

IN THIS ISSUE:



Quit Digging
p.2



2020 Calendar
p.3



Slam Dunk Artist
p.4

Finding Freedom in a Double Life Sentence

by W.M. Thompson

When Danny Duchene was 16, his parents left him home alone

to travel for business. He expected them to return home to Redding, California, on Christmas Day. But instead of waking up to presents on Christmas morning, he woke up to the shocking news that his parents were behind bars. They had been arrested in Mexico for attempting to smuggle cocaine from Peru.

Danny remembers the pain he felt in that moment. This harsh reality shook his foundation. “My response was, if this is what they’re going to do with their life, then that’s what I’m going to do (too),” says Danny.

He began using drugs and alcohol daily to cope with the stress of his circumstances. Within a couple of years, he was expelled from school, homeless, and addicted.

Danny became desperate for the cash he needed to stay high. One day an opportunity presented itself to make money at the expense of human life. A



Photo by Saddleback Church

At only 18 years old, Danny was sent to prison for two back-to-back life sentences. Devastated and defensive at first, Danny eventually found the key to turning his life around.

few weeks later, Danny was arrested at age 18 for his involvement in a knife fight that left two men dead. As he sobered up while awaiting trial in the Sutter County Jail, his mind raced. “The weight of what I

did came crashing down on my conscience,” Danny remembers. “I thought, ‘OK, life is definitely over.’”

Volunteers from a local church that regularly visited the jail had a different message for him, however. It was a

message powerful enough to change his life—if he could just believe it, that is.

From resisting to receiving
Danny faced several decades behind bars. But those volunteers told him that God

loved him regardless of what he’d done or whether he was in prison. They said if he accepted Christ as his Savior, he would experience forgiveness. They explained that God had good plans for his life. Danny remained skeptical.

“The weight of what I did came crashing down on my conscience.”

“It wasn’t an instant hit with me. I was probably the most defensive ... kind of person that you could imagine. I didn’t quite know how to trust,” he admits.

But eventually, Danny let his guard down, seeing how much time and effort the volunteers put into visiting with him. “They were able to get it across to me that ... God had a plan

Continued on page 2

Breaking Bad Habits

by S.L. Ray

You can’t teach an old dog new tricks. A leopard never changes its spots. Old habits die

hard. You’ve heard it before: breaking bad habits is difficult. But what better time than the new year to break a bad habit and start a new one? The calendar starts fresh in January, and so can you!

If our brain knows something is bad for us and we try to resist, what overpowers our good intentions? It all boils down to what is known as the cue-routine-reward “habit loop.” A cue signals your brain, which causes you to take action (routine) and rewards you with a sense of temporary pleasure. Then the

cycle repeats, and eventually our brains become wired to follow habits without much thought or effort.

So how do you break a bad habit?

1. Create a plan.

Make a list of triggers and avoid them whenever possible. If your triggers include people, like family members or other prisoners, avoiding them may mean stopping visits and phone calls or putting unhealthy friendships on hold. When you can’t avoid triggers, set a time limit for that triggering situation or ask a trustworthy prisoner to hold you accountable. Before entering the triggering situation, get calm (through things like prayer or meditation) and then stay calm (through things like



Photo by gustavofraza/Getty Images

deep breathing or rubbing a soft piece of clothing) while you’re there. Keep an ongoing journal, writing down things that worked or didn’t work.

2. Change your routine.

Shake up your habit loop

by altering your schedule. We can actually override brain messages by changing up the routines accompanying a habit. Eventually the brain’s signal pathways will change. Whenever possible, break up habit rituals, like doing a habit

at the same time or location, in the same emotional state, or around the same people. For example, smokers have had more success quitting when they’ve stopped going to the

Continued on page 2

In a Pit? Stop Digging!

by Dan Kingery

A tried-and-true bit of wisdom says, “If you find yourself in a hole, stop digging.” It makes sense, doesn’t it? But most of us don’t stop digging. When we get in trouble, we double down on our strategy for living. If we get caught lying, we tell more lies to cover our tracks. If we feel powerless, we strive even harder for control.

