



Austin and family

from the church to the streets.

Although I still have challenges in my life, God has blessed me with a wonderful family. He teaches me how to better serve them everyday.

Maybe you can relate to some part of my story and realize that you need God in your life too. If you want to know God and truly be free, start by praying this prayer:

“God, I need your help. I know that you are the answer to all the issues in my life. I have made many mistakes and bad decisions. I pray that you would make me a new person. Jesus, I want you to be the Lord of my life and my best friend. Teach me to be like you, and fill me with your love and your power Take over my life completely and do whatever you want. Amen”

To talk to me about this decision you made, find a church or get prayer, call me at (800) 736-2773 or email me at austin@nycr.org. Through The Relief Bus I can also assist you in finding help in the areas of addiction, shelter, job training or food.

Austin

THE RELIEF BUS



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From HILLBILLY HELLRAISER To servant on the streets

Brought to you by *THE RELIEF BUS*

I was born in Arkansas in 1977 into a very poor family. We lived in a shack with an outhouse out back and used a woodstove for heat. We were hillbillies, basically. My father grew marijuana for a living and had a large crop planted across the street from our house. At the age of four my parents divorced and I moved with my mother to Indiana. We soon moved in with her boyfriend who, like her, heavily abused alcohol. They would often get into physical fights. Eventually he became my stepfather.



In Indiana we once again lived in dire poverty when my stepfather lost his factory job. He and my mother began to drink more and more. Smoking lots of marijuana was common in our home also. There was no electricity, heat or hot water at our house. My brother and I would sleep on the floor in between our dogs to stay warm at night. The cupboards were empty and I learned how to eat at school or over at friend's houses when I could.

“My clothes were full of holes and I would get made fun of. I became the class clown and laughed along with the jokes, but inside it hurt and I felt like an outcast.”
It was tough being the poorest kid in school. My clothes were full of holes and I would get made fun of. I became the class clown and laughed along with the jokes, but inside it hurt and I felt like an outcast.
At the age of 13 I went to a youth group at a local church and it was really a surreal experience. I couldn't believe how nice everyone was and that they came there every week to



Austin as Senior in High School

have fun and follow God. One month later I decided to follow God too.

When I turned 16 my life began to fall apart as I hung out with the wrong crowd and started privately smoking and drinking. I got stoned on pot all the time and even went to church high. I have always been an extremist. I would drink alcohol until I would pass out. I would roll giant joints and smoke the whole things. At the same time, although my parents loved me, I knew that I didn't want to go down the same path of a becoming a habitual drug and alcohol abuser.

“I got stoned on pot all the time.”

At the age of 17, when it didn't seem like things could get worse, my parents lost our house. I knew how to hustle for money doing various jobs outside of school so I rented my own apartment. As a senior in high school, my place became the party house. There was a constant stream of people bringing in acid, mushrooms, crack, cocaine, and lots of alcohol. When I was younger I was the one always getting made fun of, but now I was very popular and enjoying all of the attention.

I lost my job and was too proud to ask anyone for help. While stoned out of my mind on acid I broke into a junior high school in a nearby town in hopes of robbing a safe. All I ended up doing was vandalizing the principal's office and stealing some cheap junk. While walking home I came across a police officer who questioned me. I panicked and took off running. I hid in the neighborhood and would have easily escaped, but something strange happened. From my hiding place in someone's back yard I felt the spirit of God literally pull me out into the middle of the street where I then laid face down.

I was arrested and confessed everything because I realized that God had brought me there to come clean and get right with him again. I had just turned 18-years-old and was now facing 14 years in prison. I told God I was sorry and felt him tell me that this was my chance to turn my life around. I ended up serving only 5 months in jail.

After being released I started attending college. One night I went to visit my mom and couldn't get into her apartment building because it

was sealed in police tape and the officers wouldn't let anyone enter. I searched for her all over town, but couldn't find her anywhere. I ended up going to check at the police station and found all my family members there which I thought was very strange. My uncle got to me first and told me that my mother had been murdered. I collapsed in tears and was filled with rage, screaming in the police station. I bawled for hours and was inconsolable.



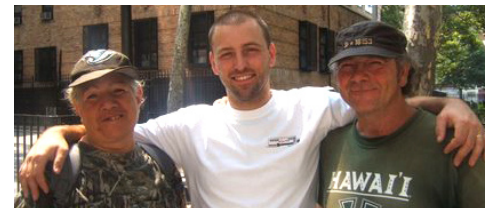
Austin in College

Weeks past and the police could not solve the crime. I went back to college, but was an emotional wreck with all kinds of feelings balled up in a knot inside of me. This tension was released as I prayed to God and forgave my mother's murderer. I began to walk in a whole new level of freedom.

While in college I met a beautiful girl who was a pastor's kid and so pure. She didn't want to have anything to do with me, but I knew she was the one for me! After some conniving on my part we started to date, fell head over heels in love, and eventually we were married. We became youth pastors back in Indiana and later in Arkansas as well. Eventually we had two handsome sons.

“my mother had been murdered”

I started my own business doing home inspections and working for a construction company for about 4 years, but knew that I was called to full-time hands on service for God. That's when I made a connection with The Relief Bus, a mobile outreach to the poor and homeless.



On the streets with The Relief Bus

I now serve as an Outreach Director leading teams to help the poor all over the New York City metro area. I can relate to those who have been victimized, are in pain, abandoned, living in poverty, fatherless, on

drugs, or have served time in prison. My heart breaks for people. I want to embrace them and befriend those who have no friends. This allows me to help connect people to vital resources. I also get the opportunity to train volunteers on how to help others and help them understand what people are going through. I enjoy becoming a bridge