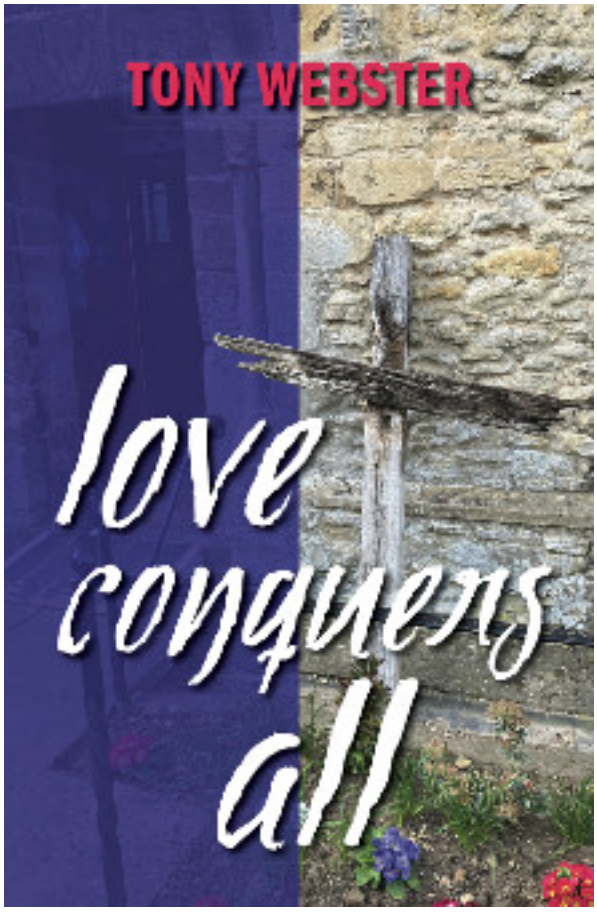

This is a partial story of my life. I didn't become a Christian until I was in my twenties. Late in life I was involved in a road accident. I felt God's calling again and gave my life to Him. I'm now training to be a lay minister.

Love Conquers All

By Tony Webster

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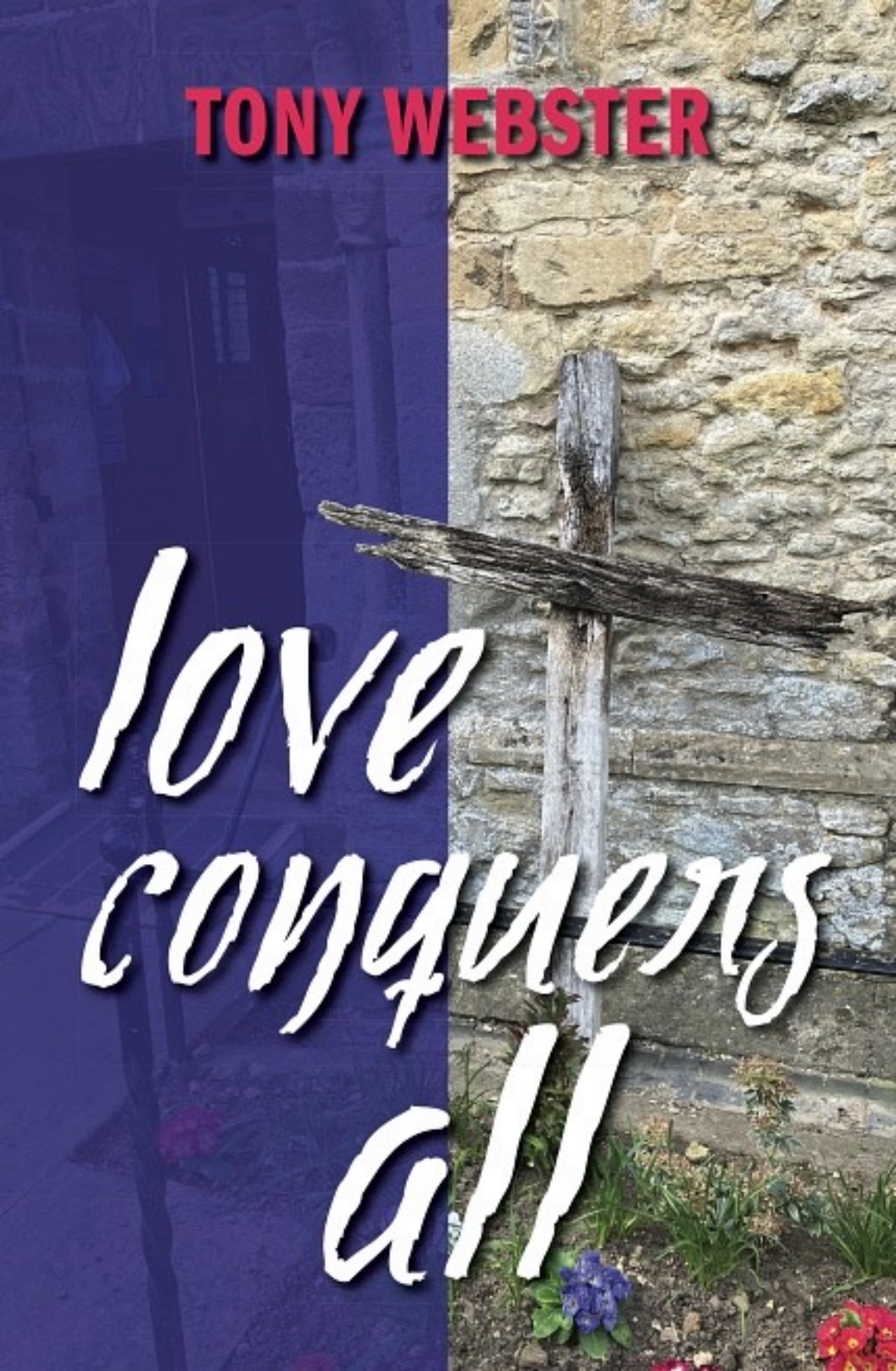
TONY WEBSTER



