

# Inner-city Dallas church saved drug dealer's life among others

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DALLAS—[Cornerstone Baptist Church](#) saved the life of W. L. Williams. Now, he's helping the church save others.

Volunteers working with Cornerstone Baptist Church prepare lunch for people without homes. It's this kind of caring attitude that reached out and connected with W.L. Williams.  
(PHOTOS/John Hall/BGCT)

Twenty-two years ago, Williams was dealing drugs in South Dallas, running a series of drug houses in South Oak Cliff. He lived on life's harder side—his friends were gunned down, family members died of AIDS, he even sustained a shotgun blast to the face after a drug deal went bad.

"Before my encounter with Cornerstone, I was a thug on the street," he said. "I had been shot several times. I'd been shot two or three times before the shotgun to the face. You'd think that would change a person's life, but it just fueled my anger."

One day, another drug deal turned ugly as gunfire erupted. Williams' friend was shot and killed next to him. In the battle, Williams fired all his ammunition and was forced to flee into nearby Cornerstone Baptist Church.

"Running into that church saved my life that day," Williams said.

As a result of the encounter, Williams became connected with the

congregation. Church members ministered to him and his family, taking his daughter under their wing. He stopped dealing drugs but still had a variety of issues to fight, including drug addiction.

“I became addicted to the same poison I dealt in the neighborhood,” he said.

By his own admission, he wasn’t there for his daughter, to whom the congregation taught values that her father “never could have taught her.”



A man reads the Bible during the devotion that precedes the free lunch provided by Cornerstone Baptist Church. Cornerstone’s hunger ministry is supported by the Texas Baptist Offering for World Hunger.

Four years ago, he was involved in an affair with a married woman. That relationship resulted in a confrontation between Williams and the woman’s husband. Because of that altercation, Williams went to prison.

Even there, the congregation wouldn’t give up on him, ministering to him to the best of its ability. Pastor Chris Simmons particularly was helpful, Williams said.

After his re-release from prison, the congregation helped him get back on his feet by helping him find employment and strengthening its connection with him.

“I have been a lot of things in my life,” he said. “I have been a drug dealer, a womanizer, an abuser, but Chris Simmons has changed the way I think by ministering to me with the word of God. He has helped me reintegrate into society since I’ve been out.”

Since the time he entered prison, Williams said, he's remained drug- and alcohol-free.

He avoids the vices that hurt his life before, sticking to a routine that limits him to home, work and church. He spends the overwhelming majority of his time helping the congregation in its numerous ministries, including a feeding program that largely serves homeless individuals. It is supported by gifts to the Texas Baptist Offering for World Hunger.

Williams knows many of the people who come to the ministry, either by growing up with them or by his regular presence at the effort. The disfigured face that once fueled his rage now is a tool to share his story—to share how Christ has slowly changed his life.

He attempts to use that testimony to connect with people who are down on their luck or have made poor decisions. He hopes others can learn from his story and discover the power of Christ.

"My past doesn't overshadow what Christ has done," he said.