I didn't even think about going there that day, I don't I know now that the Lord was protecting me and protecting the life inside of me. But had I gone there, I know, I wouldn't be where I am, I know I wouldn't have made the same decision that I made that day. And I just praise the Lord that, that my friend who told me about this pregnancy center, who had no idea what that would mean to me. But how drastically that changed my life. And God just had placed these people, as he always does in the right place. And ultimately, that led to just I think saving my life saving my son's life. Just so many things that fell into place. And I just love how that worked out. And I like I said, I didn't realize that until like the last year or two. I remember, Oh, my goodness, there was a Planned Parenthood there too. And I had never considered that. And luckily, they're out of business now. So their doors are closed.



Mike Stone 17:38

Yeah, that's, that's really amazing. And I think one thing for those listening to, I love that you can look back now and see how God was, was there, he never left you. You had rejected Him, you had pushed him away. But he was with you. And not only was he with you, but he was still guiding you. You can look back now and see that God didn't send you to the Planned Parenthood where things probably would have worked out a lot differently. There was a friend, God put that friend in the plate in the right place at the right time. God was still guiding and directing you because he loved you. He cared about you. And I think that's a message I want to share whether it's whether it's a woman who has that consideration, right now she has to make that decision right now. Whether it is a guy, that's that's on the other side of that decision, or whether I don't care who you are listening, it's important to remember that God, no matter what you've done to him, no matter where you're at in your life, God is there with you. He's guiding you, and He wants you to come back to him. I want you to share the rest of your story because this this is what really I'll never forget when you shared this for the video.



Val Shannon 18:51


So I like I said I left that day, so not knowing what I was going to do. And at that time, there was a local doctor in Findlay who was who would offer free ultrasound. So the pregnancy center was paired up with this local doctor and I came back I don't know if it was two or three days later. But to get this free ultrasound that they offered to all women who who wanted to do it at the pregnancy center. And we know that you know, I think it's upwards of 50% of women who after seeing an ultrasound if they're abortion minded after seeing the ultrasound, they change their mind and choose life. So I left that day not knowing and after I saw that ultrasound, that I mean, I'm an evidence based person, like I said, I want to evidence of God and I saw that baby's heartbeat and heard it and that was my evidence. And I had never even considered, you know, as I found out, I was pregnant and I thought, you know, what am I going to do? How is this going to affect me? What will my future look like? I never considered well what about the baby until I actually saw that ultrasound? And I'm just so thankful for those doc ders, who, you know, offered those free ultrasounds and who worked with that pregnancy center. And I just am so thankful that we have that technology number one that that I was able to see that because that truly was the turning point for me that I realized, okay, I have no idea what this means I had never stepped foot into it. Like, I didn't even know what ultrasound was probably at that point. And I thought, Okay, I have no idea what this will look like or what will happen. But I'm not going to abort my baby and end this life because of a choice that I made. And because of mistakes that I made, and I know that that was the point where it was so hard at work in my life, and every other thing that every other aspect, I mean, you look at my life, and it was like that girl is going down the gutter. And at that point, I know that God finally got to me, even though I didn't recognize that it was him, I knew that. Like, he finally opened my eyes a little bit to life, and to what that how precious that was. And so after that ultrasound, I knew that I would be starting my senior year of high school pregnant. And I had no idea what that meant. I had no idea who to tell or where to go for help. And the pregnancy center that I went to that day was with me every step of the way. They were there to, you know, talk to me about how to tell people and my family and how to navigate things like doctor's appointments and having healthy pregnancy and what that looked like. And they were just so supportive of me. And I never felt like I was being judged because I was a teen mom, or they didn't look at me as this girl who did drugs and partied and look at her, of course, she got pregnant, and here she is, it was never that it was always you are a mother now. And we are here to support you and your child. And I'm so grateful for them for that.