But there come moments in life when you can’t strive anymore. It could be at the loss of a loved one, or in the face of overwhelming odds, or in a jail cell. All you’ve been trying to achieve crumbles to ashes, and there’s nothing you can do to try to fix it.

As hard as it is to believe, these “holes” can be some of the most helpful, rewarding seasons in our lives. Facing failure is the perfect time to reevaluate who you are, what you stand for, and what you want out of life. It’s a time to test your beliefs and your



Photo by GenNeal/Photo/Stock

values and make adjustments. It’s a time to start finding accountability and stop trying to control things you can’t or shouldn’t.

Maybe you’ve had a relationship with God, or maybe you’re not sure He even exists. Either way, now is a perfect chance to ask, “Where is God in this situation? Could it be that He has something good planned for me in all this?”

You have a future, and in God’s hands, good can come from your current circumstances.

You don’t have to repeat the mistakes that got you in this hole in the first place. Stop digging. By making deliberate, productive choices, you begin the path to being a better

person with a brighter future. The new you is a step-by-step, moment-by-moment journey ... and it starts now.

This edition of Inside Journal is all about a new focus for the new year. Follow the tips for breaking bad habits on page 1. Use the 2020 calendar on page 3 to mark off the days when you remember to do something positive, like pray or journal. Discover the only New Year’s resolution that matters on page 4.

As you enter into the new year, you can use this fresh start to change the way the “old you” handled things and find a more positive, more focused way to handle things. So stop digging and start climbing! ■

Breaking Bad Habits Continued from page 1

same designated smoking area at the same time each day and stopped hanging around their smoking buddies. Also, if you’re more likely to act on your habit when you’re tired or bored, get more sleep or find more hobbies. With commitment and consistency, these simple steps make a big difference.

3. Create new healthy habits.

When temptation arises, try a healthy activity instead. For example, if your habit is nail biting, then any time you’re tempted to bite your nails, quickly stop and do 25 push-ups instead. Fill typical “triggering” moments of your day with activities requiring extra focus, like learning a foreign language or doing crossword puzzles. Find creative outlets, journaling or drawing, for the nervous energy that surrounds a habit. Also, try to repeat the healthy behavior in the same situation until it becomes routine. According to a University College London (UCL) study on habits, performing the new behavior in a consistent setting can cue that behavior in the future. So in the example of exercising instead of nail biting, you’ll need to exercise consistently every time the nail-biting temptation kicks in. The UCL study found that missing one opportunity to perform the new behavior didn’t prevent the habit from forming, but people who were “very inconsistent” about doing the new behavior in the same setting failed to form the new habit.

4. Work on only one habit.

When we get on a self-improvement kick, we can start

to analyze everything wrong with us and want to change it all. We often set multiple New Year’s resolutions. But our brains are most productive when we focus on one thing at a time. Dave Crenshaw, a professional organizer who has overcome severe ADHD, gives lectures on the myths of multitasking, explaining that when we think we’re multitasking, we’re really “switch-tasking,” or going back and forth from one activity to another, one at a time. Trying to multitask actually takes more time and is less productive than focusing on one thing at a time.

5. Don’t give up.

If at first you don’t succeed, try, try again. The UCL study found it took actively trying for 66 days on average before the new habit was formed. For some study participants, it took as long as 254 days or 8.5 months. People who have a strong ability to remember upcoming events without reminders and people who establish routines easily tend to break and create habits more easily. But for people who are impulsive or used to a chaotic life, creating and breaking habits will be harder. Dr. Timothy Walsh of a renowned addiction recovery center says the average person goes through six treatment episodes before finally reaching sobriety. And even minor habits like nail biting can be so engrained that breaking them can take months of extreme focus and effort.

