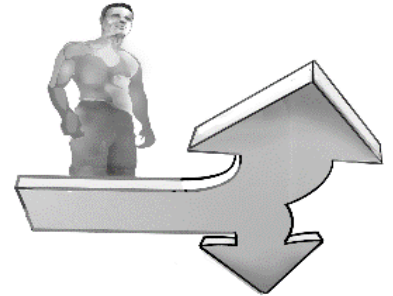


BOY TO MAN

When I was a child I thought like a child, acted like a child and reasoned like a child. When I became a man I put away childish things. -Corinthians 13:11

Growing up, my mother spent her days on the couch, high or drunk. We never had food in the fridge. I walked around hungry with no shoes and dirty clothes. My two older sisters and I got our meals from the mission because my mother sold our food stamps for drugs. Eventually, we were taken away from my mother and went to live with our grandmother, but she passed away when I was 13. Since no other family member wanted us, my sisters and I were put into foster care and sent to separate homes.

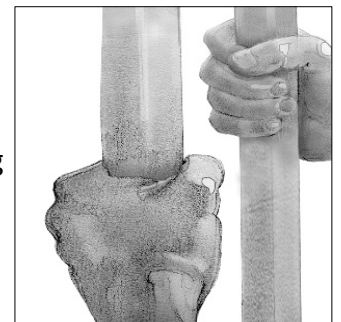
I was hurt. Later, as I entered high school, I decided I was going to have an attitude. I saw no love in the world so I held onto my pain and settled for the “bad boy” image. I could have gotten help and found someone to talk to but I chose negativity. I didn’t look for other options.



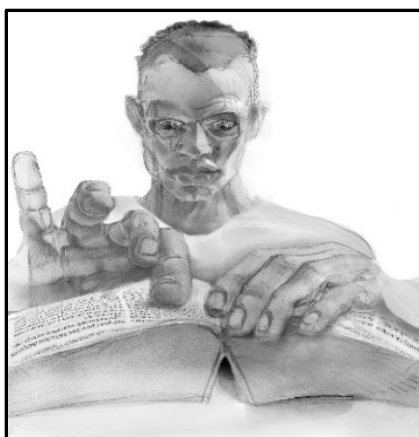
By the 10th grade, I already had a criminal mindset. At 17 you couldn’t tell me anything. I was popular at school and good at sports... but at the same time I knew I was missing something and was very angry inside. I felt like everyone owed me something. I skipped school and stole from the stores in my neighborhood. When I turned 18, DCF put me in an independent living situation with a few other guys. We partied heavily, got pretty tight and promised we’d always have each other’s backs no matter what.

One night we snuck some girls out of the foster house across the street to party with. Late at night, state troopers busted in looking for the missing girls. One girl hid in the closet and the others left out the back door. The cops didn’t see any girls so it could have ended there but we started exchanging curses with the cops so they made us face the wall while they searched the house. While we were standing at the wall still talking trash, one trooper found the girl in the closet. He pulled her out by her hair so my roommate turned around and ran at him. I knew my friend was off the chain and it was going to get bad and that I should stay out of it - but I remembered the promise we made to each other. I felt I needed to stick up for him so I jumped in to back him up. The troopers pulled their guns and we were both cuffed face-down on the floor and charged with assaulting an officer.

Since I was 18, I went to jail but my friend was 17 so he only went to juvenile detention. He didn’t even bother to contact me. I never heard from him again. After that, things went from bad to worse. I didn’t care what happened. I accepted that I was going to be a nobody and began to live like a hardened criminal. Eventually, I ended up here, serving time in state prison.



Now I’ve taken time to reflect and I’ve accepted responsibility for what I’ve done. Christ



has renewed my mind so I can see how I got here:

I’ve always been searching for the love I didn’t have as a child. As a teen, I just got angry and didn’t ask for help. I remained stuck in that “hurt child” phase and didn’t make the transition from boy to man. Holding on to hurt stunted my growth and my maturity.

Now here, in prison, for the first time, I’ve been able to grow as a person. That’s why Paul’s words really speak to me: “...When I became a man, I put away childish things.”