Mike Stone 22:00

Yeah. They probably weren't the same ones that are there now. But I do know the mission behind the local women's resource center here. I love working with them. Because they really are passionate about what they're doing. It's not a job to them. It's not. It's personal. They understand that, like you said, you came to that pivot point in your life, and you had to go one way or the other, you didn't have a choice, you had to choose one thing or the other. And I know, we've heard a lot of criticism from places like that, where they try to talk you into keeping your baby. We've also heard if the truth was really told, we've also heard about women. In fact, we had a woman on here, who we hope to have back on soon, who shared her story of having multiple abortions, and she is not a teen anymore. And she's still dealing with the repercussions of that. But thankfully, God has given her a piece about it. But there are repercussions about Listen, whether you talk in pregnancy, or a simple decision. As a child or


an adult, every decision we make has consequences. And what I really love about your story, Val is that it takes I don't know what it takes to be a 17 year old with a plan to say I'm gonna go the hard route. Because I know it's right. And I think any woman that makes that decision, I know it's not easy, but in my eyes, they're heroes, because nobody asked for that. I don't care how promiscuous you are, or whatever the case may be, I think your hero when you can make that decision, and not take the easy way out. And that's not to criticize those who have made the other decision. Yeah, I know, as you said, it's just it's a split sometimes comes down to a split moment decision. And if you choose the wrong one, you can't go back on that. And so that's not to condemn anyone who has had an abortion. We've talked a lot about that on another episode as well helping those who have gone through abortions and are dealing with that today. But I just I think that any mother who chooses life is a hero because it's so much easier to go the other way.

 Val Shannon 24:32

Yeah. And I And Mike, I do want to say I think that, that I was never I think that they presented my options to me so gracefully, and I didn't ever feel, you know, like if you do have an abortion and we're not going to talk to you or anything, I knew that they would still even be there, those people at the pregnancy center. If I did make that choice, and if I came back and said this is what I did, and I regret it and I will Wouldn't I want people who are listening who have maybe made that decision to know that there are people who are there and in we love you and knowing now what I was saved from, the more that I learned about abortion and the physical effect it has on your body, the ramifications that hasn't future pregnancies and cancer and lots of different aspects of life. God just protected me in so many ways, from so many things emotionally and physically. And I'm just, I'm just so grateful for him showing up that day. He's the real hero.

 Mike Stone 25:38

Yeah, for sure. For sure.

 Val Shannon 25:41

So I did choose to keep my baby. I stopped partying and drinking, I, you know, did all the things that I was supposed to do as a pregnant mom. So in March of my senior year of high school, I had my son Cohen. And, again, even the timing of it was perfect. You know, I was able to take a little bit of time off school, and then we had spring break. And then I had a few weeks left of my senior year, and I was done. Was it hard to graduate? Yeah, but I knew that that wasn't an option for me. My family was very supportive and helpful. And watching the baby, the school was actually amazing. And allowing me to go home when I had study halls or breaks and not graduating high school was not an option for me. I mean, I was three months away from graduating. So I graduated high school, and fell right back into my old patterns. As far as partying goes, while I had a son, you know, on the weekends, I would still go out and find somebody to watch him and go out and party and do the same things.

 Mike Stone 26:43



And because at this point, I just, you didn't really, at this point, you didn't really have that God moment. I mean, you were grateful you made the decision, you were moving forward. But you were still kind of living in that limbo, of not really allowing God to do what he wanted in your life.



