



# Perspective

By JAMIE BUCKINGHAM

Five years on drugs had enslaved him in hell just as surely as if he had been chained there. Even though he had been "clean" six months, his mind was still the slave of the hallucinogens.

At 24 years of age, Dave was a wanderer. No one at the boy's house knew much about him except that he had wandered into town and that his folks had a "pocketful of coins."

But money couldn't solve Dave's problem. Nor could medical science, because he had been in and out of hospitals seeking help. Once the drugs latch on to the mind, they seldom turn loose, and Dave was in a continual flashback.

He attended the church services, but was never with it. He tried, I know he tried, but his mind kept slipping, flashing back. Some demonic force greater than his own will had so bent his mind that at times it literally bent his body, too.

Last Sunday, Dave staggered out of the church service. That "thing" in his mind was so strong it was pulling his head toward the floor. He fell to his knees outside the building with his head on the ground, moaning like an animal.

Wednesday night before Easter he begged me to come pray with him. Jerry, another former drug addict, and I took him into a back room. Dave poured out his torment. He had started with marijuana, then to uppers and downers stolen from his mother's medicine cabinet, finally he hit the road with hallucinogens and began wandering. "I kept away from heroin and speed," he said, "because that stuff kills you.

"I want to be free, God," he groaned in prayer, "but this thing in my mind won't turn me loose. It has control of me."

I remembered Jesus' words, "This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting." We determined this was what we would do, but it seemed almost too late. His head just kept bending toward the floor.

That was Wednesday night. Thursday noon Dave left the boy's house and purchased a .22 rifle. Walking into the woods near the river he put the muzzle of the gun against his stomach and pulled the trigger. The coroner said he must have died slowly, painfully . . . as he had lived. But it was the only way he knew to find release from the demon of drugs.

The next morning an inept newspaper reporter searching for a sensational headline implied Dave went crazy because he was too religious. Actually it was the other way around; he was seeking God because the drugs had driven him to madness. The memory of his limp body lying in the leaves with the afternoon sun trickling through the overhead branches still haunts me. My mind is filled with myriad thoughts. . . of smart-aleck kids who think there's no harm in a little dope . . . of Dave's statement that only the hard stuff kills . . . of parents who gave money when what he really needed was their time and love . . . of the awesome power of Satan to control the mind once he had been invited in.

It was noon on Good Friday when I finally sat down at the typewriter to collect my thoughts. Outside the sun was shining brightly and the sights and sounds of spring filled the air. However, in the background of my mind I could hear the soft echoes of spikes being driven into a cross.

"Be of good cheer," the words rang across the centuries, "I have overcome the world." Is that really so? I asked inwardly. And the answer came: "Suicide is never the answer, but death to self is."

The drug twisted the divine concept in Dave's mind, but the symbolism remained. For as I remembered Dave's ashen face among the leaves, I realized that only in death did he finally look up.