

Grammy-Nominated Singer Unveils How Drugs, Booze Fueled His Dark Past

Singer Zach Williams burst on the scene this year with his album “Chain Breaker” – a collection of faith-infused songs that just earned him a 2018 Grammy nomination for “Best Contemporary Christian Music Album.”

But Williams’ path to stardom wasn’t necessarily an easy one. He told Faithwire in an interview earlier this year about how he grew up in a church-going home but ended up going astray before eventually rediscovering his Christian roots.

“I grew up in a Christian home. My dad led worship [when I was] a kid,” he said. “So, the majority of my life revolved around church at an early age up until my high school years.”

It was in high school that Williams started dabbling in drugs and alcohol and later ended up losing a Division I scholarship to play basketball– something that deeply impacted him.

“When that happened, it kind of just put me in a downward spiral for several years,” he said. “I really felt like a letdown to my family, and instead of turning to the Lord ... I just got more involved in that lifestyle.”

Listen to Williams reveal what happened next and how, years later, he came back to his faith:

Williams said he did eventually get a scholarship to play basketball, but he had an injury that sidelined him before he was ever able to play. Plus, his partying forged on.

But despite being heartbroken over the end of his basketball career, the singer soon found another hobby: music. Williams taught himself to play the guitar and quickly fell in love

with it.

“For the next 10 years of my life, I literally carried a guitar everywhere I went,” he said, noting that he would play in garages, at bars or wherever people would allow him to. “I met my wife towards the end of my 20s, and we were both kind of lost.”

Over time, the couple thought they could fix one another, but to no avail. The two, who went on to have children, struggled until things finally came to a head.

Williams said he was touring in Europe with a secular band, and the relationship just wasn't working well. Suddenly, hope was on the horizon.

“We got an invite to go to a church ... we were about to call it quits,” he said. “I knew I didn't want somebody else raising my kids ... we were so sick of the lifestyle I had been living. I didn't think there was a way out of it.”

Williams said he felt the “presence of the Lord” at church one day when he and his wife went. And he suddenly became convinced that he could “go on tour and stay clean and stay sober.” But after he landed back in Europe, he said he resorted back to his old ways.

Still, God hadn't given up on him. In fact, something happened a week later as his band was driving across Spain that absolutely changed his perspective as well as his life trajectory.

“The driver was scanning radio stations in our bus and I heard Big Daddy Weave's song, ‘Redeemed,’” he said. “It was just that ‘aha moment’ for me when God just audibly spoke and said, ‘What are you doing with your life? I've given you this gift, and you're wasting it.’”

Williams quickly called his wife and said he was quitting the

band and coming home. He also told her he wanted to start going to church as a family. Ironically, she had told his parents the night before that she was ready to call it quits.

"[She said] she didn't want to be with me anymore, and we were going to get a divorce,'" he said, crediting his sudden change of heart as something that God did to keep the family together.

"God just orchestrated the whole thing," Williams said.

He went home, asked his wife for forgiveness and "cried out to God."

"I was so broken. I just knew I couldn't do it anymore," he said. "[I told the Lord], 'God, if there's something here that you can use ... I'm so done with this lifestyle.'"

Not long after, Williams took a role as a worship leader and then met a music producer who invited him to Nashville to record. The rest, of course, is history. In the end, Williams gives all the credit to God.

"He pursued me and prepared me for things that I had no idea he was preparing me for," he said. "He honestly put this all together and had a plan for this."