It takes a long time for the brain to reset, but it can be done. Bad habits can be broken, and healthy new habits can be formed. So what are you waiting for? ■

Need a Bible?

To get a FREE Inside Journal NLT Life Recovery Bible, write to: Tyndale House Publishers, Attn: Inside Journal Bible, 351 Executive Drive, Carol Stream, IL 60188. Please include your name and prison ID number, your facility name, your facility address, and whether you want English or Spanish. Limit one Bible per person.



Subscription Info

At Inside Journal® (IJ), we receive many letters each week from prisoners asking for subscriptions to our newspaper. Because of limitations on our staff and budget, IJ is only available in bulk shipments to your chaplain, programming coordinator, or a volunteer who visits your facility. Chaplains, to set up these shipments for free, please contact our editorial staff at P.O. Box 1790, Ashburn, VA 20146-1790 or insidejournal@pfm.org.

Finding Freedom Continued from page 1

with me wherever I would live for the rest of my life, however long, or whatever that might look like,” he says.

One day, a volunteer asked Danny if he wanted to pray and receive Christ. He finally said yes. One week later, he took responsibility for his actions and pled guilty to two counts of first-degree murder.

Hurts, habits, and hang-ups

The transformation from addict to Christ follower didn’t happen overnight. Danny would spend the next three decades growing in his faith during his double life sentence.

Gradually, he began to see changes in his life. He started to enjoy worship music and understand what he was reading in the Bible for the first time.

“It took a number of years of discipleship ... for me to relax and fully believe that regardless of [if I] attempt to

do good or continue to fail, that God loved me just as I was,” Danny recalls.

In 2003, he reached out to Pastor Rick Warren of Saddleback Church in California to see if Danny could use curriculum from Rick’s book, “The Purpose Driven Life,” for his church inside the Sierra Conservation Center.

Rick said yes and eventually connected Danny to the resources he needed to lead Celebrate Recovery, a Christ-centered program for people struggling with “hurts, habits, and hang-ups.” This would be the first time this program was taught in a California prison.

“You can go to Bible studies and church services several times a week and still remain very surface level,” Danny says. But Celebrate Recovery gave him the safe space to really open up and face the unresolved issues that trigger relapses and unhealthy behavior.

Danny and the men in

his in-prison church talked about their pasts and the ways they needed help. Through Celebrate Recovery, they saw lives transformed. “It was a huge success,” Danny recalls.

But Rick didn’t just help him with teaching materials over the years. In 2014, Rick sent a letter to the parole board asking for Danny’s release—on the condition that he could immediately hire Danny as a pastor on the outside.

The plea was granted, and Danny was released after 32 long years in prison. Today, he is a pastor and national director of Celebrate Recovery Inside at Saddleback Church. Danny’s team equips and encourages the 30,000 community Celebrate Recovery programs to volunteer in their local jails and prisons. There are currently more than 700 Celebrate Recovery Inside programs in correctional facilities, but Danny says “with more than 2.2 million prisoners in



Photo by Saddleback Church

the U.S., we’re just getting started with our mission.”

These days, Danny is once again behind bars, only this time, it’s as a free man. Through his ministry and his Celebrate Recovery role, he uses the insight gained through his own personal experience to encourage believers to face their pain and grow in community.

“My life is involved with ministry because of outside volunteers,” he says. “To come back inside and go

through the process of getting your little tag and signing in and signing out ... it’s very moving to me to be the one signing in and signing out and getting approval and all of those pieces, because now I’m the one that gets to go in and help someone else.”

