

## **Interview with Marty Angelo** **Author of *Once Life Matters: A New Beginning***

Today, Tyler R. Tichelaar has the privilege of being joined by Marty Angelo, author of the personal biography-memoir “Once Life Matters: A New Beginning.”

Marty Angelo worked in the music entertainment business for 15 years before having his religious conversion in 1981, which he describes in “Once Life Matters.” He is here today to tell us about his conversion and about the new beginning he has since made.

Tyler: Welcome, Marty. I’m pleased to have you here today. To begin, will you briefly tell our readers what “Once Life Matters” is about and how you came to write it?

Marty: Thank you for this opportunity to discuss my book.

“Once Life Matters” is an overview of my life before my conversion to Christianity, what led to my salvation, and how God is using my life afterwards.

I wrote it because I want to share with others the hope God gives once we place our faith and trust in Him. I was so lost and confused most of my life, strung out on drugs, alcohol, and rebellion. Once I accepted Jesus Christ into my life as Lord and Savior I was totally changed. He was what I was searching for all of my life. Once He touched me, I wanted to shout it from the rooftops that if He can change me, He can change anyone. Therefore, my book became the vehicle for me to use to tell this to others.

Tyler: Would you share with our readers what were the circumstances surrounding your conversion?

Marty: I worked in the entertainment business working mainly with rock ‘n’ roll musicians, disc jockeys, and television production. I thought I found the key to life by feeding my ego through the notoriety of being a celebrity, making loads of money, and spending it on the “high life.”

Back in the 1960s, substance abuse was just rearing its ugly head and not many of us were suffering any immediate consequences. We were learning by trial and error. Even when a rock musician or band was busted for drugs, it almost enhanced one’s popularity. There was a large gap between straight people and substance abusers. This made it even harder to detach oneself from a rebellious lifestyle because we thought there was not much the “straight life” had to offer. I never dreamed I would have to pay a dear price for my lifestyle. However, once I started suffering pain and

heartache I began to question myself and sought for another way. I never thought “that other way” would lead me to a head-on encounter with the loving and forgiving God of creation.

Drugs and partying were not filling the void created by not having a personal relationship with God. I had to reach my ultimate bottom to finally cry out to Him for help. It was not until I was facing a long prison sentence for cocaine possession that I finally realized how lost I really was. Once I placed my hand in His, my whole life changed.

Tyler: Marty, after reading your book, I was struck by the fact that you had a Catholic upbringing, served as an altar boy, and even played as a child at being a priest. What happened that led you from being a relatively pious child to someone involved in the music industry and drugs?

Marty: Good question, Tyler. I have asked myself that many times. I am sure there are thousands of people out there who ask themselves the same question especially when they get themselves in trouble or an uncontrollable situation. How many times have we heard from a concerned parent, “My son/daughter was such a good person? He/she would never do such a thing.” We all would like to go back in our pasts and change something in one manner or another. Unfortunately, we cannot. We are stuck with our pasts, whether we like it or not. The problem a lot of us face is we cannot move out of our pasts into the present, the *Now!* I meet hundreds of prison inmates and substance abusers who feel the present is too painful to deal with so they get stuck never letting go of their pasts; therefore, their present is influenced negatively.

I say all of that to say this.... I have learned the hard way that religion does not save anyone, either Catholic, Protestant, Buddhist, Muslim, etc. Whatever we were taught as children may or may not be right. What I found out much later in my life when my back was against the wall and searching for truth was the religion I was born into had a form of godliness but denied the power within it. My religion did not nor could not change me. In fact, I learned by experience that most of the doctrines, dogmas, and creeds I was taught could not even be found in the Bible! It was only after asking Jesus Christ to personally come into my life as Lord and Savior that His Spirit entered me. This happened in a farmhouse and not in a huge religious cathedral. I am not saying God is not in buildings; however, I believe He is everywhere. He is the God of *His* entire and glorious Universe.

My quest for success in the music business was only a way for me to find some kind of happiness in life. Music was the only thing I ever liked or enjoyed. Drugs were just a way for me to fill the void in my life that was missing because of the lack of the Spirit of God being in me.

Tyler: Since your conversion, you have become very active in numerous ministries. Would you tell our readers a little bit about your current life and the ministries you are involved with?

Marty: My life today is spent speaking in prisons, jails, and substance abuse rehabs all over the country. I send out free cases of my books to facilities where people are paying a heavy price for leading out of control lives. I then follow up with personal appearances, written correspondence, and resource referrals.

I have worked with various ministries throughout my 25+ years of Christianity. I started out in prison by graduating from four bible colleges knowing I was going to serve God the rest of my life. I wanted to be prepared so I studied to show myself approved.

Once I was released from prison, I was lead to Faith Farm Ministries in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida where I worked with over 350 substance abusers who were there for spiritual and physical assistance. One year later, God opened a door for me to work for Teen Challenge of Southern

California, then onwards to working with ex-White House aide Charles Colson's Prison Fellowship Ministries in Washington DC. I also helped start one of the first faith based "boot camps" in the country in Palm Beach County Florida called the Sheriff's Drug Farm.