love conquers all

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Table of Contents

Foreword vii
1. Introduction 1
2. My Life Before 3
3. Injury And Consequences 7
4. Path To Happiness 13
5. St. Botolph's 15
6. Marriage And Remarriage 19
7. Church House Housegroup 21
8. Anxiety 23
9. Hope Explored And Rectory Housegroup 27
10. Easter 29
11. Politics 31
12. The Bible – Old Testament 33
13. The Bible – New Testament 39
14. Bible Summary 47
15. Bible By The Beach 53
16. Real Change 57
17. Next Steps At St. Botolph's 59
18. Christmas 2025 63
19. Cruise 65
20. My Next Steps 67

2. My Life Before

I was born in Colwyn Bay (North Wales) as one of four children. My mother (Penny) had been a Physics teacher and my father worked for a large oil company mainly in different countries. At the age of about 8 we lived in Argentina and I was put on a plane and sent thousands of miles to England to school.

I went to a private primary school in Cheltenham, followed by its senior school. Both were Christian and as a result I had a 15-minute chapel service every weekday and a one-hour service on a Sunday. As a teenager I was confirmed into the Church of England as this was what most of us did. I know now that I wasn't a Christian then.

In my late twenties following the Alpha Course developed by Holy Trinity Church Brompton I became a Christian. I received a full baptism in my local Baptist church in South Wales. I also remember subsequently for many years I was a lay preacher in the local churches, most of which did not have their own minister. I also became a church deacon and helped to run the youth club and the annual holiday club. I was accepted for training by the Bristol Baptist College, but didn't take it up. During these years I'm told by my brother that I was obsessed with Christianity and rammed it down my family's throat!

> **Mark 16:16** *"He who believes and is baptised will be saved, but he who does not believe will be condemned."*

I do remember preparing my sermons by choosing a theme or message and then selecting the bible verses that supported it. Looking back now I view that it was "my message" I was preaching rather than God's. My sermons were academically correct but did not leave much room for God to speak clearly through me. Many years later at St. Botolph's I was to experience God filled sermons

that clearly explained the passage. I wish I had been capable of doing that when I was still able.

Following a successful career in semiconductors, I retrained as a secondary teacher. I subsequently taught O level and A level Maths and Physics internationally and at Stowe School and Uppingham School. Both Stowe and Uppingham are Christian schools where I was able to worship with the pupils.

I married when at university and subsequently had a son (Dan) and a daughter (Beth). Like a lot of marriages this ended in divorce many years later. I now understand that my divorce was against God's will. As all men I am a sinner, but through Jesus I know that I have been forgiven.

