



Update

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A Hit Man Transformed by Jesus

I noticed in class at the Calvary Bible Institute, that Buford is very likeable, but when I learned of his background, once more I marvel at the wonderful grace of God. Through a series of events, he became an angry man, a heavy drinker, a womanizer, and a gun for hire. He said that his life before coming to Christ could only be described as dark! Without God in his life, he reached a point where he only lived for the pleasure of the moment.

Buford was born in 1944 in Houston, Texas into a home life that wasn't a home. His father was a mean man with a reputation for no good. Shortly after Buford's birth, his parents divorced, and his father mostly disappeared from his life—only saw him briefly four or five times over his lifetime.

Not being able to care for them, his mother sent Buford and his older sister to live with their grandparents. By the time he was to start school, his mother had married, but his stepfather took up all his mother's time so that he had little relationship with her.

He said, *My stepfather was an alcoholic, and a mean man. He had been told by my grandfather that if he hurt us children he would have my grandfather to deal with. My stepfather stayed gone a lot and that is what I thought married life was all about growing up. I grew up thinking that drinking and getting drunk was okay, it was normal, my stepfather and all of his friends did it every day.*

Somehow Buford's father heard and also sent threatening words to the stepfather, so with two mean

men threatening the stepfather, he didn't accept Buford and stayed away from him. Under these circumstances Buford was ignored, the mother was pre-occupied with living with an alcoholic, and she didn't relate to him.

Even though they lived in a generally good working-man's neighborhood, it didn't help the aloneness Buford felt. As a child, he was small and sickly and had no friends. During his childhood, he and his sister were sent alone to Sunday School, but he felt unsafe among strangers and no one was able to reach out to make him feel accepted, so he found a number of reasons not to go to church.

After his stepfather passed away, his mother joined the Catholic Church when Buford was 12 and placed him and his sister in the Catholic School. The disciplined atmosphere further inflamed his fears and he grew to hate the teachers and the school. After about five years, he left home and the school at 17.

Living on his own with no one

to give him any guidelines for life, Buford married at 18 and it was a disaster from the start. His wife had come from an abusive background and brought a bitter spirit and a hard heart into the marriage. Buford tried but would do something she didn't like, and she wouldn't speak to him for days at a time. He adopted an indifferent attitude which only added to the problem. To cover the pain, he started drinking. A son was born in 1964, but Buford wasn't able to be a husband or a father, and the marriage ended in 1975.

In emotional reaction Buford sank into heavy drinking and began living the life of a violent-spirited man. He started breaking the law, used his charm and became a womanizer, and started carrying a gun. Anger was building up in him and that led to fights. He developed the reputation of being a dangerous man—leave him alone.

Buford got out of the frying pan and into the fire when he married a younger woman who was wilder than he was. She encouraged drinking and smoking dope. At age 36, he was hired to kill a man which resulted in a life sentence in prison.

Being small in build did not work against him in prison because he was strong and could fight. Many of the men in his unit knew him in the free world, and they already knew how dangerous he was so word got out in prison and

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he was left alone.

The Texas Department of Correction encourages inmates to further their education and Buford earned his GED in about 1985 and later, an Associate of Science Degree. Time passed and in 2006 Buford through a friend met a woman named Catherine who herself had been a former inmate. She started visiting him and they developed a romantic relationship. Later that year they were married. It may seem strange to us, that a woman would marry a man while he was in prison, but it has happened often.

Catherine started in on Buford to enroll in a religious-based program called Voyagers to help him make parole. There he met Cindy and Randy Richter. Cindy was the instructor, and Randy was a volunteer chaplain on Buford's unit. It was in this class that Buford heard about Jesus which eventually led him to attend church services.

He says, *On December 4, 2007, I came to the Lord Jesus and asked Him to forgive my sins. Three weeks later on Christmas day my wife Catherine passed away. She had hepatitis in remission, but it became active, and the virus attacked her kidneys and liver, and in a short time she was gone. Just because you come to the*

Lord Jesus and follow Him does not mean life gets easy. In fact, when you start doing the right thing and living a Christian life you can bet that the evil one will try you.

Coming to Christ has made a very big difference in my life. I was not supposed to ever get out of prison. A parole board member told me that I would never get out of prison, but he forgot to check with God on that. I was released from prison after 35 years of incarceration.

John Owens from Calvary Commission went to Buford's unit. I know John and he is a man full of the love of God. Through John's influence, Buford applied in early 2008 and was accepted by Calvary Commission, but it was mid-2015 before he was paroled to the base.

Although he knew Christ as Savior, Buford arrived at the base still carrying built up anger. Shelby Way and Dorsey Womack, Dorm Pastors living in the dorm, began ministering to him and through their ministry and the ministry of all the teaching staff, Buford began to be set free from tons of anger.

As Buford began to walk the life of faith he experienced a miracle in his body. He said, *When I got out of prison I had 18 prescriptions that I took every day, I weighed 215*

pounds, and was sick all the time. One night in a dream, the Lord told me to throw my prescriptions away. I struggled a bit, but after praying about it for several days, I was sure that God told me to throw away all of my prescriptions. I talked to God about that and told Him that if I was going to work for Him I could not carry around all this medicine.

It was indeed a miracle. Listen to what all God did for him, *I no longer have diabetes, I no longer have acid reflux, I no longer have high blood pressure. I no longer use three different inhalers several times every day. I now weigh 178 pounds and I no longer use a cane to walk. God is good to me every day, Praise God! I am healthier than I can remember ever being. No one thinks that I am almost 73 years old but I am. God has healed my body and my mind for a purpose which has not yet been made clear to me, but I'm sure it will come to me what He wants me to do.*

Buford is involved in prison outreach and street ministry. September 3rd, Buford graduated with an Associate of Theology and plans to continue toward a Bachelor of Theology, the Lord willing. With his felony record it is another miracle that he has been granted a U.S. Passport and was able to go to Mexico as part of a mission team. He says, *I am ready to go anywhere for my Lord Jesus Christ.* ✨

An 80 - 60 - 54 Celebration!

That's 80 years of age, 60 years in the ministry, and 54 years married to Martha. Our daughters arranged a celebration August 19th, and I was blessed beyond words. Many people from Radiant Life Church here in McKinney were there and people came from out of town. It was a heartwarming time hearing what my ministry had meant to them. My grandchildren blew me away with their comments of what I had meant in their lives.

In the 70s, I sang with two ladies in the Joint Heirs Trio. They were there to sing a few songs with me. To close out the day, Pastor Coy Quesenbury spoke with his characteristic humor. He was the man who was preaching in the Peniel Baptist Church in Oklahoma City in June of 1957 when I was born again. He came back in August and I surrendered to preach in that service. It turns out that Coy is only two years older than I am, but at the time, I thought he was a lot older than I was. There are few who can celebrate 60 years of ministry and the person who led him to the Lord be present to celebrate the goodness of the Lord with him.

The cards and gifts and many kind words have warmed my heart. Thank you! I am blessed! ✨
