

When I accepted a friend's suggestion about joining a Christian dating agency, I never realised it would eventually lead to finding a wonderful "Miss Right" and a compassionate intercessor rolled into one.

Struggling to cope with 20 years of diagnosed schizophrenia, I found my membership with Doncaster-based Christian Friendship Fellowship a lifeline of hope. It

with Royal Mail in Sheffield, and the thought of sitting in front of a warm fire on a cold winter's night, chatting with a variety of contacts in several parts of England offered some comfort.

After sifting through the quarterly lists of "available ladies", I pursued meeting up with those in easily accessible locations like Stockport, Sheffield, Mansfield and Birmingham, but soon came to the conclusion that these romantically inspired

James Stacey describes his struggle with schizophrenia and how the woman he loved played a key role in his healing

God set me free

was the mid-80s and I had been a widower for just four years.

Although a born-again Christian, who came to know Jesus at the aged of 14, I was terribly lonely and still missed the support and care of my late wife Pam, to whom I was married for 14 years. I wasn't looking to marry again, but I desperately wanted friendship to answer the tremendous loneliness and isolation that schizophrenia brings.

I was working as a letters administrator

meetings were going nowhere, and so I curtailed all my activity.

I was still on regular, fortnightly injections for schizophrenia and was struggling more and more as the debilitating illness advanced. My main fight centred around a daily confrontation with an evil force within me that was bent on destroying my life.

The exhaustion caused by contending in prayer using God's Word to ward off this 'inner foe' had often resulted in being either sectioned or admitted to the local hospital at Chesterfield. This was no low-key spiritual battle to survive, but one requiring discipline and perseverance in prayer, starting at 5 am before going to work.

I lapsed my membership with CFF for a while, but then in 1987 I decided to try again. I prayed in desperation: "I'll try again Lord, but I'm going no further than Birmingham."

Still perusing old and new A4 lists of eligible women and their brief résumé covering their personal details, interests, recreations and desires for friendship, companionship or possible marriage, I stumbled across an unusual entry which hit me with delight right between the eyes.

It read: "Christina Winterburn, d.o.b. 1944, born-again Christian, interested in friendship, companionship, possibly marriage, likes cooking, travel, embroidery, Bible study. Requirement: someone with a regular prayer life."

Medical File

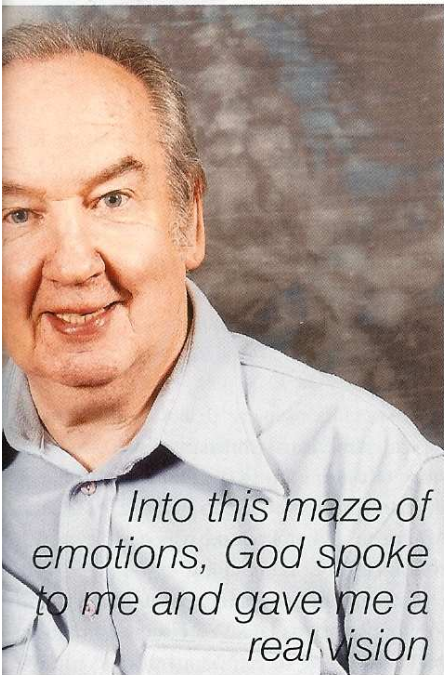
Schizophrenia is a common mental illness. Symptoms include delusions (false ideas), hallucinations (such as hearing voices), disordered thoughts, and problems with feelings, behaviour and motivation.

The cause is not clear. In most cases the symptoms recur or persist long-term. Some people have just one episode of symptoms that lasts a few weeks. Treatment includes medication, talking treatments and social support.



In no time at all I had made an initial contact, exchanged letters and, wonder of wonders, received the promise of a visit from Tina. She was willing to drive more than 70 miles from the West Midlands to look me over.

Three months later, Tina, a nursing sister, discovered that I was visiting the doctor for an injection of modicate or depixel, the same psychotic medication she administered to patients at her doctor's practice. It was, to



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For further help and information contact:

Rethink (formerly the National Schizophrenia Fellowship)

Tel: 0845 456 0455 Web: www.rethink.org
A national organisation that helps people with schizophrenia, their families and carers.

