

Ex-Prisoner: 'Jesus Walked Into My Cell' and Told Me to Start a Ministry

Prison ministry leader and pastor William Bumphus didn't know anyone who was saved when he was growing up in Indiana. And along the way, he turned into a hardcore drug addict shooting up heroin, cocaine and morphine.

Arrested 23 times for robberies, burglaries and thefts and imprisoned four times, Bumphus knew he was in trouble when he was about to be sentenced for up to 60 years. Then he came across four prisoners having a Bible study in a cell block. Bumphus had studied Islam and set out to persuade these students of the Word that the Bible was a lie. But just the opposite happened.

The inmates studying the Bible told him if he got saved, he would receive a miracle. Ready to try anything, he gave his life to Christ, but his wasn't just a jailhouse conversion. Jesus took hold of his yielded heart and transformed his life.

"I always emphasize not believe in your head but believe in your heart, the center of your being," Bumphus says. "That's when the miracle takes place."

He experienced another kind of miracle too. He only had to serve 10 months in the Indiana State Prison instead of 60 years.

Bumphus was also "baptized in the Holy Ghost in jail," he says, and now finds his motivation to serve "the least of these" from his ministry calling (Matt. 25:31-46).

"The Lord called me to do this while I was incarcerated, and that's what motivates me," he says.

Today, he has more than a criminal record. He says he has ministered in 575 prisons across America. Bumphus takes “successful” ex-convicts with him to minister, including on trips to Lagos, Nigeria, where one pastor told Bumphus he’s the only foreigner allowed to preach in the prisons there.

“Any place a person is incarcerated, I’ll go,” he says of his commitment.

Bumphus has a particular reason for naming his Indianapolis-based organization Jesus Inside Prison Ministry ().

“Jesus Christ walked inside my cell and told me to go out and build Him a prison ministry,” he says. “We were inside, so me and some other inmates wrote other churches from inside prison, let them know that we were Christians. We never heard an answer back from a pastor. So we thought, *Well, they’re the ones who need ministering to.* ... Then the Lord spoke to me, and He said, ‘Name it after me, and I’ll bless it.’”

The Lord has done just that. Along with services and Bible correspondence, Bumphus and his team of ex-cons conduct weekend “prison invasions” in three prisons in Kentucky.

“We’ll go in and preach on the yard, go cell to cell, to the lockup unit, have services in the chapel and baptize them,” he says.

He brings in singers and rappers, so “we draw a lot of attention,” he says.

He also distributes his book, *Jesus House: Where Miracles Still Happen*, free of charge to the inmates.

Bumphus has preached to tens of thousands of offenders, and his ministry is seeing results.

“There’s revival going on inside prison,” Bumphus says. “I’ve seen it for the last 25 years.”