

RESCUE FROM RUIN

A Story of Deliverance



By James K. Moore

CONTENTS

Introduction, About the Author

Part 1: The Backstory

Chapter One - Point Of Origin - Page 1

Chapter Two - Building Relationship - Page 5

Chapter Three – Special Request - Page 6

Chapter Four – The Pickup - Page 7

Chapter Five – On the Run / The Reunion - Page 8

Chapter Six – Tears of Joy - Page 10

Chapter Seven – Time for a Turnaround - Page 12

Chapter Eight – Patiently Waiting / A Fresh Start – Page 14

Notes - Page 16

INTRODUCTION

This is the true story about the transformative power of faith as evidenced in the lives of two men in desperate straits—a father in prison on a quest for redemption and the unmoored son he abandoned as a child. Their *like-father, like-son* predisposition for criminal, sinful behavior landed each of them in deep water. Nothing short of God’s love is sufficient to rescue them from ruin.

I credit the story’s publication to those who encouraged me to author the story I verbally shared with them in bits and pieces over the quarter century. My telling of it was typically in the context of discussions about the Holy Spirit doing extraordinary works through ordinary people, or the hardships of children growing up without a loving father present, or the dark underbelly of Black American urban culture.

While I don’t claim expertise in any of these areas, lessons learned from my unique vantage point in this story afford me a valuable perspective worth sharing. Moreover, the impulse to share naturally accompanies any enriching experience, especially one with God’s hand in it.

One’s search for a sense of belonging, fulfillment, and identity occurs for a host of reasons and in a variety of ways. Those that are predominantly self-focused typically fall short on the significance-to-humanity scale. On the other hand, those whose motivation and expression are selfless—primarily focused on others—dually impact humanity and honor God. The question becomes, to which audience in the end are you playing?

It is my hope that by reading this, you too will recognize God’s supreme authority and be inspired to take bold action to come to the rescue of someone in desperate straits. Such actions go hand in hand.

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- ❖ The story is being published in three parts. The following is **Part 1: The Backstory**.
 - ❖ Still Ahead in 2024: **Part 2: A New Way** and **Part 3: Winding Roads Ahead**
 - ❖ **Notes** (pages 16-20) complement the story (includes faith-focused references and Bible scripture).
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ABOUT ME

James (Jim) K. Moore is a husband, father, grandfather, and more. Retired from careers in corporate sales and news reporting organizations, he finds pleasure in continuous learning by a variety of means (reading, writing, podcasts, online college courses, drumming, outdoor labor). Rooted in his ancestral Wisconsin homeland for over five decades, Charlotte, North Carolina has been home since 2014. Jim earned a B.S. in Journalism and Radio TV Film at the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh in 1980.

Part 1: The Backstory

Chapter One POINT OF ORIGIN

Sunday, August 8, 2021
Celebration Church
Green Bay, Wisconsin

The vivid memory of my experience in this place more than two decades ago with the man standing alongside me triggered tears of joy welling up in my eyes. Failing to blink them back, I dabbed them before anybody saw me crying for no apparent reason.

Inwardly, I was elated, thinking, “*So awesome—God’s grace and love.*”

It had been nineteen years since I last attended church service at what then was Bayside Christian Fellowship Church, but now was Celebration Church. Joining me there this Sunday morning were Eugene, Jr., and his new bride, Sarah. This being our first visit in three years, I had suggested to *Junior* that, for nostalgia reasons, we reconnect at the spiritual birthplace of our relationship. As the worship band’s upbeat music resounded throughout the room, my thoughts drifted back in time to the beginning of a life-changing journey.

October 1998

A Saturday morning Bible study, Bayside Christian Fellowship Church

During meditation time in the worship center, I landed randomly (so I thought) in the thirteenth chapter of Hebrews. Soon I was absorbed in the third verse, its words inexplicably conjuring up images of *me* in prison.

¹ *Keep on loving each other as brothers.*

² *Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it.*

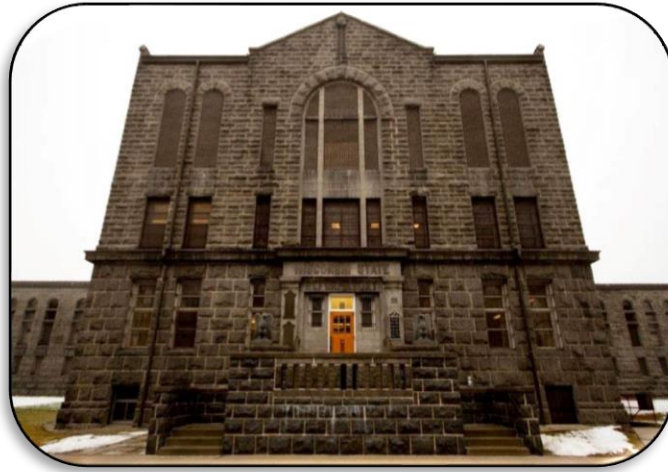
³ **Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering.**

Hebrews 13:1-3 (New International Version 1984)

“*What does this mean, Lord?*” I wondered. Reckoning it to be a sort of epiphany, I mentioned it later to one of the associate pastors.¹ He agreed with my interpretation of it as a call to step into prison ministry,² which for me would be an extraordinary manifestation of faith.³ He offered to connect me with a church friend, the chaplain⁴ of the local maximum-security prison.

The timing was perfect because the chaplain knew of an incarcerated, *born-again*⁵ believer seeking fellowship with someone likeminded on the outside.

A few weeks later, I was walking alone into the 100-year-old prison⁶ to meet inmate Eugene, Sr. (surname withheld for confidentiality reasons).



Green Bay prison visitors entrance

November 1998

Green Bay Correctional Institution

Taking a seat at my assigned table, I started to imagine what Eugene might look like while simultaneously trying to get a read on others sitting at tables throughout the outdated visitors room. I had not long to think about it before a nearby metal door swung open, revealing a stout, uniformed guard uncuffing a large man dressed in a black t-shirt and drab olive-green pants. He was wearing heavy-framed glasses, and his closely cropped black hair barely covered his perspiring head. After directing him to my table, the guard left the room. I stood to greet him as he sauntered my way, extending my right hand.

“You must be Eugene,” I said with a smile. “Nice to meet you.”

His big but gentle handshake enveloped my hand.

“Hello James,” said Eugene, looking me in the eyes before taking a quick glance around the room as he sat down. “It’s good to see you.”

