



Update

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Focused and on Fire for God

Juan has been in three of my classes at the Calvary Bible Institute and I am impressed with him and his walk with the Lord. He never robbed people or broke into their homes, but he became addicted to alcohol and drugs, and lost all direction and focus in life. But God did a work in his life and look at him now. It makes one want to shout Halleluiah!

Juan was born in the small town of Brady, Texas in 1983, the eldest of a brother and two sisters. His parents both worked so the children spent a lot of time with their grandparents. Mom and dad provided them food and clothing but not much direction in life.

It seemed to be the custom of his family for uncles and cousins to come together on most weekends for a family party and get drunk. Juan thought all this was normal, so it was no big deal for him and his cousins to steal a beer out of the cooler—no bigger deal than stealing cookies out of the cookie jar that mom said to leave alone. He drank his first beer at age 13.

Juan was full of mischief in school and often visited the disciplinarians in his school. By High School, he was pretty much drinking every weekend. He partied with lots of friends and girlfriends and was involved in sports. Like many teenagers, he suffered a little from self-image problems. He would beg his parents to drop him off at school some distance from the other students. Even though they didn't have much money, he

begged his parents to buy him the Nike shoes like the others in basketball had. It was important to be one of the bunch.

Juan's parents were Catholic so he went to church services every Sunday and to catechism class every Wednesday night. Although raised in church, the teaching went in one ear and out the other—it didn't affect how he lived. His parents did attempt to discipline him, but he says he didn't think it helped all that much.

As he grew older, his drinking increased. In his Senior year, he tried some marijuana that opened the door to other drugs. Although he was more interested in girls and sports than school work, he graduated from High School. After graduation, he moved to Ft. Worth where there was much more going on than in his hometown of 5,000.

At age 19 he got hooked on methamphetamines and received his first DWI. This arrest didn't slow him down; he increased his alcohol and drug use. He developed an image of himself as an invincible hardcore drinker and lady's man.

His life was spinning out of

control. He was in and out of county jail, most of the time for a short stay up to six months. His mother begged him to go to rehab, but he would answer her with something like there was nothing wrong with him, and other people were the ones with the problem.

After his second DWI, he was put on probation. By age 25 he had violated his parole and was sent to prison with a two-year sentence. In prison he managed to stay clear of gang involvement. He did read the Bible and attended chapel services, but admits that he was just going through the motions. It didn't involve any relationship with God. He was paroled after seventeen months of his two-year sentence.

After being released Juan did well for about a year, worked at a job, but started drinking again, which led to the same old lifestyle. In 2013 he was living in Granbury, Texas where he caught another DWI. He knew he was going back to prison and was sentenced to 20 years—all were surprised at such a long sentence, including some of the officers. He realized all his seeking God was false, *"I wasn't seeking God for who HE is, I was seeking God for what I believed He could do for ME and I wanted His help."* There was something down in Juan's heart that wanted reality, but he didn't know how to get there. The providential hand of God went to work.

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Meanwhile, during all his party experiences he fathered a son. Since he was going to prison he wanted to talk with him and tell him he was sorry that he got in trouble again. *Well, when I called my son to apologize for getting into trouble again, he was 8 years old. Something he said hit me like a ton of bricks—he said, “Dad it’s all right, it’s going to be okay.” Here was an 8-year-old kid telling his 30-year-old father it was going to be all right. That night I went to my bunk and I cried so hard, and I asked—no, I begged—God to please help me to stop, I don’t want to live like this anymore. I pleaded with Him to do whatever He had to do—I was done.*

He was in a small, country jail, and said, *The tank I was in had 12 bunks. An older man was carrying on a Bible study, and he would invite me to join them, but I would treat him rudely and tell him I was okay.*

Then one day, out of nowhere, they were having their Bible study, and I suddenly jumped down from my bunk and sat down at the table with them—they were in the middle of praying. The oldest man who had invited me went and got me a brand-new county jail Bible and set it in front of me. I knew where they were so I turned to that page and followed along. Afterwards I didn’t say anything to anybody, I just went to my bunk.

That’s when the conviction of the Holy Spirit started to really move in on my life. All of a sudden I felt horrible about how I had treated the old man and the others in the tank. I went to him and told him I was so sorry about how I had been to him and all the others. I told him that I had just got a 20-year sentence and didn’t quite know how to handle it.

He said that he had been praying for me, because he could tell something was wrong. That’s when I learned that he had a life sentence without parole and that he

would never see the light of day in the free world—that made my 20 years seem like nothing. What struck me the most was that this man was so content with Christ that it didn’t even faze him that he would be in prison the rest of his life.

The Spirit of God was working. Juan was transferred from the county jail to the Gurney unit near Palestine in September of 2013. The first Tuesday there Juan went to the prison church. Chris Lacroix from Calvary Commission preached and Juan experienced an infilling of the Holy Spirit. From that point on he was telling other inmates to go hear the Calvary Commission speakers. From there he was moved to the Bradshaw state jail nearby where he continued to grow. The Lord showed him that to be a Christian was about a relationship with Him and not a religion.

Someone suggested that he should go to the faith-based dorm across the way, but he didn’t want to. One day the Chaplain was preaching and said, *“There are opportunities in our lives that God wants to position us for change but we are too*

scared to make that move because of this or that.” The Holy Spirit put Juan under such heavy conviction that he knew that message was for him. He was now ready to get out of his comfort zone. The Chaplain helped him get transferred to the faith-based dorm. There Juan took the faith-based program twice and any other classes he could take, and was on the praise and worship team. He continued to hear about Calvary Commission.

Any time parole was mentioned, others told him he wouldn’t get a parole because he had been in prison before, and he had not served but two years of his 20-year sentence, but he kept saying, *“What’s impossible for men is possible for God.”* Juan was growing in Christ and taking advantage of every positive opportunity.

Juan was sent to take the DWI treatment program where he was being prepared for parole. He became involved with the Chaplain there and actually worked for him. He became the leader of the praise and worship team and God used him in a profound way.

Something happened and his application to Calvary Commission was misplaced, but God was working. Julie Menasco, from Calvary Commission, was working as a Volunteer Chaplain at the DWI treatment center where their paths crossed. She called Joe Fauss and got the ball rolling again, and Juan was accepted. Shortly afterwards, Juan was paroled to Calvary Commission.

He has completed his two-year Associate of Theology degree and is working on the four-year Bachelor of Theology degree. He says, *“I am focused and on fire for God. Jesus is King and He is alive!”* ✨

Thanks!

We appreciate your prayers and your financial support that make it possible for me to drive the 100 miles to Lindale each week to teach. It is a blessing to be able to help equip these men and women for the call of God on their lives. They tell me they are blessed, but I’m convinced I’m the one blessed!

If you want to help, all gifts are tax deductible, should be made out to “Calvary Commission” and mailed to the address on this newsletter.

Thank you! ✨
