

My life-changing decision



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

MY LIFE CHANGING DECISION ROSS BROWN ENGL

It was the beginning of spring about two years ago- a wet and gloomy day. I was thirty-two years old, strung out on meth and homeless. Headed back to prison for the third time, I was faced with a life-changing decision, “ do I turn myself in” or “ do I keep running and take my chances”. It was a decision that would affect the ones I love the most, my children. As I sat in the woods behind a run-down, drug-infested motel, I closed my eyes and all I could see were the tears in my kid's eyes every time they came to see me in prison. The ones that depended on me for love and security, were now sad and scared of me. They were as lost as I was. Thoughts began to run through my head, “ have I failed my children as a father”, “ do I want them to go down the same path I went down” or “ do I want to give them a future and a father to be proud of”. Living the lifestyle I lived for ten years, taught me not to trust people. Especially authority figures. So the thought of turning myself in didn't sound like a good idea to me at the time. It left me puzzled and scared.

I could keep running, but the past ten years had been nothing but a continuous cycle that always landed me back in prison and left my children without a father. I've always been known for taking chances. Turning myself in would require taking the biggest chance of my life, trusting an authority figure, and the system that I thought had already failed me. My Pastor had always told me “ recovery has to start somewhere son”. At that moment, with my children in mind, I had made my decision. I was going to turn myself in. As I opened my eyes, tears streaming down my face, the day seemed to turn from wet and gloomy, to calm and clear. I picked up my phone and

made the call. I was to turn myself into the authorities within two weeks. I walked into the Federal Halfway House. I was tired, physically, and mentally. I did not know what to expect or what was expected of me. They gave me three meals a day and a hard mat to sleep on. They provided transportation and the opportunity to become stable if you wanted it. I wanted it bad! It would require a lot of effort and determination to make it through the system successfully.

Not many ex-felons make it. They looked at me as another statistic when I first arrived. You only have a certain amount of time to get a job and start your recovery. I struggled, nobody wanted to hire a recovering ex-con. I was starting to think I was not going to make it. I was at the end of the deadline, they were wanting to go ahead and send me back to prison. On the very last day the phone rang, it was Bill Orr with Gym Bleacher Boards. He asked me to come in right away for an interview. I had to get permission from the job coordinator in order for that to happen. He was not wanting to give me this last chance at getting a job. Then out of nowhere my caseworker, Ms. Woodson, showed up and said " just give him this one last chance before you send him back". When I arrived at Gym Bleacher Boards, I was nervous and had mixed emotions about everything. As I sat there waiting on my interview with Bill, I said a little prayer to myself, " Lord, please let me get this job, not for me, but for my children". Bill came out of his office and called me in and I was upfront about everything.

By the time the interview was over, we were talking as if we had known each other for years. Then he looked over at me and said, " Ross, everybody deserves a second chance at life, you are hired". Within two months I was

able to get my own place and out of the Federal Halfway House. Now, two years later I got my family back, a good job, and a set of nine-month-old twin daughters. As I look back on the day I made my decision, I realize I took a chance that changed my life. Now, I am able to give my children a future and a father to be proud of.