After some small talk, I asked why he was open to meeting an outsider. I was curious to hear his reasoning. He said our visit almost didn’t happen because, after first telling the chaplain he would like a visitor, he had second thoughts. Something inside told him to not sign the visitor’s request form I had submitted. He blamed an evil spirit for his doubt, saying he countered by reciting Bible verses and praying. A bit taken aback by his answer, I wondered out loud when else some unseen force may have been my antagonist.

The ice was broken.

Spotting a nearby portable bookstand stocked with reading material, including well-worn Bibles, Eugene retrieved one to reference full verses corresponding to ones he was about to partially recite from memory as he shared his story.

He was beginning year eight of what eventually would be a fifteen-year term. His background leading up to the 1991 conviction⁷ that sent him away at age twenty-six consisted of over a decade of gang-related crimes. It was this urban gang culture of crime, symbolism, territorialism, and violence that had shaped his view of manhood since adolescence.

Both his parents were serving time in New York prisons when he was born in 1965. His mother, Jean, died a few days after delivering him at the storied Bellevue Hospital⁸ in New York City, the nation’s oldest public

hospital. The state granted custody of him to a great aunt, Henrietta, who single-handedly raised him along with a number of his cousins in a rough part of Chicago's South Side.

His enduring memory of the woman he called "*mom*" was her disciplinarian manner; hers was a tough love.

Sometime during 1973, Eugene's father, Samuel, unexpectedly dropped into his life. Living in New York City after his release from prison, Samuel sporadically called Henrietta's home to talk by phone with his now-eight-year-old son, whom he'd never met.

Not long afterward, Samuel made the first of a series of unannounced visits to her Chicago residence to see his son; their brief visits were under the disdainful eye of Henrietta, who had little regard for him.

At some point, Henrietta's vigilance lifted because Eugene recounted being allowed to twice travel alone by bus as a young teen to visit Samuel in New York City.

The long-distance relationship lasted through the 1980s, coming to a sudden ending one August day in 1992 or '93 when Waupun prison officials informed Eugene about his father's death in New York. Few details are known.

It's hard to say to what extent and in what way the father may have influenced the son during the span of their disjointed relationship. What I can say about the time or two Eugene shared his recollections about Samuel with me is that he clings to fond memories of him.

"I loved him, and he loved me," said Eugene.

* * * * *

By the age of twelve, Eugene, like other boys that age, yearned for masculine adventure. Bored, impressionable, and highly susceptible to the temptation of easy thrills and easy money, he took the recruitment bait of a Gangster Disciples⁹ gang running Henrietta's South Side neighborhood.

He committed a multitude of gang crimes throughout his teen years and early twenties, including dealing and using drugs, robberies, shakedowns, and acts of violence. Often armed with weapons.

He recalled that he was only sixteen when he married Beverly, a twenty-year-old mother of an infant girl from a different relationship. The union with Beverly—herself an abuser of alcohol and drugs and a petty crime offender—did little to improve his bad conduct. They argued and fought constantly.

Despite the turmoil, they brought two more children into the world.

In time, Eugene's gangster lifestyle and the family's hardships drove them out of Chicago. They relocated eighty miles north to Racine, Wisconsin, where Eugene began engaging in the local crime scene.

Soon, their fourth and final child entered the picture. Beverly still shouldered much of the childcare burden because Eugene was away taking care of business on the rough streets of Racine. And cheating on his wife.

It wasn't long before Beverly took rash action to escape the cesspool she found her family stuck in. Without telling anyone, she packed up the four kids and their scant belongings to move 100 miles to Madison, Wisconsin.

Weeks passed before Eugene even learned of their whereabouts. He then set out to Madison to search for them.

While his street smarts helped him track down his family in short order, they weren't useful in getting Beverly to allow him back in their world. She turned him away.

Now alone on the streets, surviving day to day, soon his will to live began slipping away.

Somewhere he'd heard a story about some broken guy who'd chosen to end his life in a striking fashion by holding up a liquor store with a gun, intending to trigger a deadly shoot-out with the shopkeeper or police.¹⁰ Eugene thought it was a good plan, so one night he put it into action.

Under the cover of darkness and light rainfall, he stood across the street from a liquor store, surveilling it with a short-barreled shotgun tucked inside his coat. Out of nowhere, he said, "A woman who was beautiful" appeared alongside him. She asked if he knew about Jesus, and without waiting for an answer, she told him

Jesus loved him as a child of God and wanted him to know how precious life is. Already edgy in anticipation of the stick-up, the peculiar words spoken by this mysterious woman baffled him. Taking out a cigarette, he turned away for a moment to light it. When he looked back, the woman had vanished. There was no trace of her anywhere. Bewildered by whatever this occurrence was, he abandoned the robbery/suicide plan.

* * * * *

In the end, the law caught up with him in Madison shortly after he had partly made his way back into his family's circle. He was arrested in 1990 for other crimes, leading to his conviction and imprisonment the next year.

Detained alone for an extended period in the jail's processing area (jailers were busy dealing with an inmate suicide), something prompted him to pick up a Bible sitting atop a small table. It was his first time touching one.

He randomly (so he thought) began reading the thirteenth chapter of Hebrews.

¹ *Keep on loving each other as brothers.*

² *Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained **angels** without knowing it.*

³ *Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering.*

Hebrews 13:1-3 (NIV 1984)

Verse two stirred his soul, solving in his mind the mystery of the bizarre encounter he had some time earlier with "A woman who was beautiful." I had no reason to doubt his belief that it was an angel¹¹ who appeared to him that rainy night to save his life.

At this point in my faith journey, it was no longer a novelty to hear personal stories about extraordinary occurrences shaping one's beliefs. But I was astonished to realize it was back-to-back verses in the book of Hebrews—read independently by strangers eight years apart—that effectively linked us. The Bible consists of around 31,000 verses across sixty-six different books. Was this very peculiar linkage a mere coincidence or something supernatural?

Eugene told me he surrendered his life to Jesus¹² in the midst of solitary confinement for his involvement in a violent riot at the prison¹³ where he had begun his sentence prior to a transfer to Green Bay. His assault on a guard during the uprising only ended when an inner voice (which he attributed to the Holy Spirit) said to stop because the man he was strangling was a child of God.

He was one of several inmates facing charges for their actions. During the official inquest, he thought they had him dead to rights when a videotape appeared to show him assaulting the guard. Out of the blue, however, a supervisory guard said the figure in the blurry video was not Eugene.

