

# Life Without Limbs & Union Chapel Ministries present Darvov's Story: Conversations Darvov Clay & Jay Harvey

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**Jay Harvey:** So, before 2002, you were just a normal guy.

**Darvov:** Nah, actually, before 2002, before I was incarcerated, I was a member of the Gangster Disciples.

So my whole life, I've been involved in gangs and street life, in and out of prison, in and out of juvenile systems, rehabs, or whatever, you know? Even when I wasn't using, I utilized those resources just to keep from going to juvenile to board school. But I ended up going eventually, but by 2002 I ended up getting sentenced to 44 years, you know? 32 years and 12 years separated. And as I've done my time, I started in 2002, I was a little bit, you know, angry. I was a little bit bitter. I was a lot broken.

And these things, I didn't know until I came to Christ and came to my senses. You know, I always knew about God, but as far as me walking and living it, that wasn't an option because of the lifestyle that I lived, you know? And I always felt like it was God's fault, as opposed to everything that had happened pre-adolescence, you know?

Dealing with verbal abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse, every abuse you could think of, I've dealt with. So, in order to have experienced those things at such a young age, my mind was programmed to believe that people weren't good, and that it was God's fault because everybody said, "Well, God, God, God." Well, why didn't God stop these things? What was God when it was happening?

And, you know, as I go throughout my incarceration, you know, I've been involved in a lot of bad situations, you know? Dealing with violence the whole time. And I will speed up a little bit to 2014, well, I got into an altercation with a guy, and I kind of hurt the guy pretty bad. And I was in my cell, and I was like, "Man, God, it's over with, you know?"

If you don't do something to change my heart, if you're really real, change my heart. But if you're not, then I'm gonna die in prison, and I'm never gonna see home." So, man, it felt like something just, like, it just pulled, lifted off of me and poured over me, and I was, like, standing there, and I hadn't, excuse me, I hadn't cried since I was probably, like, 12 or 13 years old. So, now here I am, what, 39 years old, so it's been a lot of pent-up aggression, anger, hurt, pain, every emotion you can think of is trapped in this body, that shell of a man, but it's just a little boy in there dying inside.

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So, I cried, man, and I cried for, like, 20 minutes straight. Just, I'm talking about I couldn't stop, just kept crying. So, I walked to my door, and I'm in, I'm in the end cell, so outside of my door, it's like a, it's like a cabinet about this wide, but it holds a fire extinguisher hose. I'm in the corner, and on the top of it is a Bible. So, I look, I beat on the door. My officer comes around. I said, "Can I get this Bible?"

He said, "No, I've only been working here two weeks. You gotta wait till Tuesday when the book card comes around." I'm like, "All right, whatever." He shut the door back. I go back, I stand in the corner, I'm looking out the window, standing on the bed. I don't have any clothes because they confiscated everything due to the blood on me.

So, I'm sitting there in this window, I'm still crying. It's obvious that this officer could see the distress. And it's so beautiful how God sends his people because later on, I find out that this guy is a man of God that preaches the Word and helps men in prison in my city in Anderson [Indiana]. I hear the door open, the food slot, the Bible sit down on it.

I don't even wait to see who said it or what, I just grab it, go back in the corner. I read that whole Bible in 122 days! Didn't comprehend none of it, really, but Genesis 50:20 stuck with me, and it said, "But as for you, you meant it for evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive."

And I kept that scripture on my heart, and I keep it on my mind and on my mouth everywhere I go, because I know that that was God showing me, "This is your purpose. This is why I kept you so long. This is why all the things you experienced, I still carried you through."

So, I kept reading, kept studying. The Holy Spirit, again, sends a Bible study. I didn't order no Bible study. I was out here gang-banging, doing drugs. So, I gets the Bible study. I goes over it and just constantly get into it. Then, a lot of the brothers that are in the lockup with me, they see the transition. They're like, "Something's different about this guy. What's going on?" So, I'm sharing with them, through the vent, excuse me, hollering across the range about Bible studies and listening to Bible shows on the radio every day for 30 minutes. I would holler out a Pastor Ford.

He would come out of Chicago. He'd come on at like 7:30 or 7 o'clock every night. Pastor Ford, Pastor Ford. All the brothers, all right, they'll get quiet because they know I'm listening to the radio. No beating on the doors, no flood, none of that because we're listening to the Word. So now they start listening to it. So the officers are seeing the change, so now it's shifting the atmosphere because these guys are starting to listen.

