

My name is Michael Hooper and I am 20 years old. I was born and raised in Avon, NC. Growing up as a kid I had a normal life and great parents. I wasn't raised in church but my parents had high expectations of me. Right before my first year in middle school, my mom's brother was murdered and it threw my whole family for a loop. I became somewhat paranoid knowing that on that small island I lived on, someone would do such a thing for no reason out of the blue. Later on in middle school I began experimenting with smoking pot and drinking. I quickly realized that it seemed to help with the paranoia, depression and stress. But what I did not realize was that it was all momentary and the symptoms just got worse after the high wore off. By the age of 17 I had tried every street drug that I could get my hands on. I was completely bound and addiction to prescription pain pills and Xanax. My use was all day, every day. At age 18, I had been to three different inpatient psychiatric treatment centers for my depression and to also help me detox off the drugs. Every time I got out, I went straight back to using. Something was just missing...there was a void I was trying to fill but the drugs weren't filling it. I had hit rock bottom, I was using heroin and could not escape the darkness I had entered years ago. I had been to numerous doctors to get help with my psychiatric issues and all they would do was prescribe even more medication, which in the end, worsened my addiction. There seemed to be no way out. Until one day a childhood friend, Cody Harris, who is also a Teen Challenge graduate, came and told me what God had done in his life. Then and there I knew I had to surrender my life to God. But it wasn't as easy as I thought. He began to help me out and disciple me but I still struggled. With him behind me and a push from God, I decided to enter Dare Challenge. God has done an incredible amount of work and transformation in my life. He has delivered me from my addictions and through His perfect work on the cross and His shed blood I have life redeemed and the forgiveness of all my sins. I am no longer condemned to death and hell even though it is what I deserve. I am no longer "Mike, that lost cause, drug addict from Avon". My identity is no longer in the drug culture but by the grace of God I have a new identity in Him. I am now Mike, a son of God, adopted into a royal priesthood. I am a blood bought son of God.