

# Do-Over

At one time or another all of us have yearned to create better versions of ourselves. While some people work to repair broken relationships with family members or mend friendships, others are wondering how to reverse the damaging effects of a choice that they made years ago. Navigating these changes and life experiences can reveal both the best and worst in our character, as proven by the following individuals.

## **ADOPT THE PLAN**

Victoria Harrison was adopted as a child and struggled to understand and accept God's grace.

"I am the visible and simple story of rescue, restoration, and repurpose," said Harrison. "I was always a 'precious treasure'—it just took decades for me to believe and live this truth!"

Harrison was born to a South Korean woman and a U.S. military serviceman. But they wouldn't become a family. After a few days her mother placed her in a trash can outside the Seoul Sanitarium and Orphanage, where employees found her. Through a series of small miracles, a couple in the United States that was unable to have children of their own later adopted Harrison. The couple really wanted a child. They received several photos of Korean children, prayed and fasted over each image, and felt drawn to Victoria's photo. They told the orphanage that no matter what happened, she was their baby. Harrison felt their love immediately, but still suffered from abandonment issues and struggled to find self-worth as a child.

"Being adopted is like a two-sided coin," said Harrison. She often flipped between feeling special because she was chosen by one family and then confused because she was given away by another.

Growing up in a strong Christian household, Harrison learned the importance of trusting in God and doing things by faith. However, she had difficulty applying those principles to people and situations outside of her secure family structure. The death of her adoptive father when she was 11 deeply affected her fragile faith in God and disrupted her sense of well-being.

"I became an overachiever and strove to obtain things that would announce that I had value, rather than looking solely to God for value, safety, and security," remembers Harrison. As she grew into adulthood, Harrison turned to God for relief and help, but did not always receive clear answers. When trials, heart-aches, and many losses went unhealed, Harrison tried to bury them deeply and pretended, at least on the outside, that her life was good. Harrison is a well-educated woman in her mid-50s with two adult children. Today, after many years spent in ministry, raising a family, and caring for her late husband, she knows that Satan is constantly trying to pull people away from God.

"Facade is the enemy's method of deepening hurt and adding shame that both oppresses and depresses our ability to connect to God and His community," says Harrison.

She knows with certainty that faith in God develops in stages and phases. "A person can be strong in segments or rooms of life, while compartmentalizing areas that are withheld from God's transformation. As I truly surrendered access to all of my life, including my childhood, I began to discover His plan for healing my pain and shame."

## **IN PRISON**

Timothy Robinson was convicted of armed robbery in 1985. Robinson was sentenced to spend at least 18 years in prison at the Kirkland Correctional Institution, a maximum-security prison in South Carolina. His training as a U.S. Army soldier helped him to survive that first year without incident. He remembers clearly his daily routine. He got high at every opportunity, inhaled cigarettes, and cursed at every minor irritation.

Robinson's life was different as a child. He grew up attending church services and came from a Seventh-day Adventist and Southern Baptist background. However, the years following his parents' split when he was a preteen were spent in survival mode, with very little church involvement. During that first year Robinson had an intense experience with the Lord that changed his life forever. It was similar to the "Damascus road" experience that Saul (a man who hated Christians) had in Acts 9 in the Bible. One night he felt the presence of the Holy Spirit surrounding him, convicting him that he needed to surrender himself to God's will. After several hours spent on his knees in prayer, Robinson immediately gave up profanity and smoking, and changed his attitude, just as Saul had done when he was struck blind by a bright light.

Robinson became a model inmate and encouraged other inmates to do the same. He completed an associate's degree, and quickly moved from maximum security to a minimum-security prison before landing at a work-release program in record time.

"Although it may seem to have a negative connotation, surrender is one of the most powerful things that we can and should do," said Robinson, who reflects back on his early release.

Because of his complete trust in God, Robinson took pleasure in following the rules. His lifestyle and positive influence on other inmates attracted the notice of prison administrators and the warden. He received an inmate-of-the-year award, and was even able to attend classes at a nearby university while still in confinement.

Today Robinson is the owner of a real estate company in South Bend, Indiana, where he mentors youth and adults. He remains passionate about helping other inmates change their lives and reenter society. He has his work cut out for him. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics in 2011, about one in every 107 adults was incarcerated in prison or jail.

#### **GRASP CHANGE**

Jimmy Munoz grew up without a father, with a teenage mother in Colombia, South America. The family was poor and lived in a small village near the Amazon jungle. To support her children, his mother did odd jobs and worked at cocaine farms. She often took her young son with her.

Munoz was sexually abused as a child and felt hopeless. When a Christian couple visiting the area came to his home one day, they struck up a friendship. "In them I saw Christ's hope for my life. They taught me the basics of Christianity," said Munoz, who was baptized at 14.

"Shortly after I started attending church, the 'impossible' dream of becoming a pastor began in my heart."

When his mother decided to open a brothel, he left home and lived with friends. He graduated high school, enrolled in a local Seventh-day Adventist university, and soon after came to the United States.

"When you learn that God has a plan for you, follow it. Obey it immediately and completely," said 36-year-old Munoz, who is now married and has two young

boys. "Even if it might feel difficult at the time, remember that immediate obedience is the easier way." Munoz realized his dream and is an associate pastor at the Seabrook Seventh-day Adventist Church in Lanham, Maryland. (To read more about Munoz's story, Google Out of the Cocaine Fields.)