

# UNIVERSAL NEWS



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## Addiction: *“A road to destruction”*

Addiction, no matter the form, traps a person in a cycle of setbacks and suffering. It doesn't just affect the individual—it impacts families and society as a whole. Discover the root of this struggle and how to overcome it.



*“I left my daughter alone and carried a large amount of drugs.” - Margaret*



Page 2

**Bishop Edir Macedo**

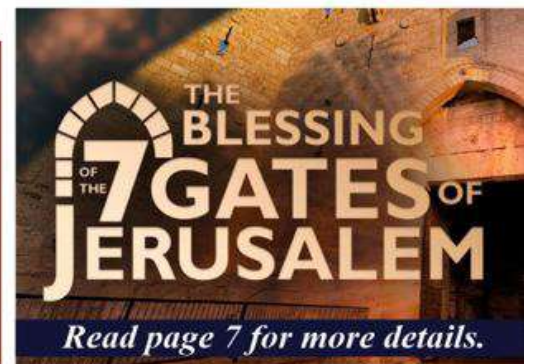
**True freedom**



Page 5

**YPO GIVES BACK**

The Youth Power Group came together to make a positive impact in the community, reaching out to those in need.



Read page 7 for more details.



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**NOT TO BE SOLD**

## | IN THIS EDITION |

### Addiction: A road to destruction

No one becomes an addict overnight. Every addiction starts small—one hit, one sip, one puff, one video. What begins as an experiment, something seemingly harmless, can quickly spiral into a daily habit. And before you know it, addiction takes over, controlling every aspect of a person's life.

When we hear the word "addiction," most people immediately think of substances like drugs or alcohol. But addiction isn't limited to that. It comes in many forms, including behavioral and impulse addictions. A person can be addicted to non-substance-related activities like gambling, video games, internet browsing, overeating, shopping, work, promiscuity, or pornography.

According to Health Direct, addiction is a strong physical or psychological urge to do or use something, even when it's harmful. It creates a dependence that not only affects the person struggling with it but also impacts their family, friends, and overall well-being. Addiction can lead to a destructive path—but there is a way out.

No matter how long you or a loved one has battled addiction, breaking free is possible. Thousands worldwide have found hope and transformation through the Friday Service for Deliverance at a Universal Church near them. Join us this Friday and uncover the root of your struggle. You, too, can overcome it.

## | BEATING DEPRESSION |

Depression is more than just feeling sad—it's a deep, overwhelming sorrow that weighs down the soul. It brings feelings of hopelessness, drains motivation, and makes even the simplest tasks feel impossible. In severe cases, it can even rob people of their will to live. Depression isn't just a state of mind—it's a sickness of the soul. But who can heal the soul? Only the Savior, the Lord Jesus, has the power to restore a troubled heart.

Every Sunday, The Universal Church opens its doors to those who are battling depression. If you need support, we invite you to visit a nearby branch. Join a Chain of Prayer—a seven-week commitment where you'll receive spiritual strength through powerful prayers, practical guidance, and one-on-one counseling.

You are not alone in this battle. Thousands around the world have found hope and transformation through faith, proving that a Chain of Prayer can truly make a difference. You can be the next success story.

**You can overcome depression!**

**BEAT DEPRESSION**  
BEATING DEPRESSION THROUGH THE POWER OF FAITH!

Call 1.888.332.4141  
Text 1.888.312.4141  
For more information  
**SEE PAGE 12 FOR LOCATIONS**



**Bishop Edir Macedo**



### True freedom

Freedom is often misunderstood, yet it remains one of the most sought-after ideals. Many people, in their pursuit of freedom, unknowingly become prisoners of something—or someone—simply because they don't understand what true freedom really means. They fail to realize that true freedom is not about doing whatever you want. It's about living **without** the things you **don't** want in your life.

- A man who believes freedom means drinking as much as he wants ends up a prisoner of addiction.
- A son who thinks freedom means disobeying his parents becomes a prisoner of the consequences of his poor choices.
- A husband who sees freedom as having multiple relationships becomes a prisoner of his endless search for satisfaction.
- A wife who believes freedom means saying whatever she wants becomes a prisoner of loneliness.
- A young man or woman who thinks freedom means giving themselves to whoever they want becomes a prisoner of an unwanted pregnancy.

