

Greater Piedmont Adult & Teen Challenge, Inc.

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NEW BEGINNINGS

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Cam Lawson's Entry Photo
Praise God for Redemption!
His Graduation Photo (right)



My name is Cam Lawson. I am here today because of a praying Grammy, a praying momma, and a merciful God. I grew up in a loving home, my mother was a single parent. My mom had me at a young age. She did everything and more to provide. Growing up we lived under my Grammy's roof, so I grew up in a great loving environment. Every need was met. However, I had a void in my life. I grew up fatherless. I didn't have a father figure. That's just how it was. My mom got married and I had a new loving family. But, when they got divorced, I stopped seeing that side of the family. I guess that made me bitter. That's when I started my rebellion. I was around 11 years old.

My mom remarried and my rebellion stage hit a peak. I started drinking and smoking weed. I tried a Hydrocodone. Instantly, I fell in love with that feeling. Weed and opiates were my thing. I was smoking weed every time I went to stay at a friend's house. My friends had older siblings and cousins who were involved in drugs. **By my freshmen year I was doing Xanax, cocaine, heroin, and anything I could get my hands on. I wanted to try it all...and I did.**

By my junior year of high school, I started selling weed and opiates. I had hit the point of no return. I was all in. My friends and I would be snorting pills, doing LSD, and any drug we could get. We did this before class, during class, and after class. By that time, I had a job working in restaurants, which became my passion. I loved it and I was really good at it. I also loved it because it gave me more opportunity to expand selling drugs, using drugs, and the women... there were plenty of them. In my mind, I thought I had found my purpose and my calling. But, that was just the tip of the iceberg.

When I got to college, I was already an everyday user and addict. I was enrolled in culinary school and did very well in it. While in college, I met more connections in the drug world and ended up selling fire arms. I was living with three high school buddies. The amount of drugs that went through that house was absurd. **My identity was a life of crime.**

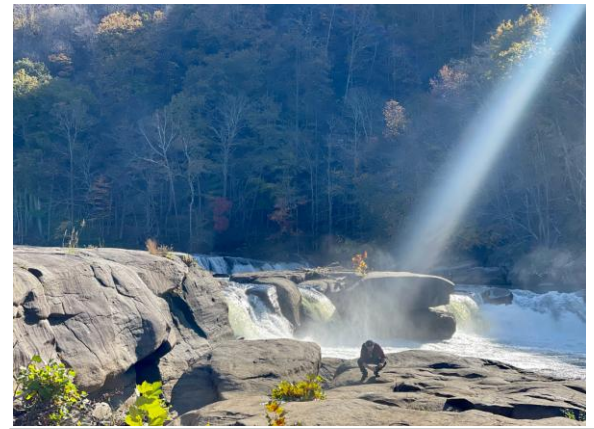
At only 22 years old, I was searching to push the limits. My addiction was so bad I could hardly get high. I had been an IV drug user since I was 18, which had led to 11 overdoses. No drug, no amount of women, no matter how well I succeeded in the restaurants, **I was never fully satisfied. I was only temporarily quenching that hunger to fill the void in my life. It was nothing that lasted.**

All this came to a quick halt. I had gotten arrested and sent to a place called Greater Piedmont Adult and Teen Challenge. I knew I needed to get help, but at that point, I didn't want to stop. With completion of the program my charges would be dropped, so I went and I completed the program.

Teen challenge is a seven month faith based program. It changed my life. I met true friends and found a relationship with God. Eventually God got a hold of me. Teen challenge taught me how to be successful. I learned that the void in my life, I longed to fill, was God. That's how we are created, to seek after Him. It was rough at the beginning, being around a bunch of dudes who loved God. It was a complete culture shock. It was like being on a different planet. I ended up finding true friends and brothers in Christ.

I left Teen Challenge after completion of the program. I managed to get an extra month for being a bone head, but God knew I needed it. I stayed in the reentry house for six months, then left and got my own apartment. At that point, I stopped doing my daily devotions and going to church. Everything I was taught to do in order to live a successful Christian life, I stopped doing. I didn't stay sober long. Like the Bible says, if your house is empty, "not filled with the Holy Spirit" it will be seven times worse. It sure was. I was selling more drugs than ever and using way more than before, which is unfathomable. I was working at a local restaurant when I was approached with an opportunity to help open a restaurant in Myrtle Beach. I agreed to go help out. At that point I was already full into my "mess" again. I was injecting fentanyl, cocaine and ketamine heavily. I don't know how, but I was very successful in the restaurant world. I helped open up another restaurant after that and helped turn a couple struggling ones around.