Tyler: Marty, in the book you talk about your prison ministry as being about bringing people to Christ, but also helping prisoners with the practical side of life by offering Life Action Planning Seminars. Would you tell us a little bit about this side of your work and why it is important?

I found that many Christians who minister in prison want to just *preach* to the inmates. They do not take into consideration that eventually inmates are released and have a ton of needs, both physical and spiritual. Many churches are horrified at the thought of a prison inmate showing up on their doorsteps, and not knowing how to deal with them.

By helping identify inmate's needs before their release is important. Prisoners become institutionalized very quickly and making decisions are rare. Many inmates actually block out life on the streets altogether, pretending instead to live in the prison world fulltime and placing the real world on hold. Therefore, trying to make release plans is difficult. Many inmates are in for a big surprise if they do not formulate a plan while they are in prison for their life on the streets. National statistics show three out four ex-offenders are re-arrested within three years. Here in the State of California it is worse: Over 82% of ex-prisoners return to prison within only one year!

Tyler: Wow, Marty. That makes your ministry sound very important and covering an overlooked need. These people, like you did, are starting their lives over again. Is that why you chose the title "Once Life Matters: A New Beginning"?

When I look back on my old life before my Christian conversion all I can remember is that nothing ever seemed to matter to me. I lived in the "fast lane" with little concern about consequences. I had nothing to live for and actually tried to commit suicide a couple of times. Once Jesus Christ came into my life, everything started to matter. I was alive!!! I received a "new beginning." I found out the Bible calls this being "born-again."

Tyler: Prior to your conversion, you were very active and successful in the music industry. Do you miss any aspects of that part of your life, and do you use music in your current ministries?

Marty: I do not miss one second of my old life in the music industry. I am thankful God delivered me from that addiction. I really do look at it as an "addiction" and not a job. I was addicted to any and everything that happens when one is lost in that type of work. I am not saying others cannot maintain a balanced life working in that industry. However, serving Jesus Christ is much more important to me, and it has nothing to do with the music industry.

I do reach out to the entertainers, musicians, and actors who get themselves in trouble because of substance abuse and are arrested or enter rehabs. I send copies of my book to those who wind up in the news. It is at that down time in their lives that they might be open to finding the other path God has for them. It takes "searching" and when things seem to be going well, I have learned we have a tendency not to search for God's plan for our lives. However, when one finally has to pay a price to a life out of control is usually when one turns to God. I like to be there for them even in my small capacity. I do this knowing that if God changed me He can change anyone including... rock stars, movie idols, or successful business people.

All of the entertainers you are reading about in the news today, from Paris Hilton to Phil Spector have been sent a free copy of my book. Whether they get anything out of it is between them and

God. I only pray they will receive enough inspiration by reading my book to begin to trust God will help them “now” before their lives get worse. I know through experience that the ultimate consequences from continuing with a life of substance abuse either will be incarceration, long-term hospitalization, or death. I always end my prayer for others who still are searching with: “Please do whatever it takes to reach them Lord.”

I do not use music in my ministry other than during prison worship services and personal relaxation and growth. I enjoy listening to all types of Christian based music.

Tyler: After reading “Once Life Matters”, I felt it wasn’t the music industry but the drugs that were your real downfall, although everyone in the music industry you knew was involved in drugs. This was also during the sixties and seventies when drugs were prevalent. Do you think people entering the music industry today have the same issues you had, or has it changed any?

I feel people entering the entertainment industry today have the same temptation in front of them as I did back in the 1960s. Some issues never change. People are attracted to the same glamour, fame, and pleasure. It feeds the ego. All one has to do is pick up the newspaper or do an Internet search using the words, “Celebrity Substance Abuse.” The sagas are heartbreaking.

I have not met many people who planned to become drug addicts. I know I never did; however, as I look back, I see the consequences of a life gone wild with not only music business influences but also movies, sports and any other “idol” I replaced God with.

I am not saying people cannot lead successful and productive lives in the entertainment business as long as one has balance and puts God first. Unfortunately, “self” is promoted in that business and “making it” as a god or star. What good is it? God did not place us on earth to be stars, but rather servants.

Tyler: What is the message you hope people will bring away with them after reading “Once Life Matters”?

Marty: God will never leave us once we place our faith and trust in Him by repenting of our sins, receiving His forgiveness and love, and serving Him for the rest of our lives. He provides all of our needs according to His riches in glory. We have hope *now*; here on earth by being a part of His spiritual kingdom and upon our deaths, we have eternal life. What more can a person ask for? God loves us and proves it each and everyday.

Tyler: Toward the end of “Once Life Matters”, I was struck by the following statement “Only one thing can truly change a person’s life. And that’s a personal relationship with the living God, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.” Obviously, your life had become a disaster just prior to your conversion, and it serves as an example of turning your life around for people like yourself who were caught up in a world of drugs. But what about people who live good, decent everyday lives but simply do not believe in God and point out the many tragedies that have been inflicted in the name of religion. Why should your book matter to those people?

My book may not matter to those good and decent people. It was not written with them in mind. What I do find hard to understand is how people can be considered “good” without first believing in God.