Cleared of the assault charge, he got off without the extra prison time imposed on a number of fellow rioters. Instead, he drew a penalty of several months of confinement in segregation, serving much of it after his transfer to Green Bay.¹⁴

It was in the darkness of this isolation where his hard-edged spirit broke down and he found enlightenment. He credits the one book he chose to take into "the hole" with him—a Bible.

Seeking redemption

Now participating in the Green Bay prison's Christian fellowship program, Eugene's budding transformation as a Christ believer¹⁵ at age thirty-three was catching the attention of the chaplain, other inmates, and volunteers from the local community. The chaplain described him to me as one who spoke humbly and lovingly to the group about his own repentance¹⁶ and faith in Jesus.

Eugene asked how my faith in Christ was shaping me as a husband and father, something nobody in my faith circle had even asked me about in the two years since I'd received¹⁷ Jesus as my Lord and Savior.

Having been a practicing Roman Catholic since childhood, I had long esteemed Jesus and church teachings, and was active in churches I'd attended well into adulthood. But around the time of my thirty-eighth birthday, I was sensing a deep faith deficit and strong longings that could not be addressed where I was. And so, in mid-1996, yielding to the Holy Spirit's leading, I took my first bold step toward a relationship with Jesus—I left Catholicism outright to begin Bible-centered learning at nondenominational Bayside Christian Fellowship Church.

My new friend regretted failing miserably at both roles. His newborn worldview prompted him to look to Christian men modeling a biblical definition of a godly husband and father to learn where he went wrong.

Legally separated from Beverly and estranged from their teenage children—two daughters and two sons—Eugene hadn't seen them in eight years. The broken family he left behind was mired in hardship.

During the course of our talking honestly about his responsibility for this, my initial skepticism about his conversion's authenticity began to die, supplanted by seeds of respect and trust.

I had to think for a minute about how to answer his question about faith's influence on me as a husband and father. My family consisted of Josette, my wife of sixteen years, both of us forty years old, our daughter Megan, nine, and our son Kellen, six.

I talked about how uniquely challenging the two roles were, admitting I was still very much a work in progress. In my youthful years, I violated any number of the Ten Commandments,¹⁸ but it was dispositional sins¹⁹ that were still getting the best of me to that day.

God's instruction is for husbands to love their wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.²⁰ I told Eugene I was learning the discipline of showing Josette this level of selflessness, something unachievable in my own power. Our marriage's positive state was due to our holding up Christ as its centerpiece. We were working daily to improve it, practicing forgiveness, grace, honor, patience, and more.

As for being a father, I told him I dearly loved my children, relished our time together, and took seriously my paternal leadership duties to serve as primary protector, provider, and pastor to "*bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.*"²¹ It was on me to fulfill these roles during their time under my roof.

Conversation flowed freely for a couple hours before the guard in charge hollered, "Visitation ends in three minutes!" We closed with a brief prayer, another handshake and an awkward first-time man hug.

"I'll see you next week," I told him.

"Thank you. I can't wait," said a smiling Eugene, turning to make his way single file with other inmates out the same door he'd entered. Each man paused to be reshackled with ankle and wrist restraints before walking back to their cellblock.

Stepping outside into the cold nighttime air, the thud of the heavy door closing behind me made me flinch. Walking briskly to my car, I was feeling grateful to be a free man and blessed by the experience I just had.

Chapter Two

Building Relationship

Winter 1998-99

Over the next few months I visited Eugene roughly every week, usually during an early evening on my drive home from work.²² We mostly avoided weekends because the prison would be crowded with out-of-town

visitors.²³ Josette's reminders that our precious family schedule took priority over practically everything else kept me in check, so I was prudent about making good use of time.

Given his circumstances, Eugene turned to the lost art of letter writing to stay in regular contact with me.

In one letter, he wrote:

"I was overwhelmed with joy the night you visited me...the Holy Spirit prompt(ed) me to praise and exalt God, for he said (about you) 'that brother got off work, tired, and instead of going home to spend time with his wife and children, he came up to visit you.' James thank you for being a friend and a good example to follow. Praise God, I love you my brother and give God all the glory!"²⁴

In another, he responded humbly to my treating him with Christian music and teaching resources:

"I was surprised (to receive a cassette tape), thank you very much. I still get excited over surprises. God is to(o) good to me, for I do not deserve all this blessing after blessing. At times I feel guilty. I've caused so much destruction in my life, why should I prosper and live like a king."²⁵

Looking back, I'm amazed at how dynamically and tellingly the Holy Spirit must have been working in me, enabling me to do what I admit I wouldn't have done in my flesh alone.²⁶ Our situational differences—Eugene locked up and me a free man on the outside—mattered little. We spiritually stood on common ground, each of us out of obedience²⁷ longing to be free of our respective prisons of sin.²⁸

Something special was happening—supernatural, I believe. Little did I know that this was only the beginning because the prison walls were about to be breached.

Chapter Three

SPECIAL REQUEST

February 1999

Eugene dropped an unexpected request on me by letter stating he wished to see his oldest son, sixteen-year-old Eugene, Jr. He wanted to restore their relationship in the hopes of preventing Junior from ending up in prison. Having fled Racine to avoid the consequences of his own criminal record, Junior was living with distant relatives in Joliet, Illinois, 100 miles removed from his mother and siblings. He was no longer attending school.

Eugene asked me to assist with a reunion visit. At first I couldn't help but think of it being like a 'scared straight'²⁹ intervention. The request was for me to arrange Junior's bus transportation from 240 miles away, his lodging with relatives who I did not know from a nearby county, escort Junior during a prison visit—minors not permitted alone—and witness Jesus to him while he was in my custody.

My gut told me this was beyond what I signed up for. "*Father God, what is this?*" I thought. The answer would come to light after I discussed Eugene's request with Josette, prayed for guidance, and slept on it.

The next evening, I was in front of Eugene offering to be the bridge to reunite them. I would personally transport, lodge and chaperone Junior for a weekend visit. No bus ride, no staying with relatives.

Eugene's loud drawn out "Well praise Jesus!" retort roused the otherwise quiet visitors room.

This night's visit was far and away the most enjoyable we'd had. I left prison walking on air, as though uplifted by a breeze of providence.