Val Shannon 27:02

Yeah, I took a lot of credit and pride in the fact that I chose life and I'm graduating high school and look at me, I'm going to college now. And I was I guess that's the best word. I think I was prideful in the fact that I was a teen mom and beat all the odds of not graduating high school. And, you know, I was double majoring in college and got great grades in college and was working and doing all these things that to the world. People might say, like, wow, this, this girl's got it together, you know, she might have a son in college, but she's doing all the right things. And I was literally dying on the inside. Still, I had no hope. And I mean, my hope at that point, I would have said, would have been in my son that that was the reason why I kept living. But I had no hope in Christ, I had no recognition that God gave me this life. And, you know, my son, right in front of me that that was a gift from God, I just, it was almost like an obstacle that I had overcome on my own. And so I still kept living, you know, all those those ways. So I was still doing everything I was supposed to do as a college student and as a mom, and was raising my son, and you know, seemingly doing a great job at it. But I was still lacking so much. Just freedom from from my past and from the sins that I was still living in. And my sophomore year of college, I met my now husband. And I was very stubborn and very independent at that point. And I as we began dating, and I, I told him, I will never get married, number one and number two, I will never take a man's last name. And those were like my two things that I swore to him. And he said, Okay, then we're not dating. I mean, it was it was drag, cut and dry of that. And then I thought, wait a minute, let me change my mind. So I was very independent. I mean, I think if anything me coming out as a team mom, that's I was very driven. I always have been driven but being a teen mom really made me independent in a non healthy way too. Because I wouldn't allow myself to depend on anyone and I think that reflect was reflected in my the the need that I didn't have for a Savior. I didn't think I needed anything, whether that be a husband or Jesus. So after a while, God really began working in the life of my husband and changing his heart and through him and just through him speaking truth to me. I had already known all these facts about Jesus I knew all these things, but I still didn't have faith. Like I said, I was still very independent and didn't think I needed anything else even though I was so I had no freedom. I had no freedom even though this free life that I thought I was living a partying and you know having friends and doing whatever I'm it wasn't it wasn't real. And God was seeking me the whole time. Even as I was running from him, there are so many just weird stories of things that happened to me when I was doing these horrible things that looking back are so evident that it was the Lord being so clear to me. And, you know, I'm just blinders are on, I had, I had no idea that that's what it was. So, I finally surrendered my life to Jesus after just number one, the Holy Spirit working in me obviously, and, and seeing the life of my husband change, and just his influence in my faith. And I have never felt more free. I remember the night that I that I accepted Jesus, and just, some people talk about that, you know, it's a gradual change, or that things, you know, gradually look different for them. But mine was just instant. And I could just feel just the chains falling off, and the desires that I had were gone. And I still look back at that night and just makes me smile and cry. Because I knew at that point, like, this is what freedom is, this is I'm so free in Christ. Now I don't need to go out and, and party and drink and do all these things to try to feel free. You know, it's right here. And it's been here the whole time. And I just had to, you know, say yes to Christ and to surrender my life to him. And I

remember calling my dad the next morning. And he started crying. And he said, I was praying for you last night at dinner. And just again, another moment that I know that there were so many people praying for me, and I didn't even know that at the time. And so that has just really taught me that. There's so much power in prayer. Yes. And I had given up on myself, but there were a lot of people who did it. And so I've learned through that, that even the people who I think are so far gone, and who have no hope that they are this sinners, just like I was, and you know, no further away from God than I was because we are all equally, you know, enemies of Christ if we're not following Him in and it just gives me so much hope. And I want to encourage other people listening that we all can think of somebody right now, who we think there is no way that they will ever, you know, no Jesus, there's no way they'll change their life. And I was that person, I was the person who, like I said, hated, I hated God, and I hated. I love to argue with people who love God. And there's just so much hope in that. And so I just encourage anybody to keep praying and to not give up. And I'm preaching to myself here too.



Mike Stone 32:59

There's a lot of moms and dads out there praying for their kids who are in college who are, you know, on their own kids that are in high school, praying for them. A lot of grandparents, a lot of friends, a lot of people out there that are praying for others. Because once you experience that, that hope that we have, um, can only be found in Jesus Christ. Boy, changes your life changes your life. It does.



Val Shannon 33:26

Yeah. And I, yeah, I don't want anybody to have to go through what I went through to find Jesus. But like you said, at the beginning, I wouldn't change a thing. I wouldn't. I wouldn't change a thing. I mean, even all the things that I did that I, you know, can look back at with regret I, you know, I might be regretful that I did them. But I know that the Lord used every moment of my life leading up to that point and leading up to today to, to share my faith with other people to tell my children about it, and to be honest with them, and just to encourage other people that there is hope. And even if you're 17, and you're pregnant, and you think that there is no way out. The only thing that you can do is turn to Jesus at that point, you can't do anything on your own.