Those who believe freedom means living without regard for God's laws become prisoners of suffering and the devil's influence. Freedom is essential to life, and only the Lord Jesus can truly set us free. He said it Himself:

*"Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed." – John 8:36*



Everything we **don't** want in our lives—pain, sickness, setbacks, grief, tragedy, sadness, poverty—comes from the evil the devil brings. But when we are under God's protection and live in obedience to His Word, the devil has no power over us. And when we are free from the things we don't want, we are free to embrace the things we **do** want—peace, health, joy, harmony, prosperity, and fulfillment.

True freedom comes from discipline because discipline is the greatest defense against suffering and disorder. That's why prisons exist—to confine those who lack discipline. And, ironically, those prisons are often built by their own hands.

Obedying God is the only way to be truly free—because it's the only way to keep yourself from everything that enslaves you.



### "The world of drugs led me to live on the streets for nine years."

Addiction destroyed Nuno's life, dragging him to rock bottom with no way out—until one invitation changed everything.

"My first encounter with drugs was at 21. I was introduced to alcohol and cocaine, and from that moment, I was hooked. Addiction took over my life, leading to constant fights with my father. Eventually, I left home and ended up living on the streets. I had to beg just to eat and stayed in an abandoned house. During this time, I met people who used crack, and I started using it too. That's when my life took a drastic turn for the worse. To support my addiction to drugs and alcohol, I resorted to stealing."

#### A life of pain

"For nine years, I lived as a beggar

and spent seven of those years addicted to crack. During this time, I met my daughter's mother, and we moved in together. But things didn't improve—she was also addicted to drugs and alcohol, even while pregnant. After our daughter was born, the hospital tested her mother and found traces of hashish. Child Protective Services (CPS) was called, and our daughter was taken from us. To get her back, we had to go through detox, attend therapy, and undergo frequent evaluations."

#### Trapped in addiction

"I eventually found a job, but addiction still controlled me. Every time I got paid, I spent my entire salary on drugs, leaving my family with nothing. The regret was overwhelming, but the addiction was stronger. Our home was filled with fights and arguments. One day, I lost control and physically assaulted my daughter's mother. That was the breaking point—our relationship ended, and I went to live with my grandfather. But even then, I remained trapped in my addictions."

#### Finding true joy

"One day, my mother invited me to a service at the Universal Church. I went, but because I wasn't truly ready for change, I fell back into my old habits. Then, I met someone who, despite knowing all my struggles, assured me that my life could change. Those words revived my hope, and I decided to return to the Universal Church. At my very first meeting, something shifted inside me—I felt certain my life would change. As I kept attending, I gradually lost the desire for crack, then alcohol, and eventually even cigarettes.

"I surrendered my life to God and, within a month, found stable work. I learned the importance of obeying His Word and strengthening my faith. Today, thanks to the baptism with the Holy Spirit, I have true joy, a restored family, and a happy marriage. The very person who evangelized me is now my wife, and together, we share beautiful moments with our daughter."

– Nuno Silva

# See what's happening on Sundays



**"The sores took over her whole body."**

I had sores all over my body. I couldn't sleep, bathe, sit down, or even wear clothes. I was on multiple medications, including an injection every two weeks, but I became allergic to it. The other treatments didn't work either. I had to leave my job and stay home, often wearing little to no clothing because anything on my skin felt unbearable. I couldn't go outside because the sun would burn me.



When I started coming here regularly, I used the water by faith—I drank it and even poured it over myself since I couldn't bathe at the time. I remember needing a nurse to visit twice a week just to help me apply some of the medication. Today, as you can see in the pictures, I am completely healed. All it took was faith and belief!

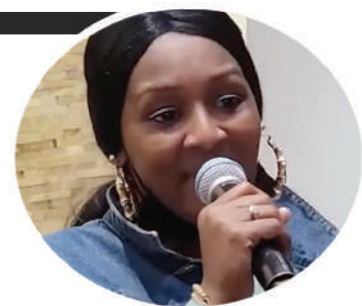


I was barely able to put my foot on the ground and ended up being diagnosed with a varicose ulcer. I was at risk of having my leg amputated.

I had endured that wound for about three long years, but today, I'm free-Emerson

**"Free from a varicose ulcer."**

In 2021, my life took an unexpected turn; at this challenging time, I made a crucial decision to unite medicine with my faith.