As sometimes happens with conspicuous believers, joyous moments like this may catch Satan's eye. In his letter to me days later, Eugene wrote that a spirit agent visited him later in the darkness of his cell –

“About 2 a.m. I woke up, the Lord was urging me to worship and pray. I did...then tried to rest but couldn't. I just lay there quiet with the lights out, and all of a sudden...I felt the presence of this evil spirit moving around my cell, bumping into things. After rebuking it and praising God, it left. I was so excited, my first real victory in spiritual warfare. It felt good to operate in Christ's authority.”³⁰

March-April 1999

At first, the planning pieces did not come together well due to communication happening in fits and starts. Of course, Eugene and I were limited to writing letters to one another and prison visits.

Connecting with Junior was even more difficult. The only way to get word to him was by leaving a phone message with his relatives in Joliet³¹ and hoping he responded with a call back. I would learn some time later that despite his father telling him in a letter to expect to hear from me to make plans, he dodged me because he suspected me—a white adult male—to be in law enforcement, tracking him down for his troubles up in Racine. Evidently, the relatives relaying my messages told him I sounded like a white guy.

It took deep digging to identify a credible contact in Joliet who could serve as a key link: enter Hugo Vargas, the owner/operator of the McDonald's restaurant where Junior worked part-time.³² Reaching Hugo by phone, I described the circumstances and reunion plans. Immediately on board, he encouraged a wary Junior to take advantage of the opportunity.

Within a day or two, I heard from Junior, and the ball was rolling.

The pickup date would be April 2, 1999—*Good Friday* on the Christian calendar. The reunion in prison would occur Saturday afternoon, followed by Junior joining my family's Easter Sunday celebration. I would return him to Joliet on Monday.

Chapter Four

THE PICKUP

Friday, April 2, 1999

Aside from preparation for the weekend stay of a teenage stranger (a first for my family), it was a normal off-school Friday at home for Josette and the kids. I set out early morning for the long drive to Joliet³³ to pick up Junior. Our rendezvous point: the McDonald's restaurant.³⁴

Within minutes of arriving, I spotted a young black male shuffling across the parking lot make eye contact with me. His New York Yankees jacket stood out, prompting me to smile. While not a Yankees fan, I did like baseball. Neither of us knew what the other looked like, but I figured it had to be him.

“Are you Eugene (Junior)?”

“Yeah,” he answered, punctuated with a sharp upward flick of his head .

“I’m Jim. Nice to meet you,” I said. “Let’s go inside.”

Upon entering, Hugo greeted us with a big smile and handshake, happy to see the plan becoming reality. He spoke highly of Junior as an employee before wishing us well and returning to his busy lunch hour tasks.

Now it was just Junior and me for the five-hour drive home in my 1992 Buick Riviera two-door coupe. This was a first for each of us—strangers confined to a small space for a prolonged period with somebody of a much different demographic (age/generation, family background, race). Junior’s willingness to engage in my inquisitive discourse (sometimes mischaracterized as ‘nosiness’) allowed us to talk freely throughout the trip. We touched many topics - families, friends, school, sports, work, a little about Jesus, especially the meaning of this day for Christians.³⁵

Comfort and trust levels rose with each passing hour. From answering my questions with a mere word or two, Junior loosened up to the point of asking me questions. I began to see into him. He was lost, lonesome, and wounded. It wasn’t long before I discovered his good heart, and he seemed open to making a real life change.

“*This may be an interesting weekend,*” I thought, not knowing just how much of an understatement this was.

Driving into my garage, I casually mentioned that *Newman*, my eighty pound Black Labrador, would greet us at the door. A look of panic creased Junior’s face. “I don’t like big dogs,” he said. Snickering, I assured him it would be fine, he and *Newman* would become good friends.

The whole family, including *Newman* and our cat, *TT*, warmly welcomed Junior to our home.³⁶ Josette treated us to a tasty homemade meal of chicken, mashed potatoes with gravy, biscuits, and peach cobbler à la mode. During dinner Junior revealed a peculiarity—his penchant for ketchup, a lot of ketchup. Mercifully, he drew the line at the warm cobbler.

Good-natured laughter about his over-the-top enjoyment of ketchup flavored the night’s wide-ranging conversation before we wound down what had been an incredibly special Good Friday.



Junior’s first meal at our home; Megan and Kellen look on.

Chapter Five

ON THE RUN / THE REUNION

Saturday April 3, 1999

For Junior and me, the new day kicked off with a stop at my church's bookstore to buy his first Bible. Next, because he had only brought a small duffel bag containing a change of clothes and a few personal effects, we headed to a nearby department store for some new clothing items, which he referred to as "gear." It was one of the handful of urban slang words he would teach me. Others included "paper" (Capias, as in arrest warrant), "crib" (house), "holler" (talk), and "scrill" (money).

Only vaguely aware of why Junior lived in Joliet and not with family in Racine—Eugene had only described it as "some trouble back home"—our next stop was a lunch meeting I'd arranged with three church brethren, black adult men whose jobs centered on guiding youth caught up in crime and bad family situations.

I wanted to learn more about Junior's trouble.

Their caring nature, credibility, and relatability produced an immediate rapport at the table, prompting Junior to reveal his heartbreaking world.

He was scarred by poor parenting, emotional and physical abuse, barely any structure, poverty, school truancy, bad influences on the streets, and more. On a path toward gang membership back home—he had undergone brutal hazing by a cohort of gang aspirants—there was "paper" on him in Racine (specifically, unresolved Party to the Crime of Battery charges).

"*Oh, great,*" I thought, only half joking. "*I'm harboring a fugitive.*"

Junior's adolescent rap sheet included charges for battery, disorderly conduct, harassment, operating a vehicle without the owner's consent, receiving stolen property, and retail theft.

The three men discussed the advantage of dealing with his business in Racine as a juvenile over carrying it into adulthood (a year and a half away). Deferred consequences, they figured, would be worse for him. They advised that he should turn himself in as soon as possible. The sullen look on Junior's face laid bare the weight of their advice.

At this point, it dawned on me that I might have a more immediate issue: getting him into prison in light of the outstanding charges. Would those pop up in the prison's database when we checked in as visitors?

The five of us wrapped up what turned out to be an illuminating lunch meeting over burgers, fries, and sodas.

Deep in thought about his situation, Junior didn't say much during our short drive to the prison.

