

From Motorcycle Warlord to Godly Mentor: Al Aceves

My name is Alfonso Aceves, Big Al to my friends, and my life has been changed because of Christ.

I was committing crimes and selling drugs by the time I was 18. It was exciting to me then, and I wanted to do it. I had to do it. In fact, at the time, I was glad I did it, even if I came out hurt. Then, all of a sudden, the Vietnam War came.

After serving two tours in Vietnam as a member of the 101st Airborne Division, my time with the army was over. I thought to myself, What am I going to do? I was coming home on the plane, and I thought, Man, I'll go to college, try to change my life. But that didn't happen.

After several run-ins with the law, some friends and I started a motorcycle club called the Mongols. When we started the Mongols, there were 10 of us. Everywhere we went, somebody would test us, and we would fight. Little by little, we started growing more chapters, until I was getting famous for my fighting and all of the things I would do to people.

At the time, we thought we were living a dream. People were afraid of us. In time, my reputation grew, and I would do things for other people, like collect money for them. I'd do anything as long as someone would pay me to do it.

Through it all, I made countless enemies. And eventually, I became addicted to heroin.

Then I met and married Lorraine.

She had six kids, and I told her I would take care of the kids. I told her everything would be all right. But my addiction to heroin got worse. I needed money for drugs, so I

started taking on bigger jobs.

Someone once asked if I could bomb a place, and I gave him a price. It was so bad that Lorraine was worried someone might call her one day and say that I was dead.

When the jobs and the money ran out, we needed a place to stay. A family took Lorraine, our kids and me into their home. But they had one stipulation: To stay with this family, we had to read a scripture every day. At the time, I didn't know what a scripture was, but I reluctantly agreed to do it.

As I began studying the Bible, my curiosity began to grow. One day a guy started talking to me about salvation. He asked: "You know, wouldn't you like to be saved? Wouldn't you like your sins to be forgiven?"

I looked at him, and told him: "Man, you don't know who you're talking to. Do you know what I mean? The things I've done."

And he told me, "No, God died on the cross for you."

So, I accepted the Lord. But I was still hooked. Turning my life around wasn't easy. I was eventually locked up for planning a bomb attack. When I got out of jail, Lorraine and the kids picked me up at the airport. It was a bit rough at first, but I told Lorraine that we were going to church. I didn't want to leave God.

I moved into a Christian men's home and kicked my drug habit. I was kicking heroin! God was so good that He gave me the strength to stay, because I wanted to run. When I started falling down on the ground, having convulsions, God was good. I stayed; I kicked it.

Death called on me a lot. People have tried to kill me; drugs tried to kill me. But God had a plan for my life.

Today I am a mentor for other men, of all ages, who want to find Christ and grow in God's plan for their lives. I attend

The Rivers Edge (Etiwanda Foursquare Church) in Rancho Cucamonga, Calif., pastored by Gary Hornsby, and serve as program director at The Rivers Edge Ranch, a working ranch and transformation facility for men.

My friends say they hear compassion in my voice now, and that's a big change. It's all because of Jesus in my life! God has changed my life completely.

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