**"Free from every addiction."**

I was addicted to cigarettes, marijuana, and alcohol for more than 30 years. I tried everything I could to stop it, such as programs and God's help, but I would go back to the same thing. Due to the addictions, I lost my children, and I became depressed. Since I started coming to this ministry, in less than two months, God has set me free from all addictions.

I just got a new job after being unemployed since 2020. God is great. – Natasha



**Receive the healing waters this Sunday at your nearest Universal Church**



| MESSAGE |

Bishop Joshua

## Strength in surrender



In life, we're often taught that strength comes from fighting, pushing through, and never backing down. But true strength is found in surrender—surrendering to God's will and trusting in His plans instead of our own.

Spiritually speaking, surrender isn't a sign of weakness but of faith. It means letting go of control and allowing God to take the lead. When we try to handle everything on our own, we become overwhelmed, anxious, and exhausted. But when we put our trust in Him, we find peace, direction, and true strength.

Jesus Himself showed us this when He surrendered to the will of the Father, even in the face of suffering. His greatest victory—defeating sin and death—came through His complete trust in God's plan.

*“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.”*

— Proverbs 3:5-6

Maybe you've been struggling, feeling like nothing is going the way you planned. Maybe you've been fighting battles that aren't yours to fight. Stop carrying burdens that belong to God. Surrender your worries to Him today. Pray, trust, and watch how He leads you to victory.

May the God of the Bible bless you!

**Surrender isn't a sign of weakness but of faith. It means letting go of control and allowing God to take the lead**

## “I squandered my inheritance on drugs”

Nelisiwe lost her mother when she was just a year old, and with her father absent, her aunt became her legal guardian. She grew up in a loving home and was well cared for. But everything changed when she started high school. She fell in with the wrong crowd, who introduced her to marijuana and skipping classes. From that moment, her life took a downward spiral.

“In high school, I moved from my aunt's house to live with another relative. That's when things got even worse. In that area, I was introduced to harder drugs, including crystal meth. When I was high, I felt like everything was perfect, but when I was sober, I was miserable and depressed.

Surprisingly, I still managed to graduate from high school, but by then, I was completely dependent on drugs. My family saw how bad things had gotten and sent me to rehab. I was furious with them—I felt like they had turned their backs on me. I stayed in rehab for four weeks, but within three months of being out, I relapsed, and things got even worse.

Around that time, I received the inheritance my mother had left for me. That money was supposed to pay for my education, but instead, I blew it all on drugs and alcohol. I hired transportation for my friends and me to travel to different towns just to buy more. I stopped sleeping at home and lived only to feed my addiction. It didn't take long for my entire inheritance to disappear.

When the money ran out, fear and stress consumed me. One night, overwhelmed and desperate, I called my aunt, who was a member of the Universal Church. She prayed for me, and for the first time in a long time, I felt



some relief. That same night, I went to her house and told her I wanted to go to church the next day.

The moment I walked into the church, I received a prayer and felt a deep sense of peace. I knew I had found the help I needed. From that day on, I had the strength to fight my addiction. I lost the

desire to smoke or drink, and even the smell of drugs became unbearable to me. I never craved them again.

As my life started to change, I applied the teachings of the Word of God and engaged in chains of prayer for my complete deliverance. I realized that if I truly wanted a new life, I had to build a relationship with God. I didn't want to fall back into my old ways, so I surrendered my life

completely to Him and got baptized in water.

Since then, everything has changed. My behavior is different, my family trusts me again, and the depression that once consumed me is gone. I am at peace and truly happy. God gave me a second chance at life, and I wouldn't trade it for anything,” said Nelisiwe.

**I stayed in rehab for four weeks, but within three months of being out, I relapsed, and things got even worse.**

Feb 2025 Bible Reading						
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
						ACTS 1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
ACTS 2	ACTS 3	ACTS 4	ACTS 5	ACTS 6	ACTS 7	ACTS 8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
ACTS 9	ACTS 10	ACTS 11	ACTS 12	ACTS 13	ACTS 14	ACTS 15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
ACTS 16	ACTS 17	ACTS 18	ACTS 19	ACTS 20	ACTS 21	ACTS 22
23	24	25	26	27	28	
ACTS 23	ACTS 24	ACTS 25	ACTS 26	ACTS 27	ACTS 28	

## CHAIN OF PRAYER WORKS!

**Are you or a loved one battling addiction?**

**Do not give up, there is a solution.**

Start a Chain of Prayer for total deliverance

every Friday at a Universal Church near you!