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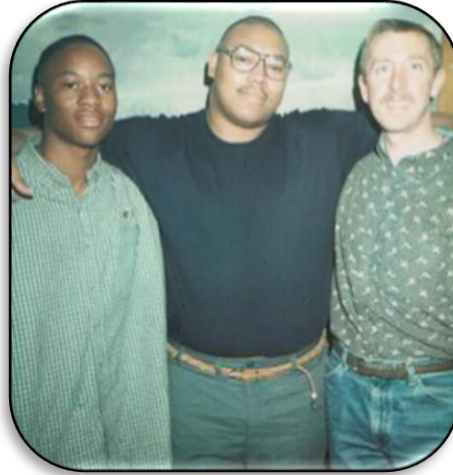
After identifying ourselves to a guard at the check-in station, we stepped away to blend into the crowd of waiting visitors while he completed the screening process. We would either be admitted, declined or busted. This being a Saturday, and an Easter weekend to boot, the waiting area was noisy with the chatter of many visitors. "*Good,*" I thought. "*Nobody can hear my heart pounding.*"

Fifteen minutes later, the guard announced, "Eugene (Eugene's surname)." His next words brought instant relief. "You're next. Step over to the gate!" (Picture a busy airport's security screening process, but inside an iron cage and stripped of all geniality.)

We were as good as in; mild anxiety turned into excitement. This young man was now only minutes from reuniting with the father he had not seen in eight years.

Shortly after Junior and I settled in at our assigned table, the familiar metal door opened, revealing Eugene being uncuffed by a guard. He spotted us. I walked up to him, and we hugged. Exhilarated, he greeted me with his customary "Praise Jesus!" I stepped back to witness the reunion.

Eugene wrapped Junior in a bear hug, speaking words of gratitude into his ear. Junior quietly spoke a soft word or two and, deliberately looking his father up and down, lightheartedly said, "You're so big."



Junior, Eugene, Sr., Jim; April 3, 1999, reunion

It had been just twenty-four hours since I'd taken Junior into custody, and already he was growing on me. He had an appealing honesty, tenderness, and slightly muted charisma. I was feeling ever more vested in his welfare, sort of like his protector. This wouldn't change in the company of his father. Nevertheless, this was their moment, so my role—much like at lunch—was mainly to listen, observe, and fill in here and there.

Overjoyed at the sight of his grown son, Eugene kicked things off by asking him how things were going with the Moores.

"Awright," said Junior. Feeling this answer egregiously understated the truth, I wanted to jump in to say things were actually going smashingly well but managed to bridle my tongue.

After covering a variety of topics, Eugene, not wanting to miss an opportunity to talk about faith matters, raised the personal salvation topic.

Well aware of his father's professed conversion—they'd exchanged letters in recent years—it didn't surprise Junior when his father went there. What was new, however, was hearing him speak so eloquently about the saving grace of Jesus.³⁷ Junior listened. Still, having not yet recognized a need for his own salvation,³⁸ he received it as meager words. He believed his father believed what he was saying, but it would be some time before the message struck a personal chord.

The three-hour visit ended when a guard announced it was closing time. We hugged, said a short prayer, and agreed to resume tomorrow afternoon. The two of us watched Eugene exit through the metal door, pausing to be reshackled before returning to his cell block.

The image capped what had been a deeply emotional day for father and son. There had been general cheerfulness at the table, but it wasn't lost on Eugene or me when Junior retreated into silence for a time or two. Deep inside, he was coming to grips with seeing his father in prison and struggling with feelings of latent frustration and anger.

Junior later confided to me that he had felt mixed emotions—excitement and happiness marbled with festering resentment toward his father because of the damage inflicted upon the family.

For Eugene, it was stark evidence of the need for forgiveness and reconciliation in the relationship. It would take some time for things to truly begin healing.

Fortunately for Junior, emotionally spent after confronting hard challenges all day, he had a turning point, seeing for the first time he was no longer alone in the battle.

Driving home, we talked only briefly about the day before settling into a sweet stillness over the last few miles. It had been a long day. We were ready to relax back home with my family.

I privately updated Josette on everything. By this point, Junior had pierced our hearts. Seemingly in sync, we voiced for the first time the same questions about his future.

The moment held no pragmatic answers, leaving both of us deeply musing over the third child in our midst as we went to bed.

Chapter Six

TEARS OF JOY

Easter Sunday April 4, 1999
Bayside Christian Fellowship Church

There was a notably joyful vibe at the morning church service—a celebration of the risen Lord.³⁹ All of this was new to Junior, who'd previously only set foot in churches with his siblings to enjoy the food giveaways. Enjoying the sounds of the worship band's songs of praise, I wondered what he was making of this as he stood alongside me. From the corner of my eye, I saw his head bowed, softly bobbing. He was weeping, tears of joy and relief.

"It's all right," I whispered while pulling him close to me. "You're in good hands." It was his first tangible taste of God's sweetness.

After service, we got to see the expanse of his charisma come to life as he interacted with several church friends who'd approached us to chat. He wasn't like the typical teenage boy looking to make a beeline to the lobby exit doors. Junior appeared to enjoy the attention he was getting from young and older people.



Easter Sunday 1999 at home: Jim, Junior, Josette, Megan, Kellen

After a homemade Easter meal, Junior and I returned to prison for part two of the reunion; this time the focus would be on his immediate future.

Desiring what's best for his son, Eugene encouraged him to follow the advice of the three men from the previous day: turn himself in to Racine County authorities. Doing so meant risking his freedom, as it was likely the system would come down hard on him. He didn't come right out and say he was open to the idea, but his body language showed he was resigning himself to it.

We closed the short visit in prayer and what we assumed would be the last father-son hug for a long time. Eugene walked more slowly than usual to the exit door, looking back forlornly at us every few steps, deep in thought about what's ahead for Junior. I was feeling a measure of his uneasiness.

Back home, I approached Josette as she was picking out a dinner item from the basement freezer. She quickly read my face; the pressing matter of Junior's future was weighing heavily on me.⁴⁰ Would I return him tomorrow to Joliet or Racine? Ultimately, it was his decision, but we felt obligated to provide guidance.

Looking me in the eyes, Josette said out loud what both of us had been privately thinking. "He should come live with us," she said. Both of us, now misty-eyed, hugged. "Thank you, Lord," is all I could express in the moment.

We had no clue whether such an arrangement was even feasible within the legal or foster care systems—we had no experience with either. To say nothing about how this would shake out for our family dynamics. We were stepping out in faith,⁴¹ not unlike what countless believers the world over had done in other circumstances.

