

Why This Ex-Drug Addict Is Ministering to Junkies and Felons

Drug addiction is practically an epidemic in our country today, and our jails are full because of it. Countless lives have been damaged—and even ended—because of drug addiction. But thankfully, some Christian ministries are stepping up to the plate and challenging this epidemic head-on.

One of those ministers is John Alarid. He's pastor of Freedom City Church in Springfield, Missouri, and has a very interesting past. Although he's a young man in his 40s, he's already experienced many of life's hardships, including drug addiction. He was even in prison a few times, but God gloriously saved him.

And Alarid wasn't satisfied simply enjoying his freedom in Christ. He felt compelled to help others who are in the same situation he was in. In fact, I traveled to his church recently and saw a sign that said, "Welcome Felons, Junkies and Saints."

When I asked Alarid why he worded the sign that way, he told me he wanted people to know they were welcome at his church.

"I came from that background, and my wife does too," he told me. "But most people from that background feel uncomfortable at a 'normie' church, what we call 'normies.' They feel uncomfortable, so I wanted to make sure that they knew they were welcome here."

Interestingly, Alarid's sign got some opposition from a local pastor. That pastor actually called Alarid and asked him to take the sign down because it supposedly condoned crime and addiction.

But instead of taking it down, Alarid made a T-shirt with the same slogan! His church started selling the T-shirts online, and people from all across the country wanted to buy them. True to Alarid's mission, the money the church makes from the shirts goes toward supporting recovery homes.

I admire Alarid's courage to keep reaching the hurting and the lost despite opposition. And isn't that what Jesus did when the Pharisees condemned Him for reaching out to the tax collectors and prostitutes of His day?

"What's interesting is people would never see themselves—Christians today would never see them—in the place of the Pharisees," Alarid says. "But these gentlemen who called and some that I've come into contact with, that's exactly what they are—modern-day Pharisees. If Jesus were here, He'd be ministering in prisons and in the trap houses and the 'hoods. You know that Jesus went to the broken; He went to the down and out; He went to the up and out."

But Alarid is unafraid to reach those very people because he remembers all too well how awful it was to live that lifestyle. Even though he grew up as the son of missionaries in Latin America, he experienced intense struggle when his parents went through a divorce that wasn't amicable.

Alarid says because of the bitter divorce, he didn't have much supervision growing up. Soon, he got involved in criminal activity and even went to prison because of it. He started selling drugs because he wanted the glamorous lifestyle he thought drug lords had, complete with nice cars, houses and women.

But after he graduated high school and started attending the University of New Mexico, he was arrested and given his first cocaine trafficking charge.

"Eventually, I found myself hopelessly addicted to crack cocaine and heroin, and that went on for almost a decade," he

says.

Alarid reached one of his lowest points when, in 1998, a drug deal went bad, and he ended up stabbing a man outside a 7-Eleven. Alarid made plans to flee to Mexico since he spoke fluent Spanish, but on his way, he stopped at a Christ-centered recovery home that was connected with a local church in Phoenix, Arizona.

“I went into the program just to get clean, not to find Jesus, not to have a spiritual awakening,” he says. “I wanted to get clean so I could stay on the run. ... But I went into that little recovery home, and I had a radical encounter with Jesus. So the same Jesus that my parents talked about, the same Jesus that I heard about in church but wasn’t real to me as a kid, made Himself real to me. And overnight, my worldview changed.

“I didn’t want to use drugs. I stopped cursing. I didn’t want to hurt people. Overnight—it was one of those radical, overnight transformations.”

After that, Alarid was in the Word continually. After graduating from the program, he started running it. Soon, he felt the burden to become a pastor and help more people, so he went to a school of ministry in Los Angeles.

The leadership there asked him to go to the Philippines as a missionary, but Alarid felt hesitant because of possible charges against him. Instead, he ended up going to Brownsville, which was actually experiencing revival at that time.

At the Brownsville revival, Alarid saw Steve Hill—who used to be a homeless drug addict before he became a preacher. At the revival, Alarid felt the tangible presence of Jesus Christ. And while he was questioning whether God wanted him to go to the Philippines or stay in L.A., a man walked up to him with a prophecy: “God says go. You’re not out of place. You’re in

place.”

A couple weeks later, Alarid went to Manila, Philippines, and saw God move mightily in the recovery homes, with hundreds coming to receive wholeness and healing through Jesus.

But that’s not the end of Alarid’s story. When he returned to the United States, he was actually arrested and faced a potential sentence of up to 25 years for attempted murder. As a result, he started backsliding from the Lord.

Yet God was so gracious to him. Be sure to listen to my podcast interview with him to find out how God moved miraculously to bring Alarid back to Himself. [Click here to listen!](#)

And be sure to share this article with someone who needs encouragement. Perhaps you know someone who is struggling with drug addiction or who has a loved one in a similar battle. Let Alarid’s story be a fresh encouragement that God can truly change anyone.