

How God Turned a Convicted Murderer Into an AG Megachurch Pastor

Today I want to share with you one of the most amazing testimonies I've ever heard. Years ago, Maury Davis was convicted of a terrible murder, but now he's an Assemblies of God minister—one of the most respected ministers in Nashville, Tennessee.

I first heard Davis' testimony when I attended the Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference in Tampa, Florida, recently. I was so blown away by his testimony of redemption and grace that I asked him to join me on my "Strang Report" podcast. I think you'll be fascinated to hear his story of getting saved in jail, being delivered from demons, being released from prison early, and becoming a successful pastor. You can listen to the interview right here or in this article.

Like most people who commit crimes, Davis had a troubled childhood, which he says set him up to let the devil in.

"I grew up in Dallas, Texas, in a suburb called Irving," he says. "My mom and dad divorced when I was a young man, and my mom remarried my stepdad, who adopted me when my dad didn't pay child support. My natural father was an alcoholic, and my stepdad was a perfectionist."

His stepdad often spanked Davis with a switch in a way many people nowadays would consider abusive. Davis says the discipline was humiliating and damaging.

By 12 years old, Davis was experimenting with drugs, and by the time he was a sophomore in high school, his father didn't know what to do with him. When Davis suggested he go to military school, his father simply told him to pick one. He

graduated from the New Mexico Military Institute with honors.

"I came back to Dallas and discovered that without a heart change, there is no destiny change," Davis says. "So I got back involved with my friends, and by January of 1975, I weighed 133 pounds, and I was a speed freak. In the middle of a crime, I committed a horrible murder, and it was there in jail that I heard the gospel for the first time."

He heard the gospel from his attorney, Dennis Brewer, who had recently been born again. Brewer often asked Davis if he wanted to pray, but Davis always said he wasn't ready. But the more time Davis spent in jail, the more he saw men commit suicide, and he realized he couldn't ignore God anymore.

"Every time I saw that attorney, he would ask me, 'Are you ready to pray?'" he says. "I finally said, 'Yes.' And there, I looked up at a concrete ceiling and I said, 'God, if You're up there, and if You come down here and prove Yourself to me, I'll serve You for the rest of my life.'"

God also pursued Davis through a fellow inmate named Tommy Joe. Joe had been a backsliding Christian, but when he went to jail, he recommitted his life to Jesus. As a result, he radiated joy and faith in a way Davis had never seen.

When Brewer told Davis he had asked the district attorney to plea-bargain for 50 years, Davis was crushed. He was 18 years old at the time, and he didn't think he would survive in prison until he was 68.

"And I sat down, not ready to die, and Tommy said, 'It's going to be all right,'" Davis says.

Soon after that, Tommy received news that he had been delivered a 75-year sentence. Still, the young man smiled and said, "I would rather be in this cell with Jesus Christ than be back out there living like we were for the devil."

Davis says those words shed the scales from his eyes, and he knew there had to be a God.

"I asked him to tell me about his God," he says. "They got a Bible that I'd never read and opened to the Gospel of John and began to read, 'For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but should have eternal life.' ... And I knew that was my only hope."

Davis and his attorney used demon possession as his defense, and by God's grace, a born-again ex-police officer named Don McDaniel was part of the jury. Davis says McDaniel had been possessed by a demon of murder, but God delivered him. So when McDaniel heard Davis' testimony and saw his sincerity, he advocated for him and refused to let him get anything greater than 20 years in prison.

But a few years later, the prison began getting overcrowded, and Davis was a prime candidate for early release. Again by God's grace, Davis won a lottery that allowed him to become a free man after only 8 1/2 years in prison.

From there, God led him on a journey to becoming a popular Assemblies of God pastor. But first, he had to do some training.

"I had done Berean School of the Bible while I was in prison," Davis says. "And Pastor Don George made me a member of Calvary Temple Church in Irving while I was in prison because you have to be a member of an Assemblies of God church for five years to be credentialed. So he had laid the foundation for my education and my membership."

Davis started out as a janitor at George's church and soon was promoted to head of the janitors. Not too long after that, he became the pastor's administrative assistant and then the youth pastor.

"[Pastor George] took me jogging every morning at 6 a.m.," Davis says. "I visited the hospital with him, listened to him, did dictation, traveled with him when he traveled, went on family vacations, where they mentored me in a way very few people have been mentored. ... So I had to pass some tests and some interviews, but I just took it one step at a time."

Eventually, Davis became lead pastor of Cornerstone Church, an Assemblies of God megachurch. He served in that position for 27 years until he stepped down and assumed the role of global pastor. He now travels the world, coaching and consulting pastors and business professionals.

Davis has shared his story of redemption and grace many times, and it's a prime example of how God can turn anyone's life around—no matter what they've done. But Davis says true deliverance must come from a heart change.

"There are three areas where we can become in bondage—spirit, soul and body," Davis explains. "And until all three of those areas are delivered, transformed and healthy, we always live beneath our potential and are not going to reach our destiny. Obviously, a spiritual transformation is required by the Holy Spirit and the blood of Christ and making a commitment to lordship."

I hope Davis' story inspired you. I know it inspires me each time I hear it. If you enjoyed this article, I encourage you to share it on your social media and listen to the full podcast right here or at the top of this article.