

What Happened When a Violent Drug Dealer Encountered the Radical Presence of God

Caleb McCall was 13 years old when police first arrested him for drugs. What started with smoking pot quickly evolved into snorting cocaine before junior-high basketball games.

"My parents had an idea some things were going on, but they didn't understand how bad it really was," McCall says.

McCall was dealing the same cocaine he smoked and turned to methamphetamines as a freshman in high school. The drugs didn't impede much on his athletic performance, and colleges began scouting him for basketball.

But at 18, he got his girlfriend pregnant.

"I turned down all the [college] offers and said I was going to work, but keep in mind, I was a drug dealer. It was all that I knew."

McCall would pick up job every few months to keep the police off his back, but drugs remained his consistent source of income.

"At 18, I'm a kid trying to raise a kid, just a drug dealer whose become addicted throughout my years of dealing and using drugs," McCall said. "I always had them, and I was taking them as I was selling them."

McCall said he wasn't an intimidating presence at the time, which made him a target. His 6-foot-5 frame carried maybe 100 pounds.

"I wasn't a violent person," McCall says. "I was always soft-spoken and never really liked fighting. Word got out about

this skinny kid who has all these drugs, all this money, and these other people who'd been dealing drugs were more violent. They begin to hear about his, and two robberies changed the trajectory of where my life was heading for the next six years."

The first occurred in a Walmart parking lot.

"They held a .45 caliber pistol to my chest and told me to give them the drugs," McCall says. "My pregnant girlfriend was in the vehicle at this time, and they took all the drugs and robbed me."

McCall didn't retaliate, so other dealers jumped him in an apartment complex a few weeks later.

This time McCall changed everything and started injecting steroids to bulk up.

"I got really big really quick, really mean really quick," McCall says. "I started lifting weights, and the violence began coming out of me. My mentality changed."

Now McCall was the one behind the gun conducting robberies. From age 19-26, he lived a life of crime and addiction. But he also began hearing the voice of the Lord.

At age 24, McCall says he went into church the morning after a bar fight. On crutches, he hobbled through the church doors after the service and shook the pastor's hand.

"As we were leaving, he stopped me and said, 'Man, let's grab some lunch sometime,'" McCall says. "And I'm sitting there thinking, *Does this dude even know who I am?* A lot of people in the church knew I was the biggest drug dealer in the area. But sure, yeah, let's go to lunch."

McCall says the pastor really began to minister to him and offered him odd handyman jobs at the church.

The church became his haven.

"The reason why I went to church is I knew that the only way my life would change was if somehow God intervened and had mercy on me and changed my life," McCall says.

As McCall began to paint walls, the pastor introduced him to an audio clip of Todd White's testimony, detailing how God set the evangelist free from a life of drugs.

"I would walk around the corner of the church and break down crying," McCall says. "Me, this big, violent, angry, mad drug dealer. But God was speaking to me through him. And I told God, 'God, if you'll do it for that man, you'll do it for me.' And there was a breakthrough that happened in my spirit."

McCall says he spent the next six months living in hypocrisy, working at church but selling drugs on the side.

When McCall got into more trouble, the pastor recommended a Teen Challenge program.

"When I got to the program, I realized Jesus is way more than I thought," McCall says. "It's so much better to actually live for Him, to have a relationship with Him and not just go through the motions."

McCall says he devoured the Bible, renewed his mind and felt a fresh call to ministry.

"When I went to Teen Challenge, they taught me how to be a man, how to get up, go to work, do your devotions and spend time with the Lord."

He now leads a program similar to Teen Challenge called Be the Bush Ministries in Middle Tennessee.

"We teach them Christ and disciple them," McCall says.

It's testimonies like McCall's that really make a difference

in the lives of addicts today.