

Moyers describes recovery from addiction, recovery of lost faith

March 10, 2008

Posted: 3/06/08

Moyers describes recovery from addiction, recovery of lost faith

By John Hall

Texas Baptist Communications

SAN ANTONIO—William Cope Moyers grew up believing the prayer his parents taught him: “God is great. God is good.” But when his childlike faith in a good and great God died in a flash, he sought to fill the void in his soul with drugs and alcohol.

Moyers described his long struggle of recovery from substance abuse—and recovery of his faith—at the Texas Baptist Christian Life Conference March 4 in San Antonio, sponsored by the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

Growing up, Moyers recalled having everything most children want. As the son of Bill Moyers—former White House staffer and acclaimed journalist—he considered his childhood idyllic. His parents loved him. They provided for all his needs—physically, emotionally, socially and spiritually.

William Cope Moyers

And in return, he was everything most parents want. He excelled in school. He was active in his community and his church.

“I lacked for nothing growing up,” he said. “I had it all. I led a comfortable life.”

In an instant, that changed July 18, 1971, a date he describes as the day “God let me down.” While he and his family were vacationing in the mountains of New Mexico, he saw a lightning bolt strike a tree, travel through it and hit a nearby family. It killed that family and Moyers’ faith, as well.

“That was my introduction to death and the end of life and the death of my faith,” he said. It also signaled the beginning of “questions that would haunt me for decades.”

Moyers struggled to rationalize how a God he understood to be “great” and “good” could allow—or worse, cause—something like that to happen. Desperately, he tried to reclaim his faith, even going to the extent of getting baptized, but he felt no different. He would fall asleep whispering, “God, where are you?”

As the search went on, he began struggling with a sense of unworthiness and his imperfect faith. At 15, he found what seemed to fill what he described as “the hole in my soul”—marijuana.

• [Watch Christian Life Conference video clips here.](#)

“I developed a faith in a power greater than myself,” he said. “That was the marijuana that I voluntarily ingested in my body.”

At 18, he began drinking—legally at that time. In time, he was binge

drinking and addicted to hard drugs, including crack cocaine. He became more distant from others, including his family. He didn't take care of himself physically. He was no longer active in a church.

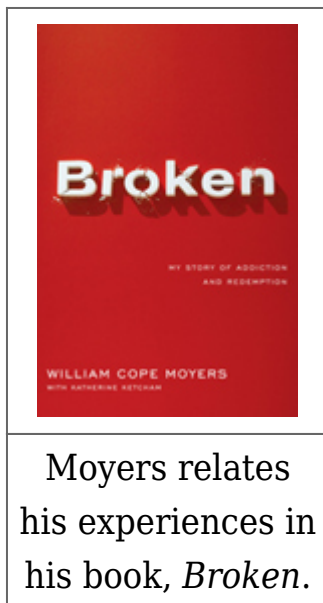
"I was a walking wreck," he said. "Alcohol and drugs stole my soul and hijacked my brain."

At age 30, he hit bottom in a Harlem crack house. When his family discovered the extent of his addiction, they were shocked.

"My wife never saw it coming," he said. "My parents were stunned."

After three weeks in the psychiatric ward of a New York City hospital and an extended stay at a residential treatment center in Minnesota, Moyers began the recovery process, but looking back, he see it only as a tentative beginning.

"I began to make my dance with God again, but it was a dance to a tune I composed and sang—a dance on my terms," he said.



Moyers forthrightly described the false starts and relapses he has experienced. He reached a turning point during a major relapse that left

him on the floor of a crack house in Atlanta.

“I went there to die. I had been swallowed alive by the black hole of despair.” The malt liquor and cocaine were no longer having the same affect on Moyers, they “were no longer the shield of deniability that I was going down.”

As suddenly as the lightning strike that began his downward spiral, a bolt of hope literally came knocking on the door of the crack house. A voice called for “the white guy.”

“It was not me getting up off the floor,” Moyers said. “My legs were moving, but it was not me moving my legs.”

“I said, ‘I’m done God, have me,’” he recalled. “In that moment, I was broken. And in that moment, I was delivered.”

From that point forward, Moyers has been on the road to recovery—one day at a time, one step at a time.

He continues battling, saying that the recent days have been extremely tough and noting he’s “hit rock bottom” sober.

Asked to explain what that means, Moyers described it as “a painful moment when you realize how difficult life is.” But he insisted he is learning to “deal with life on life’s terms”—not relying on drugs and alcohol.

In the recovery process, he rediscovered his faith. He’s betrayed his faith on occasion since becoming sober, he acknowledged, but he’s clung to it, as well. He trusts God will pull him through, a day at a time.

“Belief is one thing and trust is another,” he said. “I had to trust God could do for me what I could not do for myself.”

With additional reporting by Managing Editor Ken Camp

News of religion, faith, missions, Bible study and Christian ministry among Baptist churches, in Texas, the BGCT, the nation and around the world.