> **Acts 2:36-38** *"Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ." Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."*

A second marriage ended when my wife died of cancer. This led to my third marriage (to Jan) which has been happy and fulfilling. I thank God every day for Jan and love her company and support. As I write this, we are celebrating our tenth wedding anniversary.

> **Mark 12:29-31:** *Jesus answered him, "The first of all the commandments is: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This is the first commandment. And the second, like it, is this: 'You shall love your neighbour as*

yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."

3. Injury And Consequences

On September 15th 2022. I dropped my car to be serviced and was using Jan's electric bicycle to return home. When approaching the village of Loddington I hit a pothole and parted company with the bicycle. I flew over the handlebars and struck the road. I later discovered that I had broken my lower jaw in three places, damaged two vertebrae in my spine, broken 3 ribs, damaged the pupil in my left eye and suffered a considerable brain injury.

At the roadside I was placed in an induced coma and then flown by air ambulance to Coventry Hospital. On the back of my mobile phone, I have a sticker with my details and Jan's. The paramedics called Jan to let her know what had happened. She then called her daughter Sal who (although on her way to a holiday) returned and gave her a lift to the hospital. I was kept in the induced coma for several weeks, during which my jaw was pinned together with titanium plugs and my skull was drilled to relieve the pressure on my brain. Whilst in a coma, I had a tube down my throat and still have irritation from this. I obviously have no memory of any of this and since then have asked Jan to spare me the details.

> **Psalm 69:1-3** *"Save me, O God! For the waters have come up to my neck. I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing; I have come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me. I am weary with my crying; My throat is dry; My eyes fail while I wait for my God."*

It is worth saying that the doctors said that it was touch and go whether I would live or die. This was particularly hard on Jan as I was her third husband, the previous two having died. She faced the horrible prospect of losing a third husband. Of course, my children also faced the possibility of losing their father. I cannot say if my healing was a miracle, but I do know that as God controls all things, it was His wish that I survived.

On the positive side, a week before my accident, my daughter Beth had given birth to twins: a boy, Ezra and a girl, Rowen. My new grandchildren were to become a real joy to Jan and me.

After a few weeks I was brought out of the coma and gradually became aware of my surroundings. When I was stronger, I was transferred to Leamington Spa rehabilitation hospital under the care of a very able consultant. Over time he assessed my condition and helped me to come to terms with it.

My back still hurts constantly. The consultant's conclusion is that everything has healed but that my brain keeps reliving the accident. Although I have now got used to this pain, I am now registered as disabled. I have also no normal sense of taste. I can register salt, sugar, and strong spiciness but nothing else. I also need a lot of liquid to be able to eat anything. I see that this infirmity, like Paul, allows me to celebrate continuously in God's grace.

> **2 Corinthians 12: 9-10** *"And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore, most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore, I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong."*

The more serious issue is my brain damage. It's hard to describe this exactly but the easiest way is to consider my memory. I have normal recall up to the age of 19 and then a huge gap until 15 minutes ago. The missing period of 40 years or so was initially empty, but now I get occasional flashbacks that last for a few minutes.

However, I have found that linking certain things can strengthen my missing memories. Particularly, I remember Helen as she has

the same name as Jan's sister. I remember Mark and Andy as "Mandy" who was a headmaster's wife when I was a teacher.

Having recovered a little at the Rehabilitation Hospital, I naturally wanted to get home in time for Christmas. To be discharged I had to show that I could walk and cook. Walking was the easy bit which Jan and the nurses supported me with. I was quickly able to do this by myself, but I was aware that I might fall.

Cooking was (and still is) the problem. With my brain injury I can't rely on knowing what is hot and so am in danger of burning myself. I had to show the doctors that I could cook, I seem to remember bacon and eggs but I'm not sure of this. With a great effort I managed this. This was to be the last hot food I cooked for almost ten years. I have recently started simple cooking when Jan is able to supervise me. This is limited to chopping vegetables, boiling eggs and heating in the microwave.

Luke 9:11 *"(Jesus) healed those who had need of healing."*

I am glad that God decided that I did not need to be healed, since my constant pain reminds me of God's plans for me and my desire to worship Him.

