

## **New Man Story**

### **Jay Coughlan — “A Stranger Walked In”**

Jay Coughlan had a successful business career in Minneapolis as CEO of Lawson Software and XRS Corporation before starting his own consulting firm, TruBalance Consulting. He is a charismatic and confident leader, keynote speaker and mentor whom people want to follow, to hear from and to learn. You wouldn't know from the man he is today the depths to which he had sunk and the hopelessness he experienced before giving up and turning the broken pieces of his life over to the Lord.

Jay and his father had a special relationship. One can tell that when he describes his father with great affection—“He had this unique ability to treat everyone the same. Whether you were in the ghettos of Philadelphia, my blue collar neighborhood, or an executive at PPG (where his father worked), he knew who he was and what he was all about. A big wise guy from Phili—he was the life of the party.”

That relationship came to an abrupt and tragic end In the winter of 1998 when Jay's parents were visiting him in Minnesota over the holidays. One day he and his father had a great day hunting and went to a local bar afterward. Jay had too much to drink, missed a turn on the way home, went down a hill and hit a train at sixty miles an hour.

Jay remembers waking up in Hennepin County Trauma Center in a lot of pain with many people working on him. He also remembers looking up, seeing his mom and wife, and hearing his mom say —“your dad didn't make it.” Over the next several days, while clinging to life, Jay spiraled into a state of profound guilt, torment and separation from God. Priests and pastors were trying to help him, but he was kicking them out of the room. As he says, “I was in a really, really ugly spot.”

Then one day he was all alone in his hospital room when a total stranger walked in. He was using words like “sinner” and “forgiveness.” Jay told him he felt like he was at the top of the sinner list because he had caused the death of his father. The stranger led Jay in a simple prayer of acknowledging his sinfulness, asking for forgiveness and inviting Jesus into his life. Jay describes what happened to him at that moment: “It was like the Holy Spirit connected right to my soul and I exhaled all my guilt.” Then the stranger left.

What happens when someone is delivered from near death, saved by grace and recovered from multiple operations? Life turns around and things are wonderful from then on? Not the case with Jay. While God and his family forgave him, the state of Minnesota didn't. He was charged with “criminal vehicular homicide,” went through a six-month trial, and served time in prison. There was a price for his action. However, God's faithfulness and grace prevailed. Lawson Software welcomed Jay back after prison and in 2001 he became CEO—a story of failure, faith and hope.

#### **Discussion Questions**

1. How might Jay's story have ended if that stranger hadn't walked into his his hospital room?
2. How does God use available strangers in the lives of broken people to save them?
3. Why would Lawson Software advance someone from convict to CEO in just three years?
4. What does Jay's story tell about the nature of God?

Click on the link below for Jay's 6 1/2 minute story

**<https://vimeo.com/507973501>**