Mike Stone 34:19

We say it all the time here that there's an empty place inside of all of us that can only be filled by Jesus. And I know that that sounds like fluff, that sounds like Christian talk. But it's so true. And if you are out there listening to Val story, know that it is true, you can find hope in Jesus Christ. And, you know, I think we both went through that time of being raised in the church and then kind of straying away. And you know, he's always there. He's always there with you. You're never too far gone, like you said earlier, and I love that. So where are you at today, Val?



Val Shannon 34:59

Well, I did get married, I broke my first promise. And I took his last name. So I can't really stand to firm on that. And he's a great guy, whatever. Yes, yes, he is. I also said I would ever have

to him on that. And he's a great guy, whatever. Yes, yes, he is. I also said I would ever have more kids. And we have four more children. So we've got, well, I have one on the way. So we'll have five kids here coming up in a few months. And I just look back. And I'm just so grateful that God never stopped pursuing me and that God doesn't see the the teen mom, the pregnant mom, he doesn't see the girl who lied and cheated and partied, he sees Jesus now. And there's so much freedom in that, that you can't get anywhere else. And, you know, I used to not want to step foot in a church, I used to feel very condemned when I would, you know, maybe go with my dad before I was saved. And I know now that there are so many people who just with open arms are willing to welcome you and to share the same joy that they have not because they want to condemn you or make you feel bad, but because like you said, there's once you feel that joy and know that freedom, you just want to tell everybody, because you want to share that and you want other people to know that love, and I'm just so grateful for his redemption and the mercy that he offers me every day when I screw up and the forgiveness that He offered to me after so many years of, of running from him and rebelling against Him.



Mike Stone 36:34

You know, I heard years ago, someone told me, you know, if I had the cure, because I questioned during my doubting time, I said, Why does everybody have to keep pushing Jesus? And the answer that I received from someone was, you know, if I had the cure for cancer, or if I had the cure for whatever it was, I would be telling everybody about it. And this is no different. And that really resonated with me, because that's really the way it is. When you experience the freedom and the hope and the power of and love of Jesus. You want to tell everybody? So, Val, for those for those who are listening? What's the takeaway? What do you want to tell them about your story that they can take with them and find that hope or have that hope or continue and be encouraged.



Val Shannon 37:32

So I remember a time before I was saved when somebody said to me, you know, Val, you've done such a good job raising your son. And I'm just so proud of you for doing this. And I just swelled right up. And thank you, you know that thank you so much. I've worked so hard. And I know now like I said that that was all the Lord. And so I want to give all glory to God for what he's done in my life. And my son jokes with me that Mom, if you didn't have me, you'd probably be in prison. And I'm sad, you're probably right. And I'm okay with admitting that because he you know, I've shared my story with him, obviously, he knows them. Yeah. And he truly my life did change and my life, you know, your life will change obviously, when you have a child if you're in high school, or whether you're married or not. But I think the biggest takeaway for me is thinking that I had, I was living this free life and you know, doing drugs to experience freedom and partying and living this life where I thought I could do all the right things from the world's view. But on the inside, I was dying, and I was not free. I was not set free until I accepted Christ. And nobody can have that freedom unless you are in Christ, no matter what you think. And so I just challenge people who are not believers, and who maybe are in a place that I was where they hate God, and don't believe, to really just look deep inside. And are you really, are you really free? Do you really have joy? Because I know now that the joy that I thought that I had, was very superficial, and it was fleeting, and the joy that I have now even on hard days, even on days where I don't feel very joyful, that my joy is complete in the Lord.



Mike Stone 39:29

Amen. Very well said. Well, I I, first of all, I think it's brave of you to share your story. I don't know how often you share it. But I think that one of the things we say here is that everybody has a story. And when we share our stories with one another, we can encourage one another and we can point people to Jesus. So I'm so grateful that you're willing to do this. I love your family and I knew that this would be an opportunity for you To share with my audience and I know they're going to be blessed by this. So, thank you so much for sharing.



Val Shannon 40:07

Thanks for having me, Mike.