



Update

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Vernon & Martha Hedge

Caught in A Raw Deal

Donald is a student in the Calvary Commission Theological Seminary. He serves as a residential advisor (men's dorm pastor) where he speaks life into the new students and helps them be responsible to follow all the guidelines and policies of the school.

He was born in Houston, Texas the eldest of four children. He had a good relationship with the entire family. There was little or no Christian training, but his mother was loving and cared for the needs of the family. His father taught him skills, took him hunting and fishing, but as far back as Donald can remember his father smoked marijuana. Both mother and father considered marijuana on the same level as cigarettes. She later realized it opened the door to other things.

At age 15 sitting around a campfire with uncles on a deer hunt, his father let Donald join him in smoking marijuana. Donald thought he was a "big shot" now; it was so cool. He started smoking pot with his dad.

By 16, he was snorting cocaine occasionally. His mother was afraid of hard drugs and when she out found about it, she was more than upset! The father's defense to her was that cocaine helped him stay up so that he could get his work done. She didn't buy that at all, and their relationship began to fall apart, eventually ending in separation.

Meanwhile, Donald got deeper

and deeper into drug use, smoking marijuana, snorting cocaine, and even smoking crack cocaine. *It began to get to where that's all my life consisted of was doing drugs. I ended up quitting my junior year of high school because my mom and dad separated.*

His mother took the other children and moved, but Donald decided to stay with his dad in Houston where he continued to do drugs and run the streets of Houston. Then something unexpected happened. He and his dad got into a fight, and his dad blacked his eye, *I couldn't believe he would do something like that to me, so I called my mother and she told me that I should come home.* At 17 he went to live with his mother, got back in school, and graduated from high school. He continued to smoke marijuana and do cocaine occasionally.

After graduation, his father called to ask for forgiveness for the fight. He informed him of a new program his Union was offering where Donald was trained to disassemble nuclear reactors.

In 1990, he went to a job site in New York where at age 19 he was

making \$25 an hour, pulling an 84-hour week plus \$1200 a week living expense. *I was on top of the world. I had security clearance to get into any nuclear reactor in the country. To my family I was a hero and they were so proud of me. I worked in New York for about five months and when I came home I had thousands in cash. I bought a brand-new step side Chevrolet truck, bought mother some furniture, and life was good.*

Then the raw deal happened. All Donald's friends wanted to drive his new pickup, so a friend was driving after dark from a deer lease. They came upon a drunk man walking in the center of the road who had flipped his car upside down in a ditch. Wanting to help him, Donald moved to the center of the seat, put his shotgun between his legs with the barrel pointing up. In conversation, the man knew Donald's mother, revealed he had drugs in the car, and was desperate to get help. They had intended to drop the drunk man off at a payphone, but he insisted they take him home.

When they said no, the drunk got angry and belligerent, got out, slammed the door so hard it rocked the pickup. This made Donald angry, and he opened the door to tell the man off, when the drunk grabbed the shotgun by the barrel and tried to pull it away from Donald. In the struggle over the

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gun, it hit Donald in the mouth cutting a gash. All three men were fighting angry by now. The friend ran around the pickup and started fighting with the drunk. The drunk broke loose from the friend and started for Donald.

Donald grabbed the barrel of the gun and tried to use it as a club against his head, but Donald missed his head and hit the drunk's shoulder with the stock. It was an old gun with no safety, and when the gun hit the man's shoulder, it fired and broke open at the same time. The blast of OO buckshot narrowly missed Donald but left power burns on the man's body. The friend tackled the drunk again, and he soon ran away.

About two weeks after this incident, Donald had a reactor job in New Jersey, but the foreman told him that he had charges pending in Texas which disqualified him to work at the nuclear plant.

Returning to Texas, he was put in jail with a charge of aggravated assault with a deadly weapon with the intention of robbery. He sold his pickup and hired a lawyer. Unfortunately, after three months in jail and bail being denied, his lawyer advised him to plead guilty to a lesser charge of robbery, because if it went to jury he could win big or lose big.

There he sat in jail, lonely, scared, angry, and thoroughly confused—he tried to help someone and look how that turned out. As it turned out, he went to prison. Before being transferred to prison, he met a man from the outside and became friends. This man visited him and asked if he would like to accept the Lord Jesus as his Lord and Savior. The man led him in a simple prayer, and he

asked the Lord to come into his heart.

In prison, Donald began to go to chapel services and started reading the Bible. But he said, *I just couldn't understand what I was reading. Nevertheless, I was searching for something so I kept reading and kept going to chapel. I don't remember how much longer it was after praying that prayer, but I was reading my Bible one day, and the light bulb turned on. It was when I read John 1:1-17 where it says, "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God." After that day, I could not get enough of the Word. I think it was like the week before I had been crying out to God and saying, God if you're real, show me You are real. Well, He did.*

After his release, he went back to the Union and started a millwright apprenticeship training which would give him \$20+ per hour, but he got back into drugs to try and deaden the emotional pain. It is hard for him to believe now, for one reason or another, he was in and out of prison. But during this process, *I always knew that God had a calling on my life.*

In Donald's mind and emotions, he was bouncing back and forth between anger and guilt, resulting in a general frustration with the way his life was working. Since doing drugs was the original issue for his mother, it weighed heavy on Donald's heart thinking he was to blame for his parents breaking up.

I didn't know how to deal with it and I thought that the only way it would go away was by doing drugs. So, I stayed wrapped up in this crazy merry-go-round cycle—always having good jobs when I was free, making good money, multiple skills, talents for certain things, but never knowing how to live life on life's terms.

Months before going to prison the last

time I just knew inside that this was the last time and something inside me said that I was ready for new life. In prison, I began to really examine myself and take a serious look at my life. I began to realize just how selfish I had been most of my life, only thinking about myself. I remember the times when my mom would be crying and telling me, "Donald you're killing me," only to have me turn to her and say, "I'm only hurting myself." I know now, that's the most selfish statement anyone could ever make.

The Lord began to speak things to his heart, *You're never going to be happy in life until you obey Me*, and made it real to him that everything he had been seeking all my life could only be found in the Lord.

Donald heard about Calvary Commission, applied, was accepted and will graduate with an Associate of Theology in September and will begin working on a Bachelor of Theology Degree.

His legal status is still a felon on probation, but the Lord has given him favor. Even though he is a felon, he has been given the permission by Texas to go back into prisons to minister and has been granted a passport making him able to travel to any state in the nation. ✨

Thanks for Your Support

Thank you to everyone for your prayers and financial support. The trip each week to teach at the Calvary Commission base is 100 miles one way. You are a part of helping these men and women grow in Christ and equipping many of them for ministry. In the last two months, the donations have been down. Would you ask the Lord about sending a one-time donation to help catch things up? Thank you! ✨