The Bible teaches us, “fools say in their hearts there is no God.” See this scripture reference: Psalm 14:1-3 (King James Version) *The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt,*

*they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good. The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one.*

The Bible clearly states we are *all* corrupt and filthy sinners. There is not one person who is able to become righteous on his or her own. Society has a tendency to not call sin by its proper name: *sin*. We have developed new words or phrases. It started in the '60s when we came up with the phrases, "Do your own thing," and "Tune in and drop out," and "If it feels good, do it."

The ones who point out the many tragedies in the world inflicted in the name of religion have a good case, but that does not change the need of personal salvation. It only takes one lie to make a liar.

The Bible also clearly teaches that the *fear* of God is the beginning of wisdom (Psalm 111:10). He is also a loving and forgiving God; however, our responsibility is to learn from both His blessings and curses.

The Israelites in the Old Testament would have been much better off had they heeded to and obeyed God's word. God is an "if" God. "If you do this, I will do that." However, He also states, "If you don't do this, I will do that." It is the age-old "blessing and curses" clauses in the Bible that humanity has a tendency to block out of our lives.

Man clearly has to serve somebody and in most cases we wind up serving "ourselves," making ourselves kings of our own kingdoms, writing our own rules and regulations based on how "we see it." This creates anarchy.

Jesus Christ did not come to earth to start a new religion. That was man's idea and creation. God was finished with religion, which is why He destroyed the old Jewish covenant temple system through the ruling Romans. He prophesied that would happen and it did in 70 AD. The new covenant consists of God reigning in believer's hearts, not physical buildings. Man has falsely replaced this solid biblical principle over two thousand years with doctrines, dogmas, and creeds.

Man wants to place God in a box thinking He is just for one denomination or religion, which is quite the contrary. He stated *He* would build His church and the gates of hell would not prevail against it. *He* is doing the building, not man. Our part is placing our faith and trust in His plan, not ours.

Tyler: Marty, do you know of any success stories regarding someone's changing their life after reading "Once Life Matters"? Would you briefly share such a story with us?

I receive hundreds of letters each month from inmates and drug rehab clients who write to let me know how much my book has inspired them. I started a feedback response page on my website to share these letters with my site visitors.

One story that does come to mind that I would like to share with you is the time I was speaking at a California state prison. An inmate kept raising his hand wanting to tell me something. I tried to put off his request until after the service but he kept waving his hand. Finally, I acknowledged him and he stood straight up and went on to explain that he had read my book while he was in solitary confinement. He found it on the floor inside his cell under the bunk. He stated he was so enthralled with my book because he felt as if he was reading his own life story because we had so much in common. He read the book in two hours, set it down, got on his knees and cried out to God,

repenting of his sins and asking Jesus Christ to come into his life as Lord and Savior. He stated he has not been the same since. He started reading the Bible and praying and was soon released back into the regular prison population. His whole life was turned upside down. He believes he was placed into solitary confinement just to personally find my book, which then God used to touch him. This type of story makes my life worthwhile. Nothing can replace this blessing.

Tyler: What do you think makes your book stand out from other books about overcoming addiction, such as James Frey's recently popular book "A Million Little Pieces"?

My book is written and based on truth. Frey's book proved to be based on lies or half-truths.

Oprah Winfrey was appalled to learn how much James Frey "snowed" her after she placed his book on her book club list.

The positive side of the Oprah/Frey controversy was people were discussing the perils of substance abuse. Though Frey took liberties with his memoir I feel a larger issue was brought to light and that is the way the media portrays basic substance abuse, especially alcohol advertising. Drinking is glamorized in the media, making people believe they can obtain pleasure by indulging in it. Young impressionable people then take it one step further by thinking, "the more I drink the more pleasure I will receive."

The statistic I find mind boggling is Super Bowl Sunday has surpassed New Year's Eve for more drunk driver related accidents and deaths. If Oprah and the media were really concerned about the lies of Frey's book, they should dig a bit deeper and address some of the real issues. They were willing to chastise Frey for lying but turn around and willingly accept the millions of advertising dollars beer manufacturers and distributors spend each year.

Tyler: I understand you have another book coming out later this year titled "Vision of the New Jerusalem: Now!" Would you tell us a little about your next book?

Marty: My new book is a continuation of my first one. It goes into more detail regarding my personal experiences and I address many of the confusing "end-time" prophecy doctrines.

Tyler: Thank you for joining us today, Marty. Before we go, will you please tell readers where they can find out more about your books and where to purchase them?

Marty: Thank you, Tyler for this wonderful opportunity to discuss my book. It is available online at Amazon.com and through my personal website. I wrote my book with "souls" in mind, not sales. It is offered "free" to prison inmates and substance abuse rehab clients. I have already shipped out over 40,000 copies to 350+ prisons and rehabs around the country. Private donations pay most of the expenses. Any money I receive from book sales goes directly into paying the ever increasing shipping costs.

Please visit my website to read some of the hundreds of response letters I have received from inmates, chaplains, and substance abusers. It is truly a blessing to me to hear how much my book is helping others. [http://www.martyangelo.com/book\\_feedback.htm](http://www.martyangelo.com/book_feedback.htm)