

Motorcycle Chaplain Revs Up Faith in Biker Circles

Fred Higgins looks and acts the part of a chaplain to bikers. His beard is reminiscent of fiery abolitionist John Brown. A rattail likewise isn't the typical hairstyle of Assemblies of God clergy. His straightforward manner won't win him any congeniality awards.

But Fred Higgins isn't the archetypal AG chaplain, either in background or mission field. He got booted out of Boy Scouts at age 12 for smoking cigarettes. While still a teenager, Higgins rode with hardcore outlaw motorcycle gangs, dealt drugs and worked as a bar bouncer. He engaged in various criminal activities.

"If you think I'm not too pretty now, you should have seen me then," says Higgins. "I never really was addicted to anything except sin."

At age 15, Higgins went forward during an altar call at an AG church, but it took quite a few years before he fully walked away from his old lifestyle.

"God was continually reaching out to me in an effort to change my life," Higgins recalls. "A lot of people sowed a lot of seed in me before it began to bear fruit."

Eventually, Higgins not only surrendered his life to Christ, but also heeded a call to ministry. While serving as the pastor of an AG church, Higgins began riding a motorcycle again, not intending to become part of the biker lifestyle.

But following the leading of the Holy Spirit, Higgins sensed doors opening to become immersed in the biker community, this time with a different focus than during his youth. In 2003, Higgins became a full-time AG motorcycle ministries chaplain

based in southeast Georgia. Because of his past, he quickly made inroads.

"But knowing the culture doesn't mean you have all the answers," Higgins says. "I still have to pray every day, 'God I don't know how to do this, I need You to show me.'"

Higgins didn't return with wrathful vengeance, but rather with loving acceptance.

"If you are judgmental you get absolutely nowhere in the biker community," Higgins says. "I'm just trying to bring them closer to God."

Consequently, hundreds of hardcore bikers pray prayers of repentance and commitment with Higgins every year. From personal experience, he understands that such prayers don't necessarily result in an immediate turnaround. Higgins conducts anger-management counseling, premarital counseling, weddings and funerals in the biker community for those who have no pastor.

"I do all this with the objective of preaching the gospel," says Higgins, who spends most of his time ministering in Florida and Georgia.

"My approach is pastoral," Higgins says. "I get involved in their lives week after week. I try to see them as often as possible."

Higgins has a broad reach. While he has ongoing relationships with numerous motorcycle clubs and hundreds of bikers, he gains access to thousands more in other parts of the country because of the domino effect of the close-knit fraternity.

Higgins has gained the trust of many bikers because they know he is real.

"If you want to reach the lost you have to go where they are," Higgins says.

For more information about AG Chaplaincy, see its website.

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