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So, I go through my lock-up experience. I file for a dismissal on my write-up, a federal in the federal courts. They overturn it. This is in June, around July of 2015, where I get word that Nick and his whole team is coming, Life Without Limbs, to the prison. So, I'm like, and I've been reading this pamphlet, so I'm like, "Yes, I'm going to this." I said, "God, please let me go." I didn't go, but I didn't lose faith and I didn't lose hope.

So, I get out of lock-up in October of 2015. I go to a faith-based unit. Well, first I go back to regular population. Now, I told you I was a member of the Gangster Disciple, so I kind of feared the repercussions of leaving the gangs and knowing how it goes if you leave, you know,

all the stuff we knew, you know, secrets, and I'm like, "Well, I've never told on nobody before, so why would they think I would do it now?" But I told God, I said, "Listen, I chose to walk this way now and walk with You, so you're gonna have to protect me."

That He did. All the brothers would come up and say, "Man, we commend you, man. We're proud of you. We see the change." So, I no longer go by my moniker no more, which was "Lope." Called me by my name. So, they're working on it a little bit at a time. So now they're calling me by my name. Now it's "Brother Clay" or "Bishop Clay" because they hear me. I'm going around. I start a prayer circle. I had a prayer circle every night, unless it was a lockdown, all the way until I was released. So, and I was released in '22, just Valentine's Day. And now that's the love of God.

But to backtrack a little bit, as I get out in '18, I'm like, "Well, I go to the faith-based unit." They put me in the dorm with some brothers that I had been in lock-up with and some other brothers that had heard and that come from other dorms and they're like, "Man, we heard what you were doing. We want to be a part of that." So, we start small groups.

Well, they have us do a focus group for Nick Vujicic and Life Without Limbs. So, I'm like, "Man, I'm overjoyed. I want to do this. I always wanted to see him." But we made a video for him after the focus group, two times. So, I still didn't get to meet him. So, I'm still doing this now, *Free in My Faith* come around, so I'm facilitating three classes: "Free in my Faith," I'm facilitating "Purpose-Driven Life" by Rick Warren, and I'm facilitating "Battlefield of the Mind" by Joyce Meyer.

So, we're doing this and we're studying. We're studying. And I notice that the brothers are gravitating more towards "Free in My Faith," and I know why now because of the simplicity of it, and the heart of it, because that hope, you know, we have to start with that. So, we stay on it, and eventually, I come home, Valentine's Day, the love of God again, you know, the best Valentine's gift I've ever had.

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So then I get to meet you at Man for Man. And I'm like, "Man, this can't, you can't make this up, man. This was already written, you know?" So, I come here, I come to the seminar, you take me to meet Nick. Man, that really blew my mind, you know and put my spirit at an all-time high, but it let me see God.

**Jay:** It just so happened that Nick was going to be in Indiana. And I got to tell you, you know, Nick normally these days doesn't do a lot of traveling or Midwestern-type events unless they're really, really big. But he felt called to come back. This is the part that you probably don't even know. He felt called to come back to Indiana because the prison ministry started in Indiana,

Okay, we got all of our surveys and information from inmates to do the program and put it together in Indiana. He wanted to honor Indiana, he wanted to honor some of the people on the team, and so he came here to Union Chapel to do a three-day evangelistic event and also honor the ministry that started here.

So all of a sudden, you go from getting released to "accidentally on purpose" running into me at another place that is a blessing for men, Man for Man in Anderson, Indiana. I was speaking there that day, and you said, right afterwards.

You said, "Man, your voice sounds familiar." "Well, I've been on videos," you know, "and I've been there, I've got a *Free in My Faith*, so we connected, and then I said, "Hey, you know, Nick's coming, and I can probably get you back to him to meet him." And so now all this is being put together. You missed an opportunity to see him in person.

But like I said, you'd been one of about 400 guys. You show up that night here at Union Chapel. We reconnect, I walk you back and sit down on the couch with Nick, not as a prize, but as, as me introducing you as Darvov Clay, somebody who facilitates the program that you helped put together. You're a leader of men. This is what the whole thing is all about.

And so, it was a moment, I mean, it was a moment. And it's a beautiful story, and I appreciate you sharing it, because I think the thing that stood out to me was sometimes it is that simple. You cry out to God, "If You're...I'm ready. If You're..., You don't look, You better show up."

And He knows when you're at that point when there's no pretense, you're not making deals, you're saying, "If you're real, I need to know," and boom, He showed up. And He puts you on a journey, and, man, what a story. God bless you. Thank you for sharing it.

**Darvov:** I appreciate it. It's my pleasure.