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**BroadStreet**  
P U B L I S H I N G

## *Journey of Redemption: From Fraud to Faith*



Mark Faris.

Sometimes, ascending rapidly up the ladder of career success presents people with temptations that are difficult to overcome. Here, Mark Faris describes how he lost his moral compass and fell prey to the temptations of personal gain from less-than-ethical business practices. Mark was convicted of money laundering, mail fraud, and wire fraud. He was incarcerated in a federal prison and separated from his family and friends. Cate Greenway, his guardian

angel, led him back to making faith, love, and service to God the highest priorities in his life. In 2012, Mark published his memoir, *The Wishing Well*.

Mark was a sales director and later a vice president at a company named Interlink, which sold refurbished networking equipment to larger companies with multiple locations and complex technology requirements. Interlink experienced rapid growth until the tech bubble burst in the early 2000s. To make up for lost revenue, Mark's team began to send false warranty claims to Cisco Systems, requesting newer parts the company knew had high commercial demand. Then they sold the parts and kept the profits. The fraud ultimately cost Cisco Systems about \$490,000 and led to the arrest of several Interlink executives. Mark pleaded guilty to charges related to the scheme and spent nearly nine months at a federal prison in Duluth, Minnesota, and another two months in a Minneapolis halfway house.

After being released in 2010, Mark launched MPV Ethics, a training and consulting firm. He speaks to business groups and students about his experience, emphasizing that before you can have *business* ethics, you must have *personal* ethics.

I first met Mark at a business meeting five years ago. He spoke to an audience of more than two thousand people to courageously relate his remarkable story. The audience was mesmerized by his willingness to share his own transgressions and the need for establishing a faith-based moral compass. God's grace, as manifested through Mark's guardian angel, truly transformed his life and empowered him to positively impact the lives of thousands of others.

Here is Mark's story.

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I have heard God call me a number of times in my life. In my case, I encountered an angel at the age of fourteen who lived several miles from my home in suburban Kansas City in 1971. I didn't know Cate was an angel at first. Located on her massive pasture and farm was

a real wishing well where she prayed to the Lord. Cate would later describe it as her sanctuary.

As my friends and I got to know Cate better, we could see her extensive involvement and philanthropic efforts in our community. She was unlike anyone I had ever met, other than my mother, and she was a surrogate mother to me in many ways.

My family moved to Minneapolis one year later, and I wrote to Cate regularly. She wrote beautiful letters back to me, encouraging me in all aspects of life, particularly my faith in God. I was a wobbly young Catholic boy on most days.

When her letters stopped, I wondered what had happened to Cate. In December 1973, one of her daughters wrote me the following abbreviated letter:

*Dear Mark,*

*Please accept my apologies for not writing you sooner. I am late in writing, and there is a reason for that.*

*It is with great sadness to report to you that my beloved mother, your friend Cate, suddenly passed away. For several months now, my sister and I have been diligently working to get our affairs with the farm in order and respond to the overwhelming letters and well wishes from the community. You simply cannot fathom how much she was loved and respected by people of all ages. We have all lost our angel, and I miss her so much.*

*You should also know that we found your letters in a box labeled "The Gang." In it are other letters, pictures, and notes from your friends Maureen, Cindy, and David. Also in Mom's box was a note with your names on it. There is a passage from her that I wish to leave with you: "Lord, thank You for their friendship and love, and never forget our young white doves." Mark, you take care of yourself and your family. We will one day see our angel again.*

*With warmest regards,  
Nina Greenway Wright*

## *My Guardian Angel*

After Cate's death, I saw her in a hospital chapel after a traumatic car accident I was involved in where an elderly woman was seriously hurt. She was simply beautiful and perfect in every way. Nothing had changed since the first day I had met her.

After a minute or two, I said, "Mrs. Greenway, I've missed you so much. You must have entered heaven, but why did you leave the planet at an early age?"

Mrs. Greenway replied, "Mark, I bring you good news. Edna will survive and be your friend. Comfort her and Mr. Gustafson. Continue to spend time with them, and everything will work out. You need not worry about things moving forward, as the Lord will manage everything. Maintain your faith, belief, and trust in Him to do the right thing. I must go now. Never forget me. I love you."

I heard her soothing voice a number of times after that, always during crises and trying times in my life.

On August 1, 2009, my second day in a federal prison, I discovered a wishing well by our mess hall. It was too surreal, and I was broken down emotionally, having said good-bye to my family the day before. I stared at the well and heard Cate's wonderful voice. She said, "Your time is now. God has sent me, and He is waiting for you in the chapel."

Moments later, I dropped to my knees and asked God for His love, forgiveness, guidance, and a restart. For 318 days in a row, I started my day off with the Lord to keep me on track.

I have always felt Cate's presence near me. She has never confronted me but always encouraged and guided me to stay on track with God.

The second time I saw Cate after her death was on the morning of April 13, 2010, when I was released from prison. I was kneeling at the wishing well, deep in thought and prayer. I had helped many at the prison camp, and this was the beginning of a foundation that could be expanded. With tears of sorrow and joy, I thanked God, Lord Jesus, the Virgin Mary, the Holy Spirit, and Cate for letting me leave this horrible place.

### *Guided from Beyond*

I slowly opened my eyes, and there was Cate, standing no more than ten feet away, unchanged and still as beautiful as the first day we met, smiling at me. Her glow, sanctity, purity, and light were unmistakable. Unwilling to move and still kneeling, I acknowledged my angel by nodding. Then she spoke. Her words transformed me forever:

It is time for you to go and reunite with your family. You have traveled a long way in your quest to find your faith, and it all began with my wishing well. It is appropriate that your new journey start with this wishing well and carry you forward to your rightful and permanent home.