Danny is proof that God can transform the lives of those who allow Him into their hearts—no matter who you are or how many decades you spend behind bars. ■

“For I am about to do something new. See, I have already begun! Do you not see it? I will make a pathway through the wilderness. I will create rivers in the dry wasteland.” –Isaiah 43:19 (NLT)

JANUARY

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

FEBRUARY

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29

MARCH

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

APRIL

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

MAY

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

JUNE

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

JULY

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

AUGUST

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

SEPTEMBER

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

OCTOBER

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

NOVEMBER

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

DECEMBER

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

HOLIDAYS

- January 1 – New Year’s Day
- January 20 – Martin Luther King Day
- February 14 – Valentine’s Day
- February 17 – Presidents Day
- April 12 – Easter
- May 10 – Mother’s Day
- May 25 – Memorial Day
- June – Ask your chaplain for an Angel Tree prisoner participation form.

- June 21 – Father’s Day
- July 4 – Independence Day
- August – Don’t forget to submit your Angel Tree prisoner participation form!
- September 7 – Labor Day
- November 11 – Veterans Day
- November 26 – Thanksgiving Day
- December 25 – Christmas Day

MY IMPORTANT DATES

The One New Year's Resolution That Matters

by Grayson Pope

Everyone wants a fresh start. That's why we come up with New Year's resolutions—commitments to leave behind our old ways and begin a new chapter. That's no less true for people in prison.

A couple years ago, a former prisoner asked his buddies on the inside what New Year's resolutions they planned to make. "I want to eat only health food ... to be as healthy as possible [when I go home]," said one. Another man wanted to get his estranged family back together, and yet another wanted to tap into his true potential. Good resolutions—but for all of us, resolutions are easier to make than keep. Even Paul, the New Testament writer, said, "I don't really understand myself, for I want to do what is right, but I don't do it" (Romans 7:15). He couldn't change his nature.

Neither can I. And neither can you.

The power to change

You might have made resolutions to lose some weight, cut back on TV, or be more productive, but—as anyone who's ever made a New Year's resolution will tell you—your willpower can



Photo by stellalevi/GettyImages

only take you so far. At some point, you realize that your will is not enough, and you need something more.

The Bible talks about this in the book of Hebrews. In a verse that reads like a New Year's resolution, it says, "Let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us" (Hebrews 12:1).

What's weighing you down and making your life harder? What's slowing you down and tripping you up? Is it anger? Resentment? Jealousy? You probably know exactly what it is. You'd like to be free from it, to push forward and move on with your life, but how? What do you do?

Fortunately, the Bible tells us more. After the verse above, it says, "We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who perfects our faith" (Hebrews 12:2).

This verse doesn't say to pull yourself up by your own bootstraps or try as hard as you can. Instead, it says to keep your eyes fixed on Jesus.

Now, that doesn't mean you just stare at a picture of Jesus. It means you're always thinking of Him, always making sure your actions are in line with His teachings, always working toward the life He calls us to live in the Bible.

Seeing through a new lens

But how does that help you get a fresh start? Well, you can draw strength and encouragement through Jesus that leads to lasting change. For example, let's say there are some fellow prisoners giving you a hard time because you are a Christian. Instead of trying to find strength within yourself to fight them or run from them—which will eventually lead to failure—Hebrews says, "Think of all the hostility [Jesus] endured

ARE YOU WHO YOU WANT TO BE?

Use this new year to ask yourself: Are you the best version of yourself you can be? If you want to change this year, there's only one resolution that matters: resolving to fix your eyes on Jesus. Because no matter what you're hoping to change, you're going to need His power to see it through.

So how exactly do you fix your eyes on Jesus? You can start with this simple prayer:

"God, please show me who You are and who You want me to be. Bring me strength to make changes in my life. And teach me how to always focus on Your will, not mine. Amen."

Spend time every day praying and reading your Bible. Prayer is how you talk to Jesus, and reading the Bible is how you hear from Him. The book of John is a good place to start. And the more time you spend with Him, the more strength you'll have to face all that life throws at you.

To discover how to focus on Jesus, sign up for a free correspondence Bible study through one of our trusted partner organizations. Just write to "Fixing My Eyes" c/o Inside Journal, P.O. Box 1790, Ashburn, VA, 20146-1790. To request a large-print Inside Journal Life Recovery Bible in English or Spanish, see the Bible ad on page 2.

from sinful people; then you won't become weary and give up" (Hebrews 13:3).

