



"Those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint." — Isaiah 40:31

Dear Friend,

People have told me that I should write a book about all the amazing things God has done for me. It really is incredible when I think about it.

I'm not much of a writer, so please bear with me.

I grew up near San Diego. My parents took me to church and I knew the Lord when I was young. Back then, it was the '60s, and my best friend and I used to ride our dirt bikes. The land was wide open and we just loved zooming around the hills together.

Right out of high school, I joined the Navy and served the last years of the Vietnam War as a boatswain's mate — working on the deck of a ship. **Even in that, God had a plan.**

My heroin addiction started in the Navy.

In Guam, where I was first stationed, my roommate was a heroin addict. At first, I was shocked. "No way would I ever try that," I told myself. But over there they had something called "China White." It was easy to get and cheap. After a while, I thought I'd try it just once. **Before that first high was over, I already wanted more.**

By the time I came back from Guam two and a half years later, I was really addicted. I finished my time in the Navy honorably in 1977 and started working in construction.

Life became a battle. Every bit of money I made just went to getting enough drugs to function. I used alcohol and "Mexican Brown" heroin, which was all I could get in California. At one point, I overdosed. The people I was with thought I had died. They panicked and took off. **I came to with the needle still hanging out of my arm.**

By 1984, **I was no longer functioning.** I was sleeping behind buildings, behind bushes, behind dumpsters, totally out of my mind drinking and doing drugs. Then I did some robberies and was sentenced to six years in prison.

After two years, I went up for parole — a chance for early release. The parole board told me there was no hope someone like me could ever be rehabilitated. They resolved to keep me locked up as long as they could. I went back to my cell and read their report. It was really devastating. I thought, **"These people are telling me there's no hope. I'm**

This was almost a death blow!



1973

I join the Navy and go to Guam. My roommate is a **heroin addict**. Pretty soon, I am, too.



1977

Out of the Navy, working in construction, and **spending every penny on drugs.**

never going to be able to change.”

When I finally did get out of prison, I still wanted the drugs even though I wasn't physically addicted. I started using again and was back in jail two months later. After eight more months in jail, I got out and went back to using drugs the same day.

I remember thinking, **“Wow, I can't believe this. I'm in prison even when I'm out.”** My mind went back to when I was growing up and my best friend and I were on our motorcycles. He would say, “Carl, let's go ride and be free!” Instead, I kept ending up locked up in a little cell looking out at a prison yard. And my best friend? He got drunk and crashed his motorcycle. When he came out of his coma a week later, **he killed himself. He just couldn't go on living the way he was.**

So I was really at my lowest point when my mom called to tell me she had cancer. I remember her saying to me, “Carl, would you please think about going to Teen Challenge? I've got cancer and I don't know if I'm going to be alive next year. **I don't want to die with you the way you are.”**

I went to Teen Challenge planning to last in the program a few weeks, then call my mom and tell her, “I'm fine now.” I would go back to my old ways. She would never know.

But then I started reading the Bible and doing the prayer time at Teen Challenge. **I started experiencing a new joy and a new peace that I had never known before. I realized I had been set free.**

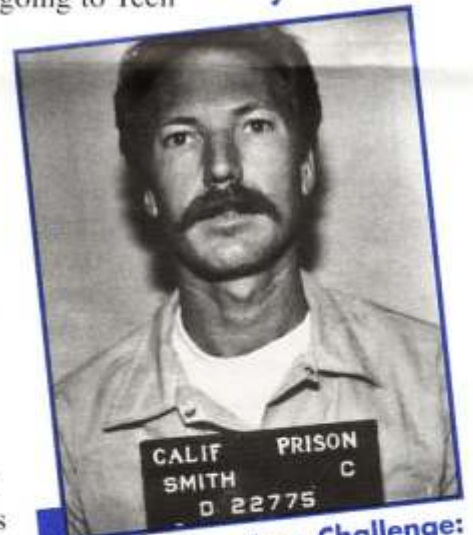
After Teen Challenge, I went to a one-year Bible college, where I graduated valedictorian in 1994. That's when a lot of good things started happening in my life.

I joined a missionary organization that sends ships around the world. We built orphanages and brought donated medical supplies to treat the poor. The ship I applied for had been praying for an experienced boatswain, **exactly what I had done in the Navy.** I could see that God was working in my life.

My best friend killed himself. I was devastated.