Sane/Saneline

1st Floor, Cityside House,
40 Adler Street, London, E1 1EE
SANELINE: 0845 767 8000
Web: www.sane.org.uk

For anyone coping with mental illness, be they sufferers, carers, relatives or friends.

Mind

(National Association For Mental Health)
15-17 Broadway, London, E15 4BQ
Tel (MindinfoLine): 0845 766 0163
Web: www.mind.org.uk

Works for a better life for people diagnosed, labelled or treated, as mentally ill.

put it mildly, "a devastating bombshell".

By early January, 1988, Tina had almost made up her mind "to let me down gently", and disappear from my life, when something remarkable happened.

I was off work for six weeks with laryngitis and bronchitis, and had received an extra injection for my nerves. It produced a 'high' condition in me, exacerbated by my having fallen in love with Tina. Into this maze of emotions, God spoke to me in my bedroom one night and gave me a real vision.

God's words were simply these: "Enough is enough" – a word directed to my long mental bondage, and in the vision I saw Tina dressed in a bridal gown, with her father by her right side.

From that night I came off all injections – I had decided never to come off all medication until God told me to – and haven't had cause to return to them. I began to pursue Tina, believing that I had the backing of heaven behind me.

She herself placed little value on the vision, stating that I "was again over the top". Her contact with me at this stage was only based on feeling sorry for me and wanting God to set me free from this worst psychotic disorder of all. At this stage, though she liked me, she was not in love with me.

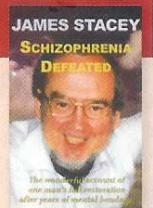
Three months later, Tina tried to end our relationship for good. She thought I would put up no resistance, but I dug my heels in, on the strength of the vision, and refused to accept it was the final meeting. Afterwards, she began to seek God and ask if there was a way out of my condition.

She asked both local and distant friends to engage in prayer for me to be delivered and healed, and began meeting with a friend from her Operation Mobilisation days in India to pray and fast. They took hold of a promise in Isaiah 45:2, in which they asked God "to break down the gates of bronze and cut through the bars of iron" around my mind.

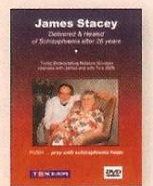


GIVEAWAY

James's autobiography *Schizophrenia Defeated*. (ISBN 0-9543573-4-5) is available for £6 plus £1.50 p&p from 36 Whittingham Road, Halesowen, West Midlands B63 3TF. A DVD of an hour-long interview with James on the Trinity Broadcasting Network is also available (£10 from the address above).



We have two books and two DVDs to give away. For your chance to win, simply send your name and address to WA/James at the address on **page 3** by **19th March** and the first two names selected on that day will each receive a book and DVD.



I myself launched a prayer offensive in a bid for my freedom. In addition to regular early morning prayer, I added prayer with fasting in my tea-breaks and dinner-breaks at work. I told God: "I am going to come here and seek you until you break this evil force in my life."

Deliverance and healing finally came on May Day 1990. In a remarkable prayer time, I had a direct word from God that by the end of the day I would be free. Tina says: "The change in James was quite remarkable – he became a completely different person. I always knew that the glimpses of the real person inside were lovely and as soon as he was free, I found myself falling in love with him. Within a year we were engaged and in October 1991 were married."

Today, now both in our sixties, Tina and I run a Christian ministry, Pray Until Schizophrenia Heals (PUSH), seeking to offer unique hope and freedom to schizophrenics. Hundreds of people the world over have so far contacted us through www.schizophreniadefeated.com and many have read my autobiography *Schizophrenia Defeated*.

I know my story is controversial, but I have not had an injection, tablet or ECT session since 1988. The Lord delivered and healed me, and has blessed me with a happy marriage. To God be the glory! ■

* *Woman Alive* does not recommend coming off medication or stopping treatment without seeking medical advice.