In my discharge meeting we were told that other than hospital inpatients there was no support for brain injury patients in our county of Northamptonshire, so I would essentially be on my own after discharge. Jan later discovered that this was not true and that there was a wonderful hospital in Wellingborough called Isebrook.

When she found this out a few months later, Jan arranged for her doctor to refer me and almost immediately I had an appointment with a neuropsychologist. She was a real help to me. This led to a care plan and to group sessions with other brain injury sufferers. These sessions were particularly useful as we found that Jan and

I had been accidentally doing all the right things. Again, it is clear that Jan and I were in God's hands.

About this time, I also started doing jigsaw puzzles regularly. This apparently helps my brain function. As a child I had been forced to do jigsaws (but my father insisted on doing the edge!). So, within my memory, this was something I still had the knowledge to do. They had to be straightforward so that I could identify different parts of the picture. Very quickly I switched to wooden puzzles as I found these were much easier to handle.

One of the problems that Jan had noticed was that in hospital when I was hooked up with a catheter, I was passing huge amounts of urine. On getting home I found that I was having to pee every 15 minutes 24 hours a day. This of course meant that I was getting almost no sleep which was causing me both physical and mental problems. Thankfully a few months later I had an all-day water deprivation test at Kettering General Hospital. This led to a diagnosis of Cranial Diabetes Insipidus (caused by the accident) and prescribed Desmopressin to help with my constant need for urination caused by medical dehydration.

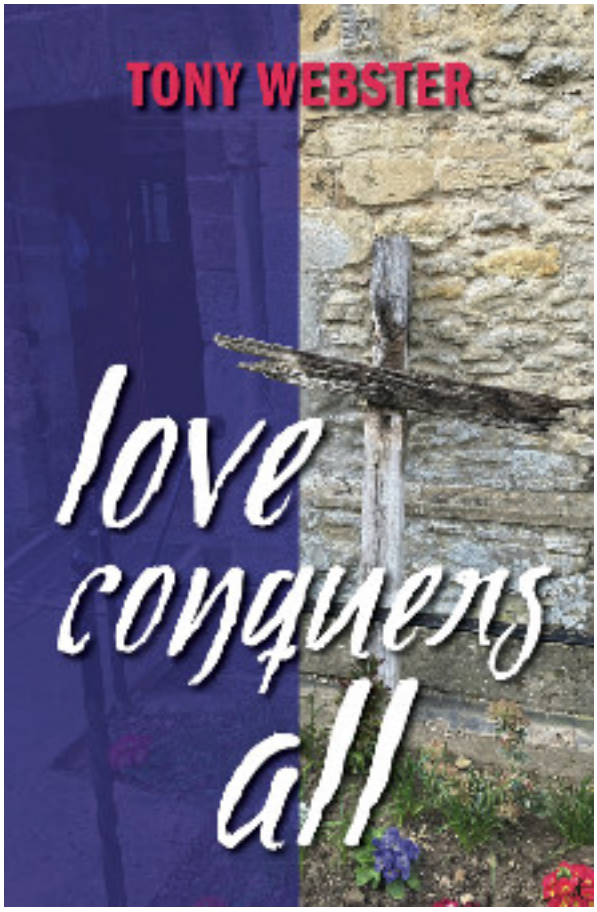
This medication is my lifeline. Since that date the name of Diabetes Insipidus has been renamed as Arginine Vasopressin Deficiency. So, the Desmopressin in my body reminds me of the presence of the Holy Spirit in my soul.

At that time, we lived in a house with only one bathroom which was upstairs. Although I denied it at the time, I was regularly falling on the stairs. Thankfully a few months later we were able to move to a bungalow in Kettering (within walking distance of St Botolph's Church in Barton Seagrave). This move was entirely because of my changed condition, but we now consider this to be our forever home.

In May 2023 after 6 weeks on Desmopressin. I was regularly getting 8 hours a day of sleep allowing my brain to heal. From this date, I finally got back my thought process and memory when not tired. This means that from Sep 2022 until May 2023 I was unable to take any decisions. During this time, I acknowledged that my thinking process was unreliable and since then Jan and I make all decisions together.

> **Proverbs 3:5-6:** *"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths."*

One of the things I was unable to do was to tie my own shoelaces! Initially I relied on Jan to tie them for me, then I got elasticated laces that allowed me not to have to tie and untie them. Thankfully I am now able to tie laces again and am slowly switching back to them.



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