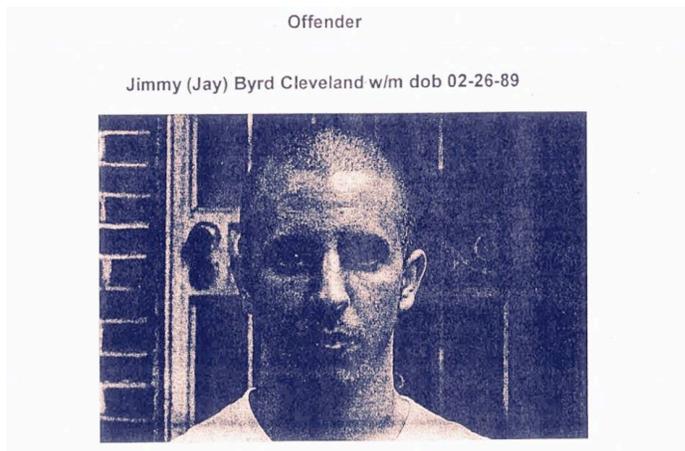


Real Life Stories
Viewpoint From A Once "Troubled Kid"



I've seen a lot of you on Facebook truly concerned about the recent events in our schools. I feel compelled to share a unique perspective; from the viewpoint of the "troubled kid" that we're all rightly concerned about.

The picture below is of me at 15-16, taken by a Birmingham Detective with Jefferson County in Alabama. I was being charged with 3 counts of Attempted murder and two counts of discharging firearms into occupied dwellings. I had been in juvenile multiple times, and this time I was taken to the adult jail. Many of you that know me, know my testimony and how far the Gospel of Christ has brought me from that day.

School was hard from me. I was expelled from 5 schools at this point. I bought and sold guns and drugs, and was crushed about many things in my life, and had no clue how to deal with them. I was in fights regularly, gang involvement, and brought weapons to school multiple times. Thankfully, I was never pushed to a breaking point to actually use them at school, but that didn't stop me from using them outside of school. I was a hurt person, so I hurt other people.

When I didn't have guns, I brought butcher knives from the kitchen to school. I burned down a detached classroom (trailer) in the 9th grade. "Jump" fighting was the norm, 3-10 guys jumping on other kids and beating them until they couldn't move.

I don't know what the right move is concerning gun laws, control, manufacturing, or anything else in that arena. I do know that I caused a lot of hurt and destruction from a variety of guns I bought illegally on the street, but I was also just as dangerous with knives or a lighter. I do know that I had some serious heart issues that made me lash out at the people around me, even strangers. Whether or not I had a gun didn't make a difference in my internal conflict and how I handled it.

No-one could help me. I wouldn't listen to a single person. My family made the wisest decision they've probably ever made in their life. They prayed for me, and they relinquished control, and let God do the heavy lifting. I called them every day from a jail cell, begging them to do whatever it took to get me out. They would cry in the visitation room. They would pray for me over the phone, and write me the most radically loving letters, but they couldn't get me out, and I believe they knew they shouldn't.

The only thing that helped me was reaching the bottom. It was the night before my court date, I was sitting in a jail cell. 2 men convicted of murder had been stalking my cell. They were standing outside of my cell daily to see what time I wake up, what my routine was, etc. They were waiting for the doors to unlock the next morning so that they could do whatever they wanted to me before I got my shoes on. I truly thought I was going to die, and if not, I thought I would die in prison. I got on my knees that night and told God that I finally relinquish control over my life to Him, to live for Him, no matter what happened next. From that moment forward, my life began. When I opened my eyes those two murderers were gone. I haven't taken a single step in the past 10 years without God right by my side. Teaching me, rebuking me, correcting me, and training me in His Way. I made some bad

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decisions along the way, like any child growing into adulthood, but in His Sovereignty they were repurposed for good. (Romans 8:28)

I don't care to twist anyones arm in one direction or another. I can't tell you a single thing about what gun laws need to be passed or not passed. The only thing I can tell you is Jesus Christ is real, and I spent a lot of time trying to prove that wrong. Where did it get me? I almost lost my life.

We need a Savior in these kids lives. In these fatherless homes, in these schools, In these homes that mimic the Devil's playground. Where mental health and illnesses fall short, God always fulfills. Where evil and tragedy are a piece of the fallen world we live in, it is easy to hope that man alone can fix it.. They can't. We all want them to, but they can't. I have to relinquish control to God every single day, even in turmoil, and tragedy, and conflict; the hardest times. The great thing about it though, is you can actually see the results. When our aim is absolute truth, the world's bandaids and "patch-it-up" jobs pale in comparison.

Put your hope in Truth today. Relinquish control and dive into the open arms that have been there from the beginning. It's an eternity of worth it.

You won't see this story on the news because you can't fit it into "this side or that side." It's not a side; it's the Way. It's up to us to show people the only way to right the wrongs. We have to point every person we know to their maker, and the promise of salvation that rests in Him alone.

God Bless

. . . . Jay Cleveland - February 2018