

No Regrets

A Journey to Redemption



JOHN O. ACREE

COPYRIGHT © 2024

JOHN O. ACREE

All rights are reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means, including photocopying, recording, or other electronic or mechanical methods, without the prior written permission of the author, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical reviews and certain other noncommercial uses permitted by copyright law. For permission requests, write to the author at the address provided in the acknowledgments section of this book.

Edited By:

Name of Editor

Printed By:

Company Name

Printed in the United States of America

First Printing Edition, 2024

ISBN 0-0000000-0-0



Dedication

I dedicate this book to my father, who never stopped believing in me no matter what, and to my mother, who was everything **anyone** could ever want in a mother and a wife.

Table of Contents

Author's Note

Chapter One

The Cost of Conformity

Chapter two

Coast Guard Adventures

Chapter three

The World of Journalism

Chapter four

Law School and Legal Challenges

Chapter five

The Dark Descent and Redemption

Chapter six

From Despair to a New Beginning

Chapter seven

Teaching Adventures in Asia

Chapter eight

Can Darkness Lead to Light?

Chapter nine

Rebuilding Bridges

Chapter ten

The Road Less Traveled

Chapter eleven

TBD

Author's Note

Author's Note

God knows that I made lots of mistakes in my life. But one thing I learned for certain: you are who you are because of what you have been through. Change even one thing about your past and you would be a different person today. It's not always been easy, and it's not always been fun. In fact, there were downright frightening times. But, with my faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and the support of my family, I stand firm today, and can say that I do not regret a single thing I have done or that has been done to me. I have hurt many people through the years, and for that I am appallingly sorry. I have also suffered some pain in the offering. But, with the grace of God, I stand rock solid, and I will remain until the time he calls me home.



CHAPTER ONE

The Cost of Conformity

“To be yourself in a world that is constantly trying to make you something else is the greatest accomplishment.”

- Ralph Waldo Emerson

Have you ever stopped to consider the cost of living a life dictated by societal norms? How many dreams have been sacrificed at the altar of conformity, traded for the comfort of the well-trodden path? For many, the answer is a resigned “yes,” whispered beneath the weight of a routine that leaves no room for passion or adventure.

This realization struck me early, as a boy barely into adolescence but already keenly aware of adulthood's looming chains. Even then, I saw people around me locked in hollow lives, consumed by routines devoid of wonder. A single question began to haunt me: **When did humanity lose its sense of adventure?**

As a child, I dreamed of climbing mountains, charting unexplored territories, and carving a meaningful path through life. But those dreams dimmed under the pressure to conform, to do what was expected instead of what felt authentic. Years later, that boy's ambitions came flooding back, reigniting a fire I thought had long been extinguished.

Yet, before I could reclaim that purpose, I wandered off course. I fell into a cycle of fleeting connections and surface-level distractions that offered neither joy nor substance. I thought I was living freely, rejecting societal rules, but in truth, I was adrift—caught in a tide that carried me further from myself.

One night, after yet another hollow encounter, I found myself alone, overwhelmed by sadness. I broke down, tears flowing as I faced the

emptiness of my choices. **Is this all there is?** The question clawed at me. It wasn't just loneliness; it was the despair of feeling profoundly lost. For the first time, I acknowledged that the life I was living was not the one I wanted.

That night became a turning point. As I sat there, face buried in my hands, I knew something had to change. Beneath the weight of my despair, I felt a faint but resolute belief that I was meant for something more. Still, I didn't know where to begin, and the life I'd built, with all its easy distractions, was hard to leave behind.

Then came a moment that shook me to my core.

At the time, I was sharing an apartment with a good friend—a friendship that, remarkably, has endured over fifty years. One night, our quiet routine was shattered by frantic knocking at our door. We opened it to find our upstairs neighbor, disheveled and streaked with blood. His hollow eyes and trembling voice uttered a plea: “Please, help me.”

Reluctantly, we followed him to his apartment. What we found there defied explanation. The walls were smeared with blood in chaotic

patterns, the metallic scent thick in the air. My friend asked, voice trembling, “What happened here?”

The man stared vacantly, as though trapped in a fog. “I... I don’t know. I just... had to do it.”

The scene burned into my mind—a grim reflection of desperation, chaos, and loss. As we left, I couldn’t shake the feeling that his torment mirrored something within me. It was a terrifying glimpse into where my own reckless path might lead if I didn’t make a change.

Yet, even with this realization, I continued to flirt with risk. Shortly after, I faced another brush with mortality—one that left an indelible mark.

One spring afternoon, the sky turned ominous, and sirens blared: tornado warning. As a massive, dark funnel appeared on the horizon, most people sought shelter. Not me. I grabbed a beer, walked onto my back porch, and sat down to watch.



The wind howled as the tornado churned overhead, an unstoppable force of nature. I felt strangely calm, almost defiant. Was this a death wish? A test of limits? I wasn't sure, but the experience left me shaken. The tornado touched down miles away, devastating Xenia, Ohio, in its path of destruction. It could have easily been me.

In the aftermath, I felt the weight of that moment. I had tempted fate one too many times, daring life to catch up to me. The thrill of

recklessness was gone, replaced by a sobering realization: life is fragile, and mine needed a purpose.

Determined to change, I started keeping a journal, pouring out my thoughts and grappling with my emotions. One night, I stumbled upon a quote by Emerson: **“To be yourself in a world that is constantly trying to make you something else is the greatest accomplishment.”**

The words hit me like a bolt of clarity. I needed to reclaim my individuality and stop living according to others’ expectations.

Little by little, I began reshaping my life. I distanced myself from toxic habits and hollow connections. I spent more time reflecting, recalibrating, and embracing the solitude that allowed me to grow. It wasn’t easy; change never is. But with each small step, I felt a spark reigniting.

My friend noticed the shift. One evening, he said, “You’ve really changed.”

“Yeah,” I replied, surprised by my own answer. “I think I’m finally figuring things out.”

“You look happier,” he observed, and for the first time in a long while, I realized he was right. I felt at peace—not because life had suddenly become easier, but because I was finally living authentically.

The blood-smeared walls, the tornado—they were warnings, reminders of how easily life can spiral out of control. But they were also gifts, forcing me to confront my fears and embrace the possibility of something greater. I didn’t have all the answers, but I knew I was on the right path: one of self-discovery, resilience, and a refusal to settle for less than a life lived fully.