Two years ago I got arrested for manufacturing, distributing, resisting arrest, and possession of weed and opiates. That was the ultimate low of my life. When I got out, I couldn't sell anymore because of the target on my back from police. So I started doing home invasions on other drug dealers and stealing from everyone around just to stay high...and I stayed high all the time. I was so miserable with my life. I was trying to kill myself by overdosing. I didn't
(Continued on back page)



The week after graduation, Cam's mom took this photo and the rays were not visible. They showed up in the photo. God shining down on him.

have the courage to pull the trigger. July of 2021, I overdosed. I remember hearing God for the first time in a long time. He said to me, "Son, it's time to stop running. I'm not done with you. I have a plan for you." I was so mad God didn't let me die, but I knew, in my heart, I needed to change. I kept hearing in my heart, "Come back, come back". Every time I did, I tried to block it with more drugs. It just got louder and louder and louder. God telling me to come back to Him.

I finally gave in and called my family. I told them I needed to go back to Teen Challenge, and they made it happen. During that time, I got high again. I ended up overdosing! While I was out, God told me, "Cam this is it. I'm not going to bring you back after this time. No more, come back to me". Boy, talk about the fear of God.

The next morning, I was back at Teen Challenge. **I felt so much peace and joy the moment my foot hit the campus.** The first week was rough going through withdrawals. I've experienced a lot of withdrawals in my life, but this time was the worst. God really wanted me to feel it this time. By the grace of God, and a lot of time on my knees praying at Neel chapel, I got through it. After that first week, and giving it all over to God (I mean ALL), He started blessing me beyond belief.

I prayed a lot about what God was calling me back for. I wanted to know what He wanted me to do in my life. God slowly revealed it over the three month restoration phase I did at Teen Challenge. First, He told me He wanted me to do mission trips outside of the country, which being a convicted felon at the time, I didn't see that being possible. My favorite saying... but GOD! All four felonies are completely dismissed off my record.

He has revealed to me that He wants me in full time ministry. God opened the door for me to join the staff here at Teen Challenge. I couldn't be more excited. I never saw myself working anywhere other than a kitchen. I'm a chef through and through. In my spirit, I feel He gave me those talents to help reach people in that industry and lead them to Christ. I'm excited to walk out this Christian life with God as my leader and not myself. I can't do it on my own strength. It's no longer my way of life, but God's way. **I searched the world, but it couldn't fulfill me.** I think it's important to have "go to" verses. I have three I'd like to share.

Ephesians 2:8-10. "For it is by grace you have been saved through faith, and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – Not by works so that no man can boast." That's deep. I couldn't get myself sober if I tried. It is only because of God and many prayers of my family that I'm even able to share this with you today. The absurd amount of overdoses, shootouts, home invasions, and drug deals gone wrong, but God spared me. Every time I think about that, or read this, it gets the ole lump in the chest going. It's a reminder to me of how great God is.

Philippians 1:12. "Dear brothers and sisters, I want you to know that the things that have happened to me have actually advanced the gospel." Once we come to God, and give Him that daily surrender to ourselves, He uses us in ways we never thought imaginable. He turns everything the enemy meant for evil and turns it to good. He will use the trials we have faced to help others and lead them to Christ. There's a saying I love that relates to that; "A great victory, looked at first, like defeat."

Romans 15:13. "May the God of **hope** fill you with all **joy** and **peace** in **faith** so that you can overflow with **hope** by the power of the holy spirit." That verse has gotten me through a lot of good times and bad times. What I realize through this verse is that today The Holy Spirit is what Jesus was back in His days on earth. The Holy Spirit is what keeps us in line with God and who convicts us before and after we do something wrong. Be filled and follow the Spirit's promptings.

I look forward to stepping further out in my faith and being the man of God He has called me to be. This is my story and I'm sticking to it.

What a great testimony from a wonderful young man. We are so proud of Cam and we're thrilled to have him on staff. To God be the Glory! Dr. Bob

New Roof For Teen Challenge House:

Wow, you all are awesome. All the funds needed for the new roof have come in. Thank you so much for your obedience in your giving. We will be starting the new roof soon. We are so excited. May God richly bless you for your gifts. Thank you. Dr. Bob