Deciding not to mention this right away to Junior or our children, I quietly reached out to the men who'd met us for lunch the day before to see if they could come by for a follow-up visit in the morning. Much to my delight, one of them, Jesse,⁴² was available.

We would encourage Junior to turn himself in, and if the system allowed it we would serve as his foster family. It was definitely a long shot, but we believed it to be his best option.

Chapter Seven

TIME FOR A TURNAROUND

Monday April 5, 1999

Seated at the kitchen table the next morning, Josette and I informed Junior about the foster care idea. We had already privately informed the kids.

"Really, for sure?" he replied. Just then, Jesse arrived.

Having discussed Junior's situation with his local law enforcement contacts, Jesse reiterated that it would be best for Junior to turn himself in. We told Jesse about the idea of serving as foster parents, which he found remarkable.

I thought it was time to put things in motion.

"Junior, what would you like to do?"

Lifting his gaze from the table to look me in the eye, he said, "Let's go to Racine."

We thanked Jesse for his support and saw him off.

Moments later, covered in prayer and hugs by Josette and the kids, Junior and I set off for the 145-mile drive to Racine.

Ever the realist, I cautioned Junior against jacking our hopes up about the foster care idea but promised to make my best pitch to authorities in Racine. Being a neophyte at navigating the criminal justice system, I was allaying by silent prayer some inner doubt I was having about the idea's chances.

A short distance from Racine, Junior asked if we could stop by his mother's "crib" (house). He hadn't seen his family for several months. I had a fleeting concern about how this could trip things up. *What if his mother objected to the plan?* And then it dawned on me: If I'd learned anything since this journey began five months earlier, it was to expect the unexpected. Things didn't necessarily happen in a straight line. Twists, turns, and loose ends were the norm. This was at odds with my usual orderly manner, but it was pointless to worry about it.

I asked if his seeing them was important. He said it was and agreed with me to not mention anything about the foster care idea at this point. And so, we headed to his mother's crib.

Parking curbside out front of the rental house,⁴³ I accentuated a "Let's do this!" quip with a somewhat stiff smile. Reaching the front door, Junior knocked and let us in.

Catching his mother, Beverly, off guard, she feebly greeted him with a few words and a brief hug. Also there were his sister, Samantha ("Sam"), fourteen, and brother, Jonathan, twelve, both off school this day. Neither of them made a move to get up when seeing him, so Junior greeted them where they sat. (Missing was Sakia, his eighteen-year-old half-sister, who had moved months earlier to Cincinnati, Ohio.)

I sensed an apathetic attitude from all three of them. They weren't in any way animated about seeing him. It was as though Junior had merely returned from running a short errand. Finding their reaction very strange, I attempted to break the ice by introducing myself to Beverly.

She already knew I had hosted Junior's trip to Green Bay, apparently hearing about it from their Joliet relatives. Although we were cordial with each other, I detected something a little odd about her demeanor. Junior later said he could tell she was high on marijuana, not an unusual state for her to be in.

He announced he was turning himself in because he wanted to get his life straightened out, to which Beverly curtly replied, "If you turn yourself in, I'll never let you back in this house again!"⁴⁴

Looking at her disappointedly, Junior answered, "It's something I need to do."

Without missing a beat, Sam remarked, "I'll take your Yankees jacket. You don't need it where you're going."

Wow. That was rude! I thought. Afterward, Junior told me it was just Sam being silly, an annoying little sister—not the first time she had tried to weasel away his prized jacket.

After a few more minutes of awkward small talk, we made our way to the door to leave. Junior gave a quick round of hugs, we said good-bye, and he followed me out the door, still wearing his Yankees jacket.

Driving away, I asked how he was doing. "My family..." he said matter-of-factly, not bothering to fill in the blanks.

I really felt bad for him. His family dynamics were in such stark contrast to what I was accustomed to in my world. I suspect all families experience a degree of dysfunction—issues with communication, forgiveness, love, and such—but his was saddled with an outsized share, something I'd seen firsthand only a time or two before in other families.

Parked outside the Racine County Human Services Department building,⁴⁵ I could see Junior's apprehension. I reassured him that he was loved, and no matter what happened, I wouldn't lose track of him. "God has a

special purpose for you,” I said. We walked inside to the Youth Justice area’s check-in counter and asked to see Barbara Riegelman, his long-time case manager.

Ms. Riegelman (“Barb”) appeared within minutes and walked us to a back office. “Eugene (Junior), I didn’t think I’d ever see you again,” Barb said, cheerfully. His case file had sat cold for a year. I introduced myself as his chaperone and friend of the family, noting we’d just come from visiting his mother. Barb honored my request to sit in on the interview.

Upon completing her round of questions and hearing a recap of Junior’s last few days, Barb leaned forward, heartened by what she had just heard. She told Junior that he must feel very blessed.

The time came for Barb to process him into a short-term hold, pending a court hearing in a week or so. I asked to speak privately with her in an adjoining room.

“What do you see happening with him?” She said he was possibly facing incarceration. She didn’t anticipate my next question.

“How about this?” I began my pitch. “Rather than lock him up, my wife and I could become his foster parents.”

The room went silent for a moment. Broadly smiling, Barb said, “I can’t say I’ve ever heard such a thing in all my years. Are you serious?”

“Totally,” I replied.

“I have no idea if the prosecutor would go for it,” she said, “but I’ll put it out there to see what they think. Wow. Thank you! And your wife.”

Barb and I rejoined Junior to share the news. A feeling of harmony and hope in the air made the goodbye process much easier than expected. Junior and I hugged. “Keep your chin up,” I said. “Obey the rules, respect the adults managing you from here. We’re trusting God with this.” I prayed over him, shook his hand, and left the room.

Escorting me back to the entrance area, Barb promised to do everything possible for Junior and keep me posted about developments.

* * * * *

Having had Junior practically within arm’s reach over the previous seventy-two hours, it didn’t feel normal to be driving home alone. The solitude afforded me a moment to try to comprehend everything from the past three days. Nothing rational came to mind.

It hit me: I was not in control of any of this; I was simply an actor⁴⁶ following the script of this dramatic play. And yet I had a peace⁴⁷ about it that made no sense.

Over dinner back home, Josette and I talked with the kids about the weekend’s highlights and began imagining what it would be like for Junior to join our family.