*So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed”*

John 8:36

# What's happening at the Universal Church

## “A word saved my life”



For the first time, I felt a sense of hope, and that's when I began my journey of faith."

every single day."

— Joseph Jesus

### Perseverance

"For so long, everything in my life was going wrong, but I thought it was normal—I was used to living that way. When I arrived at the Universal Church, the pastors and assistants welcomed me with kindness and guided me with care and attention."

### Are you struggling with addiction or know someone who is?

I have good news for you—there is a cure for addiction, and that cure is found in the Lord Jesus. That's why, every Friday at the Universal Church, we hold a special *Deliverance Service* to help those who want to break free from the grip of addiction.

By attending the meetings, following the chain of prayers, and applying what he learned, Joseph gradually started to transform from the inside out. He overcame his addictions and remained steadfast in pursuing the most valuable treasure of all—the Holy Spirit.

This service is designed to empower both addicts and their families, helping them overcome dependency, regain control over their lives, and break the cycle of suffering and setbacks.

Joseph was a violent man whose life was completely destroyed by addiction. His destructive habits left him alone, lost, and without any direction.

"I was addicted to tobacco and alcohol. Even though I was married, I spent most nights in clubs, constantly cheating on my wife. I was aggressive, always carried a weapon, and caused trouble wherever I went. Because of the way I lived, I lost my marriage."

"I got baptized in water, began putting my faith into action, and learned about the importance of fully surrendering to the Lord Jesus. I realized that true change didn't happen overnight—it was a long and difficult journey. But one day, during a Wednesday meeting, I was baptized with the Holy Spirit. It was an indescribable experience! From that moment on, my life changed completely. Everything I had been before was left behind, and I started anew."

Join us this Friday at a Universal Church near you and experience the peace and transformation that only God can provide. Counselors will be available to guide and support you, and powerful prayers will be made for your complete deliverance.

At rock bottom, after losing everything, Joseph came across a radio program from the Universal Church—an encounter that would change his life forever.

### A life made whole

"Today, I serve God with all my heart, with joy and understanding. I am happily married and have a strong, blessed marriage. I also have a stable professional life and lack nothing. But above all, the greatest gift Jesus gave me was His Spirit—because He is the one who guides, protects, and directs me

Don't wait any longer—freedom is possible! Come and see how you, too, can overcome



## YOUTH TRANSFORMATION

### Keyana Lowery's testimony

My life used to revolve around drinking, partying, and spending time with the wrong crowd. Even in college, despite my parents' advice, I ignored their guidance. I made excuses to avoid church and kept living recklessly. One night, while out drinking with friends, I was arrested for DUI. Sitting in jail, I realized how far I had strayed. In that moment of desperation, I made a promise to God: If He gave me another chance, I would serve Him. After my release, I started going to church with my mother. I listened to the teachings, sought deliverance, and truly surrendered to God. As I grew in faith, I let go of drinking, partying, and the negative influences in my life. Today, I am a new person. I help in the church and, most importantly, I have received the Holy Spirit—my greatest treasure.



The youth came together to make a difference in their community, reaching out to those in need with kindness and compassion. With warm hearts, they provided hot meals, nourishing soup, refreshing drinks, snack bags, and cozy blankets—bringing comfort and warmth during the cold winter months. Through this act of generosity, they discovered the power of giving. You can be part of this too! Join us and experience the joy of making a positive impact in someone's life.



YPG.USA  
YPG USA

BE A PART OF SOMETHING GREAT!  
JOIN US EVERY SUNDAY AT 1PM

REACH OUT TO US: 1 888 332 4141

The World Drug Report 2023 by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) revealed that more than 296 million people used drugs in 2021—an increase of 23% compared to the previous decade. This rise is linked to a range of factors, such as social and economic inequalities, but it may also be tied to the relaxation of regulations that allow drugs to circulate more freely in many countries.

