



SHARING SCRIPTURE

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New Weekly Feature

The Center for Creative Ministry is proud to introduce the new video series *Amazing Transformations in Christ*.

This series presents inspirational messages from various thought leaders, the latest news from the Adventist world, beautiful music, and some familiar faces. It is our hope that this weekly feature may be used to enrich your Friday evening worships, add value to your personal devotions, and catalyze thoughtful discussions with your family and friends.

Amazing Transformations in Christ updates on [our website](#) and [Facebook page](#) every Friday.

To see the latest editions, please click the button below. We know you won't want to miss them!

Blessings,

Paul Richardson
Executive Director

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Preamble to Deuteronomy

For use: September 26 - October 2

Texts: Isaiah 14:12–14, Ezekiel 28:12–17, Genesis 3:1–7, Genesis 12:1–3, Acts 7:20–36, Exodus 19:4–8

Gang life ends in jail ... or the grave.

That's the message convicted murderer and former gang chief Reginald Berry pounded into the head of Jermaine Rhodes, another Chicago man whose childhood and young adult life were spent in a gang. Berry—who found God in prison—wasn't about to see another victim spiral out of control because of drugs, lack of financial stability, and poor social and familial influences. [1]

"I'm seeing myself like déjà vu, and I said, 'Listen here, shorty, if you give me six months of your life, I'll change your life.'"

Through Berry's persistence, a light at the end of the tunnel began shining for Rhodes, who later shared with NBC Chicago, "For the first time I had somebody who saw something else in me other than 'He ain't gonna be nothing, he won't make it past 21. ... For the first time in my life I had someone I could disappoint, and I refused to do it. I can't, and I won't disappoint Reginald Berry.'"

And through Berry, Rhodes was able to snag a job at Cinespace Chicago Film Studios.

Now, the two of them work with S.O.S. Ministries, hoping that their experiences of redemption and their outreach can change the lives of underprivileged Chicago youth.

Stories like that of Berry and Rhodes are perhaps so captivating to us because they mirror the story of humanity. Seeking selfish pursuits, falling from grace, finding God, resetting paths, and helping others succeed not only fulfil the perfect Hero's Journey arc. [2] This theme occurs throughout the Bible. Most importantly, from these countless examples it is shown that redemption is only made possible by the grace, mercy, goodness—love—of the One who wants more than anyone to see us excel.

Recognizing the need to change and that we cannot do it without God's leading, without God literally making it possible for us to reform, is the pivotal moment we all must face.

As the repentant 18th century pirate Rachel Wall, aged 29, professed prior to her hanging, "And now, into the hands of Almighty God I commit my soul, relying on God's mercy through the merits and mediation of my Redeemer." [3]

Will we complete our individual Hero's Journey like Berry and Rhodes, or will our lives be cut short like Wall's, abruptly ceasing with us never returning to where and who we are meant to be?

~ Stefani Leeper

[1] <https://www.nbcchicago.com/news/local/a-former-chicago-gang-members-second-chance-and-the-man-who-made-it-possible/2609967/>

[2] <https://creativeeducator.tech4learning.com/2013/lessons/images/model-heros-journey.png>

[3] <https://www.iheart.com/podcast/11119-criminalia-69919305/episode/rachel-wall-new-englands-only-lady-87141365/>

For Reflection

Connecting: Do the stories presented above promote legalism or free will? How can love transform legalistic works into acts of gladness?

Sharing: What stage of the Hero's Journey are you in? Review the above chart [2] for assistance.

1. Pursuing selfish desires and falling from grace
2. Hearing God's call
3. Battling temptations threatening the progress made
4. Restoration with God's guidance
5. I've been in this loop too many times to know
6. Other:

Applying: Some believe that come-to-Jesus moments are simply ways to feel better about the wrongs we committed rather than authentic conversions. Challenge yourself to reach out to a prison ministries team and interview its members about the changes they've seen. And, when it's safe to do so and you feel up to it, ask to sit in on a meeting between the team and the incarcerated.

Valuing: What about Moses' story is the most riveting to you? After picking a plot point, view the above chart [2] of the Hero's Journey, and reflect on how conflict is necessary for development in our walk with God.

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