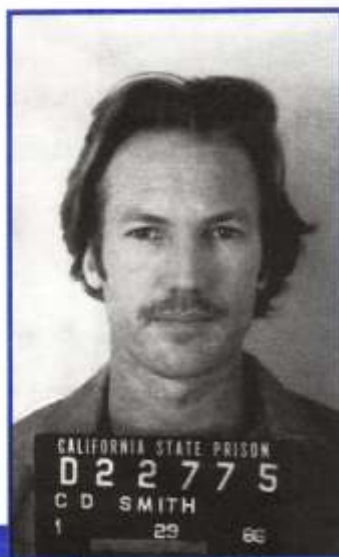
Reality hit hard!

Mom comes through!



1990 Before Teen Challenge: Imprisoned by drug addiction.

God trained me for missionary service.



1980s

No longer working, often **homeless**, and living a **life of crime**. I'm in prison whether I'm in jail or out.



1990

My **mom** tells me: “I've got cancer . . . **I don't want to die** with you the way you are.” After successful surgery, her cancer has been in remission ever since.

On one trip to Honduras, a new crew member arrived from Sweden. All I knew about her is that she was the daughter of a pastor and had been serving the Lord her whole life.

One day I was on deck and **the Lord spoke out loud to me:** "There's your wife." I actually stopped in my footsteps and looked around to see who had spoken. She was the only one there, sitting on a chair and reading a book.

Pretty soon I started talking to her at lunch. I learned she had never had a drink of alcohol or smoked a cigarette in her whole life. I thought to myself, if she knew I was an ex-convict and an ex-addict, she wouldn't have anything to do with me. But when I finally told her about my past, she said simply, "If he is in Christ, he is a new creation."

The Lord even sent me my wife!

An amazing coincidence... or God's timing?

We got married in Honduras. Soon after, the Lord was calling me back to Teen Challenge. After arriving in Los Angeles, I heard Teen Challenge had a new property in San Diego. We arrived there just as the Executive Director pulled up. He told me they were looking for staff. The coincidence made me feel pretty sure that this was probably where the Lord wanted me. The next day, we were hired. Still today, my wife works in the office and I'm on staff as a teacher and counselor.



2005 After Teen Challenge:
With my beautiful family. Blessed!

Since then, the Lord blessed us with a little girl. I've kept doing my studies and in 1999 I became a licensed minister. In 2002, I was ordained. I'm also a Red Cross volunteer chaplain. As part of the induction team at Teen Challenge, I help students through the first four months in the program. As I preach, counsel or teach classes, I share different parts of my testimony. A lot of the students tell me that gives them hope and encouragement to keep on this

road with the Lord.

I recently had a run-in with cancer. **Even in this challenge, God has been faithful.** When they first found the tumor, they did a biopsy. It was extremely painful. I came home and worried, what will happen to my little girl if this is cancer? I fell asleep. Waking an hour later, I discovered an answering machine message from a distant relative whom I had never met:

) Praise God!

"I know this is weird that I'm calling you, but the Lord just put you on my heart

Isaiah 40:31
jumps off the page at me during a Teen Challenge Bible study. I learn to **hope in the Lord** and soar on wings like eagles!

Spirit of Grace

missionary ship prays for a boatswain's mate, my exact position in the Navy.



so much that I had to call you and see if you're okay."

It was like the Lord telling me, "Don't worry, I'm still in control."

This had to be God at work!

In my work at Teen Challenge, I've helped hundreds of young people experience the freedom that comes from depending on Christ instead of drugs. But I've seen a lot of suffering, too. In fact, I just attended a funeral two months ago — a young guy in his twenties who overdosed. Other times, people bring in their loved one and beg: "You've got to take them today, because if they don't get in today, they might not have a tomorrow."

I've learned that, when an addict comes to us, it's usually because their only other choices are to end up dead or crazy or in jail. That's why I urge you to support Teen Challenge. **Teen Challenge centers are full most of the time, many have waiting lists.** Who knows what happens to the people who call for help, and then never call again? I shudder to think of it.

I can hardly bear to think about these kids ending up like this.

We just can't turn these desperate people away. Not when just \$25 can help one student.

Please consider a gift today to help with this work. I know from firsthand experience that God will use whatever you send to work miracles through your local Teen Challenge. The needs couldn't be more urgent. And you'll be investing in your community, too.

On behalf of desperate addicts and your local Teen Challenge, thank you for caring and for giving as generously as you can.

Carl Smith

Carl Smith

Please help someone like I used to be. And please do it today.

P.S. I've included some photos from some of the turning points of my life so you can visibly see what God has done for me through Teen Challenge. So many others are still trapped in the prison of addiction like I was. Please help give them a chance to "fly like eagles" through knowing Christ!



The Lord tells me, "**There's your wife.**" This is Helen and I about to be married on the ship in Honduras.

With our "miracle baby," **Moa Hope**. She's going to be five in October. Another answered prayer!



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