Often, people who struggle with addiction are seen as inferior. After all, they've surrendered control of their lives to a substance or behavior. Chemical dependency, for example, is defined by the World Health Organization (WHO) as a chronic, progressive, and fatal disease—essentially, a death sentence.

Every Friday, the deliverance meetings guide attendees to understand that the problem isn't the substance itself but the oppressive force controlling their actions and reactions. By removing this evil influence, the individual is freed from addiction and any cravings or desires tied to it.



**“Addiction:  
A Road to  
Destruction”**

## “I was introduced to drugs early on and had problems because of my addictions.”

Jakson grew up in a large family within a community marked by hardship. His childhood was tough, plagued by poverty and hunger due to his parents' financial struggles. Despite their hard work, it was never enough to support the household and children. “My brothers and I had little support from our parents, so I was practically raised on the streets. I was introduced to drugs early on and had problems because of my addictions,” he recalls.

At the age of 11, Jakson smoked his first marijuana cigarette and soon after became addicted to cocaine and alcohol. He admits that he didn't fully understand the consequences at the time, but the drugs were presented to him as fun and harmless.

As an adult, Jakson began to realize that his addiction was destroying his life. He made several attempts to break free, starting with his marriage to Heloisa. “I got married at 23, thinking it would make me happy and help me stop using drugs, but I only used them more,” he admits. This is when he hit

rock bottom. Feeling hopeless, Jakson gave into his addictions.

His alcohol and cocaine use worsened, and he developed a mysterious illness that baffled doctors. “I got so sick at one point that I couldn't get out of bed, and no doctor could figure out what was wrong,” he recalls.

In the midst of his suffering, Jakson began to see that the issue was more than just physical. “I thought it was strange, because I was in such a bad state, yet no one could diagnose me. I started to realize that my problem was spiritual,” he says.

At this time, Jakson had been invited multiple times to attend the Universal Church, but he had always declined. However, after exhausting all other options, he decided to visit the church.

“I went, and immediately I felt a change within me. I was healed from the illness and started seeing results in my faith. But after three years, I still hadn't fully surrendered my life to



**I got so sick at one point that I couldn't get out of bed, and no doctor could figure out what was wrong.**

God,” he shares.

Recognizing the need for complete righteousness and surrender to God in order to experience a true transformation, Jakson finally made

the decision to give his life to Jesus. “The hardest part was letting go of drugs and alcohol, but I found the strength to change once I made that decision. And today, thank God, I am free from everything,” he says.

Today, Jakson enjoys a completely transformed life. He is free from addiction and disease, and has a peaceful, successful marriage with Heloisa, celebrating over 45 years together. “All of this is thanks to the Holy Spirit. I can do nothing without Him. He is everything in my life,” Jakson concludes.



## “I left my daughter alone, carrying a large amount of drugs...”

I practically didn't have a childhood. I matured too quickly because of the constant fights and aggression between my parents, and to make matters worse, I was beaten a lot by my father. I couldn't take it anymore, so at 14, I left home. I got married and was pregnant at 15. I thought starting a family would make me happy, but things only got worse. There were constant fights. When he drank, he'd break everything in the house, and he was so aggressive, he even hit me. By the time I was 19, I couldn't take it anymore, and I separated from him.

I thought starting over would fix everything, but the sadness in my heart only deepened. I started looking for ways to fill that emptiness. I began to go out and experiment with things I had never done before. I discovered alcohol,



cigarettes, and marijuana. I ended up living alone with my daughter and took in a friend who introduced me to cocaine. That was my lowest point.

As I became addicted to drugs, I fell into even darker places. I ended up turning to prostitution just to support my habit. One of my worst memories is when I got hooked on cocaine. I left my daughter alone, carrying a large amount of drugs, not realizing how dangerous it was or that I could be arrested at any moment.

