

Stunts and Salvation: Biker-Style Evangelism

A group of bikers was recently indicted in connection with the well-publicized road rage incident involving a driver of an SUV on the streets of Manhattan.

The men were part of a stunt biker gang, a growing problem on the roads of America.

The video involving the sports bikers and the driver of a black SUV was recorded from a biker's helmet and went viral after someone posted it online.

Authorities said the cyclists chased the SUV after the driver allegedly bumped a rider during a biker rally in Manhattan on Sept. 29.

Surrounded by bikers, the driver called 911, telling police he feared for his life. He then drove off, running over several bikers and critically injuring one.

Hollywood Stuntz

The cyclists are part of a group called Hollywood Stuntz, sports bike enthusiasts who perform tricks and stunts on the road.

Bike shops say they've seen a spike in the sale of sports bikes, also known as crotch rockets.

Riders often modify the bikes to perform their stunts and tricks, but the bikes can go up to 200 miles per hour. Police say speed like that, coupled with reckless, out-of-control bikers, is a major problem putting everyone on the road in harm's way.

"We hear about motorcycles traveling at a high rate of speed, slowing down in front of cars so they can perform stunts,"

Virginia State Trooper Jared Vance said.

“That’s all dangerous stuff,” he added.

Those who perform stunts on the road often videotape themselves performing the acts, then post them online.

One video posted on YouTube shows a biker avoiding a police blockade after performing a wheelie for three miles.

Police are often unable to pursue the riders because the motorcycles can outmaneuver police vehicles.

Drivers are often intimidated by the presence of the bikers on the road.

A Biker Church with a Mission

Pastor Rusty Rawls of Seven Cities Biker Church in Chesapeake, Va., hopes to change the bikers’ negative image.

His church is offering bikers a new way of life while sharing their love for God and the open road.

“If you’re in the car and you’re riding down the road and you see a group of them, first thing you think is ‘Oh man! That’s a group I don’t want to be around,’” he said.

“[It’s] because they’ve got that negative connotation about them that they’re a bunch of bad boys and they’re doing bad things out there,” he continued.

Seven Cities Biker Church is part of the Freedom Biker Church Network. So far, the network has planted 12 churches, including one in Vancouver B.C. The Canadian Baptist Convention has plans to plant 10 more FBC churches in Canada.

“God has brought us here to show people that you can still ride a motorcycle and you can love the Lord and you can follow Him,” Rawls told CBN News.

Rawls has been riding motorcycles since he was 9. He found

Jesus when he was in his 30s. He uses the motorcycle as a vehicle for sharing the love of God.

From Bikers Pit to God's House

The church's location was once a rowdy night spot where police were often called.

"Yeah, I use to party in here," William Moore, a church member, said. "It was a big 'ol cowboy bar when I went in here.

"Lot of fights in here. It was pretty crazy," he added.

"This is a place that Satan had a hold of for quite some time, lot of criminal activity," Rawls said. "God's like, 'It's time to come here and take this building back and this property back, and I'm going to take this place and ask it to be a house of God and we're going to reach people for Christ and start changing lives around.'"

Outreach to unchurched bikers has been key to Seven Cities Freedom Biker church's tremendous growth and success since its start early in 2013. That's because members are passionate about the open road and about sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Motorcycles: Vehicles for Evangelism

"We operate the same way as a motorcycle club. Only thing is we do it for God," church member Sean Watt of Chesapeake, Va., said.

"Bikers still need to be saved so somebody needs to go out there and witness to them, and they'll receive us more than people with three-piece suits," he added.

Church member Lee Strader said, "We'll show up someplace and people again whether they're bikers or non-bikers, will look at us and before you know it, they're sitting at the table talking and it's a pretty awesome thing."

Rawls said lives are being impacted.

"It's just awesome. Marriages and stuff have been restored," Rawls said.

"We got a gentleman who came here one Sunday morning and this was going to be his last Sunday at church. Actually, this was going to be his last Sunday on this earth," he shared.

"He had already made a decision that he's going to come to church one more time and that after that he was heading home and he was going to commit suicide," he recalled. "He gave his heart and soul to Christ, and God turned him around and changed him and stuff. And he's just out there doing great things for God now."

Member Timothy Samulak told a similar story.

"When I came to the church I was going through a lot of personal issues in my life and since I've come here, I've been saved and baptized," he explained.

"If it wasn't for the church and having God in my life, I don't know if I would have made it through it," he added.

A Bad Rap

Meanwhile, many believe the actions of the bikers in the New York incident don't reflect the character of all bikers.

"Most motorcycle operators are law-abiding citizens. It's the 1 percent that we try to keep under control," Vance said.

"We just get together and we ride. We're not a bike club; we're not a gang or anything like that," Strader said. "[We're] just a bunch of guys who get together and ride and have a good time."

Seven Cities Freedom Biker church isn't just for bikers. Those who attend say while the atmosphere is what draws them, it's the church's message that keeps riding them for good.

"The Holy Ghost is thick in here," Moore said. "They love on you like family."

"You can just come in here, like you get off work and dirty, and still come to church," he added "You ain't got to feel like you got to get all cleaned up—just show up."