

Ex-Prostitute Now Pastors Homeless, Abused People in Los Angeles

AG ministers Lavonne Savage says she should be “dead and gone” but that God saved her for a ministry to Skid Row

When hooker Lavonne Savage and her pimp left St. Louis in 1995 headed for the Ozark Mountains, neither had any idea the trip would turn a prostitute to the pulpit and lead to a ministry to the molested.

On a recent Sunday afternoon, Savage sat inside the Harvest of Hope Assembly of God church in Los Angeles where she is senior pastor. Outside the door is Skid Row, where several thousand people spend the nights curled up on the sidewalks inside cardboard huts. A tiny rock of crack-cocaine big enough to make you forget where you are for 20 minutes costs \$3. Women strive to look ugly and smell bad to keep from being raped.

Savage brought a message to her congregation—which she knew was homeless but never considers hopeless. She told her story both with loud laughter and soft tears.

“I should have been dead and gone,” she said to them. “I’ve been beaten, attacked, hospitalized with a broken nose, cut and had my head busted by pimps. I once had my hands tied to a car door and drug down the street.

“I could have gotten AIDS and other diseases I could never have gotten rid of. But I never got diseases or been to the penitentiary. That was a miracle right there.”

There have been others—including the way she came to Christ. She was reared by her grandmother and grandfather and never saw her father until this year. From the time she was 6 until she left home at 14 she was sexually abused by her two uncles.

Though she reached out to Christ during vacation Bible school as a child, the sexual abuse continued. At 20 she was a veteran prostitute, smoking crack and hanging with gang members and pimps.

She made her first trip to Los Angeles with two carloads of other girls, pausing to work the truck stops and casinos. During those years, she entered 12 rehab programs, staying clean and even attending church, only to fall back into drugs and prostitution within a few months afterward.

Finally, one day in St. Louis her pimp took a rare day off to drive her to the Ozark Mountains and Teen Challenge. He planned for her to detox from the crack and booze that were slowing an income often as high as \$2,000 a day.

However, within a few weeks she had committed her life to Christ. The Holy Spirit baptized her so strongly during one service that she couldn't get off the floor for two hours. She was gloriously saved.

Today she's designated as an Assemblies of God home missionary. Currently she is studying for a master's degree and writing a book titled From Prostitute to Pastor.

Savage recently married TCMi graduate Ivan McFadden, and the two minister to her congregation. Some 70 people fill her small church, and many come forward for prayer. Because the

number of homeless women and children is growing rapidly she hopes to open a shelter for families.

Most days, she walks the crowded Skid Row streets, talking to everyone, especially the women. Like her, many were victims of sexual abuse.

“I can’t forget how God healed me, and I know He wants to use me to do the same for them.”

Ed Donnally