Chapter Eight

PATIENTLY WAITING / A FRESH START

April 6-16, 1999

Returning to prison for the first time since the reunion weekend, I figured Eugene would be thrilled with the idea of Junior living with my family. Seating himself at the table, I sensed he was itching to tell me something.

“I’m glad you’re here,” he said, a bit breathlessly. “I have to tell you about a vision I had where Junior was living with you and your family.”

A chill shot through me.

“No way!” I promptly filled him in on the foster care idea already unfolding in Racine. He could hardly sit still as he listened, his big body fidgeting, which I found funny.

“Thank Josette and your kids for me,” said Eugene through his big smile.

Unable to tamp down the excitement over the thought of rescuing Junior from his predicament, we spent the visit spitballing ideas about our priorities for him if the foster care idea panned out. Family, church, and school quickly made the top three.

The magnitude and sensitivity of the scene were not lost on me. Here I was, deliberating with a boy’s father about crucial life matters for his son. Eugene would be counting on me as a surrogate to carry the father torch alongside him and help fulfill what he literally could not do on his own. Imagining what it would feel like if the roles were reversed, I did my best to be deferential to his thoughts and not crowd him out in any way.

We capped the short visit with an especially vigorous prayer, expressing gratitude for the blessings we’d enjoyed to that point in this journey, and simply asking that the Lord’s will be done in the coming days.

* * * * *

Days later, Barb called to tell me Junior was doing well after being placed in temporary local foster care⁴⁸ pending his court date. She was optimistic about the prospects for the proposed long-term foster care solution.

As my family and I settled back into our daily routines, we began soaking up the realism that our domestic configuration could soon be changing in a huge way. A few family members and friends kindly cautioned us about the riskiness of what we were about to do, especially given our young children. It wasn’t an unreasonable concern. We had no experience parenting a teen, let alone a traumatized one who would be way outside his comfort zone.⁴⁹

We weren’t naïve about it. We had weighed the factors (including the capable people resources in our support system), felt it was low-risk, and were at ease with the decision. Our focus was on helping this young man in need with the care and love we believed we could provide.⁵⁰

The pace picked up the following week when Barb contacted me to say Racine authorities were in support of the foster care option, and that she was setting up a meeting with Beverly to discuss the proposed custody change for Junior. She was cautiously optimistic that Beverly would agree to it.

Two days later, Barb called me at work to ask whether Josette and I could be in Racine for a court hearing on Monday, April 19. We cleared our calendars and made childcare arrangements. We would be going to Racine, in all likelihood to gain legal custody of Junior.

April 19, 1999

Racine County Circuit Court Children's Division

Upon spotting Barb and Junior in a hallway outside the courtroom, Josette and I enjoyed a delightful reconnection with him. It felt so right to embrace Junior again. Barb lifted our spirits higher still, telling us Beverly, his mother, had formally agreed to the placement plan.

Everything was on track.

The only people in the spacious courtroom were Judge Stephen Simanek, a stenographer, an Assistant District Attorney (ADA), a public defender, Barb, Junior and the two of us. It didn't take long to realize this would be a fast-tracked proceeding.

Judge Simanek asked each of us some perfunctory questions, reviewed documents, and then ruled Junior delinquent on two counts of battery, ordering him to one year of supervision by the county and placement in our custody under the foster care arrangement. He thanked everyone involved and adjourned the hearing.

With that, Josette and I were now legally responsible for Junior's welfare for the next six months, with an option to extend it another six if all parties agreed.

After thanking the ADA and public defender, we walked out of the courtroom with Barb and our foster son. By this point, we viewed Barb as no mere county government employee—she was a godsend. She'd gone above and beyond her basic case manager duty, delivering on her promise to do everything possible in Junior's best interests. We considered her a friend, and so we expressed our deep gratitude with heartfelt words and hugs before saying good-bye.

This would be the last time Barb saw Junior.

For the three of us returning home to Green Bay, the journey's paramount stage was just beginning.

- End of Part 1 -

Still to Come:

- *Part 2: A New Way* (A sneak peek preview is now available; see website)
- *Part 3: The Road Ahead*

NOTES

Chapter One

¹ Dennis Nonnemacher, former Associate Pastor, Bayside Christian Fellowship Church; Founder-President of Going Global Inc. [Our Team | Missions | Going Global Inc. | Green Bay, WI](#)

² (Christians) that are themselves at liberty must sympathize with those that are in bonds and adversity, as if they were bound with them in the same chain. Matthew Henry commentary on Hebrews 13:3 ([BibleGateway.com](#)).

- Relevant scripture: *Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.' Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you? And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'* Matthew 25:34-40 English Standard Version (ESV)

³ Relevant scripture: *You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.* Matthew 5:14-16 ESV

⁴ Paul Emmel, chaplain, Green Bay Correctional Institution (1977-99); succeeded by Joe Baker (1999-2016).

⁵ Relevant scripture: *Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him." Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.* John 3:1-6 ESV

⁶ [DOC Green Bay Correctional Institution \(wi.gov\)](#)

⁷ The conviction was just; the crimes were indisputable.

⁸ [Bellevue Hospital - Wikipedia](#)

⁹ Gangster Disciples (GD) [Gangster Disciples: A Gang Profile | Office of Justice Programs \(ojp.gov\)](#)

¹⁰ Suicide-by-cop <https://www.ojp.gov/ncjrs/virtual-library/abstracts/suicide-cop>

¹¹ The Bible includes instances of God's angels appearing in human form, e.g. Genesis 19, Judges 13, Daniel 3, Matthew 28, Luke 1, Acts 5. Known as angelic visitation, God's messengers are present and capable of helping in times of need.

¹² If you want a change in your life, if you want forgiveness, peace and joy that you've never known before, God demands total surrender. He becomes the Lord and ruler of your life. – Billy Graham [Total Surrender \(decisionmagazine.com\)](#)

¹³ [DOC Waupun Correctional Institution \(wi.gov\)](#)

¹⁴ It was standard practice to shuffle trouble-making inmates to different prisons to separate them from cohorts.

¹⁵ The Bible teaches that a believer is one who received the truth that Jesus Christ is the Son of God into their hearts, resulting in a new creation.