Hebrews 4:15 adds that Jesus "understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same testings we do, yet he did not sin." Knowing that Jesus faced the same types of struggles and earthly temptations you face can help give you the strength and encouragement you need to persevere.

And because Jesus never

failed or sinned, that means He has power we can't even understand—power we could never get from ourselves, no matter how strong our will and determination.

By fixing our eyes on Jesus, we can see life in a new way. Spending time with Him, in prayer and in reading the Bible, strengthens and encourages us to be the best "new you" we can be, this new year and beyond. ■

News + Notes

"Slam Dunk Artist" Shows Kids How to Soar

This past September, Prison Fellowship partnered with Hillsong NYC, a large New York church, and Kenny Dobbs, considered by many to be "the best slam dunk artist in the world," to host an Angel Tree Sports Clinic™ in Harlem

for 200 children with an incarcerated parent.

Dobbs, a member of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, has toured the world showcasing his talents. Through a combination of good genes and hard work, he developed a 48-inch vertical jump and claimed titles at high-profile dunk contests.



Photo by Jaron Davis

But his success wasn't always certain. As a boy, Dobbs started using drugs, dropping out of school at 15. By 17, he had gotten into more serious trouble. After some drug dealers shot up his family's home in Phoenix, he decided he needed to change. He went back to school, got his diploma, got married, and started a family. Soon, the Arizona Department of Behavioral Health hired him to help at-risk young people get back on the right track.

Dobbs' basketball career took off, too, but he never lost his passion for helping young people. That's just what he did at the sports clinic in Harlem. In addition to learning basketball skills from a master of the game, kids got a dose of Dobbs' hard-earned wisdom about making good choices to keep their lives on track.

Angel Tree Sports Clinic exists to help break the cycle of crime and incarceration by treating children of prisoners like champions. It's a mission Dobbs agrees with wholeheartedly. "I believe this [mission to help the children] is the reason I'm here," he told the news organization Indian Country, "and I thank God I am now living out His purpose for my life."

FIRST STEP Act Results in Releases

The FIRST STEP Act (FSA), federal prison reform legislation that passed in late 2018, has resulted in the release of more than 3,100 prisoners. The releases, announced by the Department of Justice in July 2019, are a result of the law's provision for increased good-conduct time. In addition, the law made the Fair Sentencing Act of 2010 retroactive, leading to 1,691 sentence reductions.

While not all parts of the law have been fully implemented yet, FSA also will aim to beef up restorative programming for the 180,000 men and women in the nation's federal prisons.

In a recent interview with Prison Fellowship, Matthew Charles, one of the first people released under FSA, had this advice for those still serving their sentences: "Prisoners have the 'I don't care' mentality towards rehabilitation because nobody else really cares for them. They've been locked up, and they've been given a specific amount of time that they have to serve, and it doesn't matter if they better themselves or not.

But with the FIRST STEP Act now available to them, it allows them to say, 'OK, I'm being given a second chance. Society does care that I better myself, that I learn a trade. I may have siblings or a wife to return to, so I want to be able to show them that I've changed, as well as be able to get a job that allows me to make a living wage so that I can support them upon my return.'" ■



© 2019 by Prison Fellowship
INSIDE JOURNAL®
is published four times a year by
Prison Fellowship,
P.O. Box 1790,
Ashburn, VA 20146-1790.
prisonfellowship.org
703.478.0100

Editorial Manager:
M.M. White

Managing Editor:
S.L. Ray

Writers:
**Dan Kingery, Grayson Pope,
S.L. Ray, W.M. Thompson**

Graphic Designer:
N. Schmidgall

A member of the Evangelical
Council for Financial
Accountability and the American
Correctional Association.

Inside Journal® is a
registered trademark of
Prison Fellowship®.