In 2015, I met my current husband at a bar. We moved in together, but things didn't improve. He also used drugs, and the

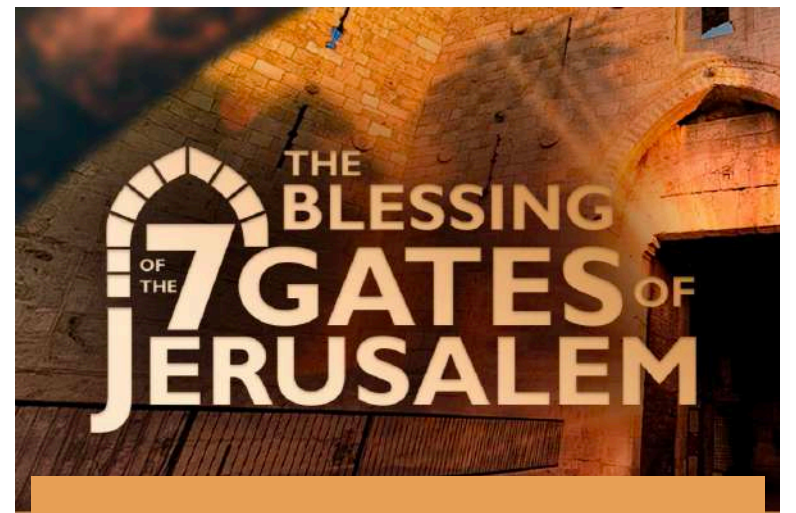
fighting started again. I kept using drugs for another four years, until I found out I was pregnant with our second child. Even after our son was born, the fighting never stopped. I carried so much hate in my heart, and I

## For years, I was stuck in this cycle, while my husband stayed on drugs.

channeled it towards everyone around me—my daughter from my previous relationship, my mother-in-law, and my husband. For years, I was stuck in this cycle, while my husband stayed on drugs.

But everything started to change when my husband decided to seek help at the Universal Church. In a short time, he got rid of his addiction and became a completely new man. That's when I decided to go with him to the meetings. From the very first day, I felt a peace I had never experienced before. I kept attending, and in about 11 months, I was able to let go of the hate I had carried for so long. I learned to forgive and ask for forgiveness. I started seeking the Holy Spirit because I had learned that only He could fill the emptiness in my soul.

And as the Bible promises in Luke 24:49, I received the Greatest Blessing. I had the privilege of receiving the Holy Spirit, and today, true joy lives within me. My family has been restored, and my husband, who is now a man of God, has helped me on my journey of faith. Before, I enjoyed making people suffer, but now, I am a soul winner. My life is completely transformed, and I give all the glory to God for the miracles He has worked in me and my family." - Margaret



Which door do you need to open in your life? A unique event is taking place in all Universal Churches: The Blessing of the 7 Gates of Jerusalem. This initiative was guided by the Holy Spirit earlier this year when Bishop Edir Macedo, along with bishops and their wives from around the world, went to Israel to pray and cry out for the people. While in the Holy Land, the bishops took a step of faith, walking about seven kilometers around the seven gates of Jerusalem. “Each gate of Jerusalem has a very rich meaning. We learned this here, and now we will bring that richness to you,” one of the bishops shared.

One of the bishops reflected on Psalm 122, which revealed a deeper meaning to him during their walk. “Jerusalem is built like a city that is compact together” (Psalm 122:3). “A completely walled city, and with each step we took, we thought of the time of the Lord Jesus, who passed through those gates, who walked there, and who wept over Jerusalem. A city that is still filled with prophecy. The same psalm tells us that those who pray for the peace of Jerusalem and love her will prosper. And by faith, we will pass through these gates, embracing the purpose of the Blessing of the 7 Gates of Jerusalem.”

Psalm 122:4-5 says, “Where the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, to the testimony of Israel, to give thanks to the name of the Lord. For there are the thrones of judgment, the thrones of the house of David.”

“All the tribes of Israel went up to Jerusalem to worship, to seek God's blessing, because the throne of judgment and justice was there. They came to seek answers for their causes, and after passing through the gates of Jerusalem, they returned with the blessings they sought,” the bishop continued. “This is what will happen during the Blessing of the 7 Gates of Jerusalem. I invite you to come and experience this faith with us. Bring your family and those you know who are facing closed doors in their lives, so they do not miss out on this opportunity at your nearest Universal Church on Sundays at 10 AM.”

You too can be part of this experience. Trust in God, surrender to His will, and receive the blessings that only He can give you.

# You can have a better life: (During and after prison)



Many behind bars have told themselves:  
 “It’s too late to change.”  
 “This is it for me.”  
 “I had my chances, and I blew it.”  
 “My life is over.”

But why do so many incarcerated individuals believe they’ll never change? Where does this mindset come from? Is it because they’ve been told this by loved ones, a judge, or fellow inmates? Or is it the result of years of regret, guilt, and disappointment?