- Relevant scripture: *But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.* John 1:12-13 ESV

¹⁶ "Only as we bow in contrition, confession and repentance at the foot of the cross can we find forgiveness. There is the grace of God." - Billy Graham [True Repentance, Real Change - Decision Magazine](#)

- Relevant scripture: *"I (Jesus) have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."* Luke 5:32 ESV

¹⁷ To "receive" Jesus as Lord includes letting go of temporal gods we build our lives around, whereby Jesus displaces earthly things that may define our identity/purpose/stature. Examples: pursuit of power, career, popularity, material things, a love of money, pride, worship of others.

- Relevant scripture: *He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God - children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.* John 1:11-13 ESV

¹⁸ Ten Commandments: See Exodus 20:1-17

¹⁹ Dispositional sins are as many as the various facets of human nature. Some of them: sensitiveness, irritability, churlishness, faultfinding, peevishness, temper, resentfulness, cruelty, and uncharitable attitudes. (A.W. Tozer)

- Relevant scripture: *Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, and forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.* Ephesians 4:29, 31-32 ESV

²⁰ The Christian's model for husbandly conduct is Jesus Christ himself. God expects Christian husbands to love their wives sacrificially, fully and unconditionally, the same way the Savior loves us.

- Relevant scripture: *Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.* Ephesians 5:25-27 ESV

²¹ The Christian father is an instrument in God's hand. The process of instruction and discipline must be that which God commands and administers, so that His authority should be brought into constant and immediate contact with the mind, heart and conscience of children.

Relevant scripture:

- *Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.* Ephesians 6:4 ESV
- *You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.* Deuteronomy 6:5-7 ESV

Chapter Two

²² Employer 1998-99: Frontier Communications, Inc., 2710 Executive Drive, Green Bay WI 54304

²³ A majority of inmates were from southern Wisconsin urban areas, including Milwaukee.

²⁴ Excerpt of Eugene's letter 1/15/99

²⁵ Excerpt of Eugene's letter 2/7/99

²⁶ (W)hen you gave your life to Christ, the Holy Spirit came to live permanently within you...because He wants you to become more like Jesus and He knows you can't do this on your own. You need God's help, and He has made it available to you by His Spirit...yield yourself to His guidance and transforming power every day. – [The Holy Spirit is already part of your life! \(billygraham.org\)](http://billygraham.org)

²⁷ If you have faith in God and believe Christianity is the truth, obedience is the practice of living by faith, obeying the teachings of the Bible.

- Relevant scripture: *All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.* 2 Timothy 3:16-17 ESV

²⁸ From Rev. Billy Graham: "Sin is like a deadly disease. Yes, you may be a good and moral person whose life isn't marred by obvious sins. But what about your inner thoughts and motives? What about your pride? What about the things you should be doing but fail to do - the people you ought to help, the person who needs a kind word, the person you ought to be praying for but don't?" [Sin Should Be Taken Seriously \(billygraham.org\)](http://billygraham.org)

Relevant scripture:

- *If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.* 1 John 1:8-9 ESV
- *For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.* Romans 6:23 ESV

Chapter Three

²⁹ *Scared Straight!* is a 1978 American documentary. The subject is a group of juvenile delinquents and their three-hour session with actual convicts. Filmed at Rahway State Prison in New Jersey, a group of inmates berate and terrify young offenders in an attempt to "scare them straight" as motivation for those teenagers to avoid prison life. (Wikipedia)

³⁰ Excerpt of Eugene's letter 2/9/1999

³¹ 400 S. Grover St., Joliet IL 60433

³² In addition to working toward a GED after dropping out of school in the ninth grade, Junior found that working retail jobs helped keep him out of trouble on the streets of Joliet. ([Wisconsin's GED/HSED Program | Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction](#))

Chapter Four

³³ Joliet, Illinois is thirty-five miles southwest of Chicago.

³⁴ McDonald's restaurant, Joliet, Ill. <https://www.mcdonalds.com/us/en-us/location/il/joliet/508-e-cass-st/2733.html>

³⁵ Christians view Good Friday to be a spiritually significant day commemorating the ultimate sacrifice Jesus made by his crucifixion for humanity's sins, providing the way for humans to be ultimately reconciled with God.

- Relevant scripture: *For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit.* 1 Peter 3:18 ESV

³⁶ Moore home 1999-2000: 420 McKenzie Lane, Green Bay WI 54311

Chapter Five

³⁷ Relevant scripture: *...because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart, one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.* Romans 10:9-10 ESV

³⁸ Relevant scripture: *...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.* Romans 3:23-24 ESV

Chapter Six

³⁹ Easter Sunday is the most important day to Christians, the day we celebrate all that Jesus did to give us the promise of eternal life. He took the sins of the world onto Himself, accepted the punishment for those sins, and sacrificed Himself for all of those who believe in Him; but, more importantly, He overcame death by His resurrection from the grave. ([Billy Graham: The Fact of the Resurrection \(billygrahamlibrary.org\)](#))

- Relevant scripture: *And he said to them, "Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; he is not here. See the place where they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.* Mark 16:5-7 ESV

⁴⁰ Relevant scripture: *Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.* Philippians 2:3-4 ESV

⁴¹ Relevant scripture: *What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.* James 2:14-17 (NIV)

⁴² Jesse Richardson, Executive Director | Founder (1995-2000), Stop the Violence Now Foundation, Green Bay, WI

Chapter Seven

⁴³ Beverly's home in 1999: 938 Wilson Street, Racine, WI 53404

⁴⁴ Beverly would eventually have a change of heart and support Junior's decision to take radical life-saving steps.

⁴⁵ <https://www.racinecounty.com/departments/human-services/juvenile-detention>

⁴⁶ Relevant scripture: *I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered me trustworthy, appointing me to his service.* 1 Timothy 1:12 ESV

⁴⁷ Lasting peace is found in trusting the one person who controls all the things that you don't understand and who knows no mystery because He has planned it all.

- Relevant scripture: *Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.* Proverbs 3:5-6 ESV

Chapter Eight

⁴⁸ Zenoria Harmon, temporary foster home caregiver, Racine.

⁴⁹ Prior to his Easter weekend trip to Green Bay, Junior had never traveled north of Milwaukee or lived somewhere with only a tiny urban black population. Year 2000 census data: Blacks comprised just 2% of Green Bay's (WI) population of 102,313, compared to 23% of Racine's (WI) 81,871; 17% of Joliet's (IL) 147,433; 7% of Madison's (WI) 210,070; 37% of Milwaukee's (WI) 596,974.

⁵⁰ Relevant scripture: *But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.* 1 John 3:17-18 ESV