



Milton, FL

OK, it's 2018 and I now know God has always been trying to get my attention for a long time. At this point in my life I would just brush it off, not knowing I was delaying the inevitable. At this point, I was already in the middle of my 20 - year sentence and was in a Spanish popular gang. And if you don't know the gang life, it can get very political and ruthless at times. I wasn't living right according to the laws of said gang, and that mixed with dislikes from people with high - ranking positions, made resentment and hate towards me. I ended up getting into it with one of my so-called brothers. That, and a lie from an officer got a hit put on me. On October 4, 2018 I was being transferred to a different institution and I didn't know anything about said hit. I landed at a reception center and was attacked by two of the so-called brothers. One with a knife and the other with a combination lock. I ended up going to the outside hospital having surgery to my brain/skull. The doctor said I had to have a surgery that would decompress the pressure on my brain and drain the fluids and blood that leaked into my cranium. I agreed to the surgery and the next morning I was put under and they proceeded. As I woke up, I realized I had over 70 staples on my head, a titanium plate and a drainer for the blood and fluids on my head. The time came when I went back to the infirmary in the institution. A few

days later, the really big hurricane Michael came and destroyed the hospital where I was scheduled for a post surgery check up and to take the staples out, which never happened. While I was waiting and healing, I started to get anxious and frustrated not knowing why all this had happened. I asked the orderly who worked back there for something to read to take my mind off of things, and he slid over some torn pages from a Victorious Living magazine. I grabbed it and started to read and look at it. One page really caught my eye. It had a picture of Jesus Christ with the word forgiveness on it. And it was right then and there that the Holy Spirit came upon me. I didn't know what I was feeling, but it was like something I've never experienced before in my entire life. That's where I cried out to God to help me! From that moment on, God has been my guide. It has been a journey and a struggle ever since then. Jesus Christ is my everything, and all I want to do now is glorify and serve Him in all that I do. I cannot live without my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! I am very grateful to now walk and follow Him. He's my strength and the only way that I want to live my life now.

A.C.

Cuero, TX

My name is Esteban Ruiz and I have been locked up since I was 29 years old, and now I am about to turn 46 years old next month. I once used to be a servant of the father of lies, but the Lord in His

mercy led me to repentance. For we know and the word of God teaches us that His mercy endures forever. I may be physically in prison, but I know now that the Lord has set me free spiritually. Therefore, I am now a servant of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. I love to sing praises to my God and my king. I love the Lord with all my heart and my soul and all my mind. It is an honor and a privilege to proclaim what the Lord has done in my life. I know that I am still a work in progress, but I get things always for the chastisement of the Lord. And I know that: *Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is, for he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit.* Jeremiah 17: 7-8 **E.R.**

Soledad, CA

Hello, my name is Lenny. I am currently at CTF Soledad Fire House. I was raised in the church as a kid, but ventured away as I grew older. I always believed in Jesus Christ, even in my dysfunction. Before my arrest, I was in a faith - based program called *The Bridge* in Pacific Grove, CA. I was in the process of becoming an ordained minister. The Lord also reconciled my family and I back together, and I have been blessed with three children. Eight months into this one year

program I was arrested for first-degree murder. My life as I knew it came crumbling down. Looking back, God had prepared me for the journey He had placed in front of me. He literally provided me with peace as I was facing life in prison. I was able to minister to the guys in the county jail for three years. A lot of brothers gave their lives to Christ. I eventually made it to prison where a counselor told me that I would never make it to a firehouse or camp. I ended up taking a deal for manslaughter. 12 years and eight months I've been incarcerated. For six years now I have managed to stay clean of write-ups. I worked my way all the way down from level three to level one. I managed to get my V 10 taken off, meaning the stamp that deemed me violent, and prevented me from going to a fire house or camp. Through the grace of God, I am here at CTF fire house. My out date went from 2031 to 2028. Now I go home July 2026. Nobody out there can tell me there is no God. All glory to him! He opened doors. I just had to walk through in faith, boldness, and obedience. I have a career with California Fire upon my release praise God! Thank you for allowing me to share my testimony! **L.S.**

Rusk, TX

I was born in New Orleans, Louisiana on the 8th of December 1984, in a home parented by broken believers who had suffered abuses within their congregation as youths. Their issues affected my young life in a number of ways which led me into abuse and mental health issues. My mama was a praying woman, and her devotion to prayer and her faith in God's supremacy has been a cornerstone which my faith was eventually established and sustained. I always believed in God or salvation through Christ, but I found myself often confused due to

the heartache and betrayals I endured in life. My faith was not even a mustard seed, but I held onto it. In 2005, as a newly married and newly enlisted natural reservist, I also became a hurricane Katrina survivor. I failed to see it then, but so much in such a short span of life affected my mental health... And then, as the old song says, I fought the law and the law won. I was sentenced to 99 years in prison for probation violations that were due to my financial hardship. I wanted to cuss God and I wanted to die. I'm a stubborn soul and I love God so I didn't die and I didn't cuss God, but I did start to go down the wrong road a bit in prison, until I ended up in segregation. Psalm 51 says God does not delight in sacrifice... But a broken heart and contrite spirit he will not despise. And my heart was shattered. One day, a storm hit the unit, and the power went out. Everyone went to yelling, but I fell silent. I wasn't afraid, but realized that the noisemakers were. The next day I made a vow before God. I told God that if it be His will for me to do every day of this sentence till the day I die, so be it. Just allow me to be a positive influence to at least one person-anyone-once a year. Then my life would be purpose driven. The moment I said, amen, I set about my tasks to fulfill my promise. Now I'm 90 days from seeing parole and I've been writing all over to offer myself as mentor, volunteer, or however I might be of use. It doesn't matter whether parole grants or not. I will neither be discouraged nor distracted. I need to be about my Father's business and no matter, bound or free, that is what I intend to do. Through writing, art, speaking, and just how I live I've decided and realized that God is infinite and knows what He has planned for me. I was like Jonah and now I feel like Job. **T.R.**

Eloy, AZ

I have always been a Christian, but was never very true to it nor guided by the Spirit. When my little girl was born in 2017, I prayed a lot for help, strength, and guidance. I made many promises that I ignorantly did not keep, but I now believe that the Lord was **seeking** me out. He heard my need for Him in my life and knew I would not hold up to my promises. From letting me fail, and fail hard, to being left in a place where I had no more control, I was left to be imprisoned, both physically and spiritually, leading me to completely surrender to Him. I found a Bible and started reading it daily, praying and developing a relationship with Him and now a friendship with my Savior. This whole journey has been guided by Him and is full of His signs. He has me right where He needs me, and has the most amazing plan for my life that I know I could not have ever have gotten on my own. The people I have met and the places I have been have all led me to going back to school for what I knew is my calling. He is fixing my life and leading me back to my family and to be the man I need to be for them, for Him. God is good!

S. C.

And Can It Be

Charles Wesley

And can it be that I should gain
An interest in the Savior's blood?
Died He for me, who caused His
pain?

For me, who Him to death pursued?
Amazing love! how can it be
That Thou, my God, should die for
me?

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