Remember what you are saved for—that the Son of God might be manifested in your mortal flesh. Bend the energy of your powers to realize your new election as a child of God; rise to the occasion every time. You cannot do anything for your salvation, but you must do something to manifest it. You must work out what God has worked in. Work it out with your brain, your heart, and your soul. Do not be set in your old ways, for then it is a lie to say God has saved and sanctified you.

Mark, God is the Master Engineer, and he allows the difficulties to come in order to see if you can vault over them properly. Rise to the occasion, and always do the right thing. It does not matter how it hurts as long as it gives God the chance to manifest Himself in your mortal flesh. May the Lord be with you every day of your life and for all eternity. Contribute to the betterment and well-being of your fellow men and women. Always know that I am close by, watching you on God's chosen path. I love you.

### *My Personal Reflection*

After I was arrested in my office on March 14, 2007 and formally arraigned later that day in federal court, I knew my life had changed

forever. Would my relationship with my wife, my two boys, eleven and eight years of age, our families, and friends change? What would I say to members of my church and volunteer organizations that were part of my life? Would my reputation be damaged for a while, or was there a chance of restoring it? Would I fight the charges or have the moral courage to admit my guilt?

For the next fifteen months, I dug my heels in and vowed to fight. I was still arrogant, defiant, closed-minded, and unwilling to confront the truth about the fraud I had supported and largely ignored as a company officer. My family and I lived in fear, uncertainty, and doubt. My dialogue with God was self-serving, unrepentant, and unauthentic.

Confronted with substantial evidence pointing to my wrongdoing, personal torment, and significant guilt, I decided to tell the truth and cooperate with federal prosecutors. Failure to do so at the time could have resulted in potential prison time of thirty-six months with substantial fines and restitution.

Separation from my family, friends, and society for three years was incomprehensible and unfathomable. In advance of my formal sentencing on July 1, 2009, I believe that my relationship with God grew considerably; we had honest, raw, and pure dialogue. I knew I had to be punished for my crimes, suffer the consequences of poor behavior, and deploy the lessons learned.

Like all sinners and flawed humans, I have my wobbly days, faith- and direction-wise. My career has never recovered, yet I fight the good fight trying to do my best and serve Him.

The purpose of writing my memoir, *The Wishing Well*, was to thank God, Jesus, and Cate, and also to acknowledge my faith and love for them as my highest priority. They never gave up on me, and this is a reminder that there is hope and salvation for all of us.

Since I returned home more than seven years ago, I have made it my mission to write and speak to various audiences about the importance of building moral compasses and creating values-based cultures that contribute to the improvement of human life.

I talk about avoiding shortcuts and tell people that rationalizing and justifying them leads to slippery slopes that any of us can find. We are all responsible and accountable for our conduct. Without sounding evangelical, I also convey that faith in God is the most important facet of my moral compass, and without Him in close proximity to me, I am nothing but a wandering nomad without purpose or calling.

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Mark says the following verses were and still remain instrumental to his well-being and connection to God.

***Scripture about Needless Worry:***

Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life? (Matthew 6:25–27)

***Scripture about Hope:***

Through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us. (Romans 5:2–5)

***Scripture about Faith:***

Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty." (John 6:35)

## My Thoughts on Mark's Story

Sometimes when we think of people in prison, we picture hardened criminals who have lived their lives on the streets, in the fast lane, amid drugs and other nefarious activity. Mark does not fit that profile; he came from a good home and had a successful career. His story shows people of faith that by failing to follow the path God has set before them, they can all too easily slide down that “slippery slope.” It can be as simple as turning a blind eye when they see someone else doing something unethical or dipping our own toes into the waters of unethical practices.

Mark said his career never recovered. His story is a reminder that there is never a positive side to succumbing to sin. He worried about losing not just his career but also his reputation in the community and his family. Through this experience, Mark recognized that his own conceit and arrogance were part of what led to his demise. He turned to God in repentance and now enjoys the peace that comes with accepting God's grace.

One unique aspect of Mark's story is how his guardian angel, Cate, guided him to the right path. God sends people into the lives of believers to serve as His messengers, whether they are living or have passed on. Another unique aspect of Mark's story is the strong symbolism wishing wells have in his life. Sometimes it can be helpful to have symbols of God's love and power in your life to remind you that He is the only life choice that will lead to eternal life.



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# ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Photo by Lisa Mancuso-Horn



Frederick J. Sievert  
Author, Speaker, Retired President  
of New York Life Insurance Company,  
and Disciple of Christ.

Fred Sievert started his career as a teacher, later entered the insurance business, and retired in 2007 as president of New York Life Insurance Company, a Fortune 100 corporation. Following his retirement at age fifty-nine, Fred attended Yale Divinity School and was awarded a master's degree in 2011.

In his career, Fred enjoyed many successes but also had to deal with much stress, many challenges, and even some serious setbacks. Through it all, he credits his success to a reliance on daily prayer, the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and his

relationship with Jesus Christ.

Fred has had many nonfiction essays and articles published in the past, most often about his own providential and life-changing encounters with God. In 2014, he published his first book, *God Revealed: Revisit Your Past to Enrich Your Future*.

He views his thirty-five-year business career as a mere prologue to what God is calling him to do today—write and speak about his faith.

Throughout his adult life, Fred has been active in his church and has served in numerous lay leadership positions. He and his wife, Susan, have five grown children and three granddaughters and reside in East Falmouth, Massachusetts.

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