Do you know the saying, “Beauty is in the eye of the beholder”? It reminds us that perception is everything. Just like beauty, your future is shaped by how you choose to see it. We were all given free will—the ability to make decisions, shape our path, and determine how we view our circumstances.

**A better life requires a choice:**

If you truly want a fresh start, you have to stop dwelling on the past. You cannot expect a new life while still seeing yourself as the same person. Change is a verb—it requires action.

So, what action will you take to create real change? What steps will you take to be seen as more than just “that inmate”? No one wants to be identified solely by an ID number, but the transformation starts with you and your decisions.

**Change your perspective, change your life:**

Instead of saying, “Beauty is in the eye of the beholder,” let’s redefine it:

**“A better life depends on your actions.”**  
 You CAN change.

**Tip: Take responsibility for your life:**

“

Don’t justify failures by blaming others. If your life isn’t where you want it to be, make the right choices, and you’ll reap good fruit. Your future is determined by the decisions you make today. It’s not too late. Your new life starts with a choice—what will yours be?



Every day the UBB has a new episode for you.

There is something for everyone! Do you need guidance about your faith, family, sexual orientation, curses, dealing with loss, addictions etc.?

“¿Hablas español? En la aplicación de Pando puedes encontrar segmentos de la UBB ¡también en español!”



I’m going to the TOP down with the UBB!



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# Universal Beyond Bars

You are NOT alone

## I was a disappointment to my father

At 25 years old, Wallace proudly declares himself a happy man, living an honorable life as a reintegrated member of society. But his journey wasn't always this way.

Abandoned by his mother as a child, Wallace was raised by his father, who believed that giving his son everything he wanted was the best way to care for him.

However, without discipline or guidance, Wallace took a dark path.

At 14, he experimented with cigarettes, which quickly escalated to marijuana, cocaine, and eventually crack. But using wasn't enough—he started selling drugs and committing burglaries to support his habit.

Arrested five times, Wallace became reckless in his pursuit of drugs and money. One fateful night, under the influence, he assaulted a young woman and stole her belongings.

She later returned with a police officer. In a desperate attempt to escape, Wallace pulled out a gun and fired—but miraculously, none of the bullets discharged. The officer retaliated with five shots, yet none hit him.

His father, José Machado, was at his breaking point. Seeing his son as a lost cause, he was overwhelmed with despair. In his desperation, he even pointed a gun at Wallace, threatening to end his life before the police could.

“The reporters humiliated me, making me out to be the most dangerous drug lord. They mocked me on TV. But then, something incredible happened—I was released just

15 days later. I knew at that moment, God had a plan for me.” While in prison, Wallace listened to a radio program from the Universal



**My father lost his will to live because of me. He thought there was no hope for me, Wallace recalls. But even after this terrifying experience, Wallace didn't stop. Each argument with his father pushed him further into crime and deeper into addiction. It wasn't until his fifth arrest that he finally started to reflect on his actions. His face was plastered across the local news as a dangerous drug dealer. Though he had been arrested with two others, authorities labeled him the leader due to his past charges.**

Church for inmates. It spoke of hope, change, and redemption. Desperate, he wrote a letter to the bishop leading the program, asking his father to deliver it. But his father, bitter and disillusioned, refused.

Upon his release, Wallace didn't hesitate—he went straight to the Universal Church.

There, he made the life-changing decision to be baptized.

He was introduced to the Victory

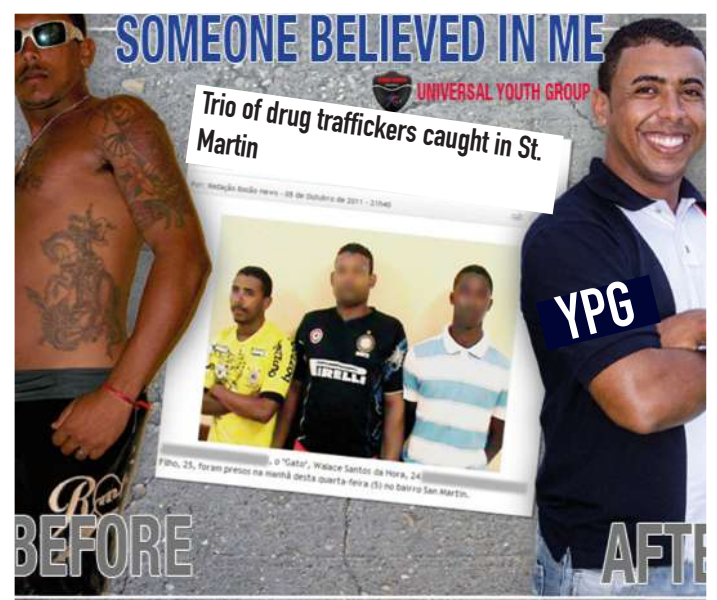
Youth Group, where he found something he had never truly experienced: a family.

