

‘From Thug Life to Christ’: Ex-Prisoner Reaching the Masses for Jesus

A former prison inmate who chased fame, money, drugs and women says he was radically changed during an encounter with the Holy Spirit in his jail cell that changed his “fate from thug life to Christ.”

John Robert Hill Jr. is better known by his one million online followers as Holy Gabbana.

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The 27-year-old recently appeared on the God Behind Bars podcast to share how God radically changed his life while he served time in prison for hit-and-run charges, gun charges, and narcotics possession.

Gabbana told the ministry he turned his reckless behavior of vandalism, theft and robbery as a teen into a budding social media gig that boasted five million followers at the time.

“All you got to do to make this much money is to be a fool and act could do that,” he recalled. “I started being a nut.”

Gabbana’s content of vandalism, robbing stores and jumping on people’s cars began to go viral, granting him fame and recognition among celebrities, but it also led him to a dark place.

“I didn’t blow up with a team. I didn’t blow up with a manager. I blew up from the streets,” he said.

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Gabbana said at the time he encountered fame, he battled with brokenness from the abuse he suffered at the hands of his mother and losing his stepfather to bladder cancer.

He learned to numb the pain by popping pills and soon became heavily addicted.

Gabbana's reckless lifestyle eventually led him to prison in 2018.

His cellmate, Joshua, he asked Gabbana a simple question when they first met.

"He was like, 'Do you believe in Jesus?' I'm like, 'Yeah.' For that man to ask me, 'do I believe in Jesus?' That lets me know that God was always thinking about me. Anybody else could have been my cellmate," he shared. "In that moment, God reached me through my cellmate."

He continued, "When I went to jail, Jesus wasn't on my mind, because to be honest. I wasn't thinking about Jesus when I went to jail. You may not be thinking about Jesus, but He is thinking about you. But God was literally setting me up so I could have an encounter with Him."

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