“They welcomed me with love and kindness. For the first time, I felt valued. The pastors and assistants treated me like a son.”

Now, Wallace has completely turned his life around. He hates drugs and fears their destructive power. Instead of destroying lives, he dedicates his own to helping others break free from addiction.

“Today, I'm here to help others overcome what I once struggled with. This transformation was made possible through the work of the UBB (Universal Beyond Bars), which is changing lives in prisons worldwide.

We believe that everyone deserves a second chance. We believe in you.”



*“I cry out to God; yes, I shout. Oh, that God would listen to me! When I was in deep trouble, I searched for the Lord.” Psalms 77:1-2*

Speak out, I am all ears! If you want to be added to my E-Message list, send me a letter with the correct info to: 7075 SW. Fwy. Houston, TX 77074.

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# Leadership is the key to thriving



**S**ome people are natural leaders but don't even realize they have this ability. They are engaged, they listen, they value those around them, and they lead by example—yet they fail to recognize their potential. Others want to lead but don't know how, while some believe they have the authority and charisma to lead but confuse leadership with authoritarianism. Many don't understand that leadership may be the missing trait they need to achieve greater success, not just in their careers but in life as a whole.

So, what are the right actions and qualities needed to lead effectively?

According to Emanuel Quiroz, a professional coach, a true leader has a positive attitude that adds value to those around them.

“A leader must also know their company. For example, if they own a small clothing business, they don't need to know how to sew, but they must understand how everything works—what equipment is needed, the quality of fabrics, production time, how shipments are handled, etc. A leader sets the example.”

On the other hand, a manager who says one thing and does another fails to set a positive example. This reflects poorly on the company and its overall image. “That's not a leader—it's a bad manager,” Quiroz adds.

To become a good leader, one must develop in areas like motivation, goal-setting, and understanding the needs of others.

“A leader is like the captain of a boat. They must know its speed, its destination, and the best route to take. Anyone who engages with business management, sales, or leadership in some form will always gain something valuable.”

One effective way to identify leadership potential is through self-assessment tests. Quiroz advises companies to offer leadership courses as part of career planning for employees.

“When a company provides leadership training, it not only helps employees grow but also prevents them from seeking opportunities elsewhere due to lack of advancement.”

However, personal initiative is also crucial for leadership development. Quiroz suggests that aspiring leaders take online or

in-person courses, read leadership books, and use free resources like YouTube and other educational platforms.

“If you're an entrepreneur, the first step is identifying what you want for your business. Investing in leadership training will give you the tools to improve and implement better strategies.”

Key qualities of a good leader

**Effective leadership requires two essential skills:**  
**Clear Communication** – A leader must be able to articulate ideas, instructions, and expectations clearly. Poor communication can lead to confusion and inefficiency.

**Delegation** – A leader should identify the right people to delegate tasks to and trust them to execute them effectively.

“Some people naturally don't like to talk much. But if you're in a leadership role, communication is essential. Good leaders ensure that information flows smoothly to maintain a strong work structure.”

## Maxwell's story: A journey to leadership



Maxwell's path to leadership was not easy. His struggles with alcohol and marijuana created financial hardship, strained relationships, and left him in debt and stress.

“I borrowed money from friends but couldn't pay them back. I started avoiding places where I owed people. I was always stressed because I couldn't provide for my family the way I used to.”  
 His turning point came when he started attending services at the Universal Church. “A few months later, I was able to quit alcohol and marijuana. My finances improved, and I was finally able to provide for my family again. I even managed to save money and pay off my debts. Today, I am spiritually mature and live a life that pleases God.”

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