

1 Robert Bell 4/27/2022

2 D: Great. Can you tell me a little bit about yourself? What is your age?

3 R: I'm 44.

4 D: What race are you?

5 R: African American.

6 D: And what gender are you?

7 R: Male.

8 D: What neighborhood or area of Milwaukee do you live, like Brewer's Hill for that's an
9 example?

10 R: [Lindsay Park neighborhood].

11 D: How long have you lived there?

12 R: Probably two and a half years?

13 D: So, you remember where your story happened?

14 R: Yes.

15 D: If so, what was the general area? Sherman Park, Whitefish Bay, Schlitz Park? This is for
16 mapping purposes.

17 R: Yeah, well [in the Washington Heights neighborhood], [in the area of Midtown n], [in the
18 Amani neighborhood], [in the Harambee neighborhood], and [also in the North Division
19 neighborhood], it was pretty much everywhere.

20 D: Wow. Well please share your story.

21 R: (laughs) My name is Robert Bell. I am the pastor of the Life Church Milwaukee Campus
22 today. It's been 10 years I've been saved, but it wasn't always that way. I grew up in a home that
23 was, man I love my parents, I grew up in a home that was full of violence and full of alcoholism.
24 My mother was young. She had six kids by the time she was twenty-one, and I recognize, yeah,
25 my momma looks good that's probably why they—(laughs) but she had six kids by the time she
26 was twenty-one, so I always felt like I wondered was she ashamed, but she didn't seem like it.
27 She always took us everywhere, and my stepfather was a part of it. He's all I know. I've never
28 met my biological father and there's five boys and one girl. I'm the oldest. And so, growing up
29 you know I just kind of clinged to my grandmother. She stayed [in the Galena Street
30 neighborhood]. I kind of clinged to her and I was her baby and so I would go back and forth to
31 her house because you just get tired sometimes of all the violence and all the fighting, the abuse
32 because it started off my stepfather would get violent with my mom, or he'd leave the house for
33 weeks and come back (unintelligible) we just went through stuff like that. He barely kept a job
34 you know. So, it was kind of hard for my mother. Man it was really hard on my mother. I could
35 tell sometimes by the way we dressed you know our clothes were clean, but it wasn't up to par
36 stuff like that at times. It happened over my mom, and they would do things differently. I woke
37 up one day like "Mom, I want to stay with my grandma." She didn't want, I could tell by her
38 eyes she didn't want me to, but I ended up going over there and my grandma, that neighborhood
39 was just infested with gangs, POS ghetto boys, trade gangs. It was all these trade gangs and
40 things like that. So, I would get chased all the time in that neighborhood man, I'm telling you for
41 real because I wasn't that type of guy. I became somebody else. So, I ended up stop running one
42 day, just start hanging with these one guys, and my whole world turned around. And I ended up

43 joining, getting gang affiliated, GD, then you know in the hood everybody had their titles, so we
44 decided to be the “Lynch Mob.” So, Lynch Mob started off small, just a few guys in the
45 neighborhood then it started to grow, and I was around pretty tough guys, you know I have a
46 friend who just got out and did 20 years for murdering somebody. So, it just started like that, and
47 people started to kill at an early age, and they didn’t allow me to get involved with them but then
48 as time went on you know I just wanted to fit in. I was just a little church boy, real kind and they
49 knew that, but they didn’t let me do too much because of that. But one day I did a robbery with
50 them, and I was just with them, and I wasn’t going to do it but I said, “Man I want to do it, I’ll do
51 it,” just to fit in. I still remember and I had 11 dollars in my sock because my grandma had told
52 me, my grandma always kept some money on me. She said she doesn’t want me stealing, so I
53 had like 11 dollars in my sock. I had bus fare to get back home and a few other guys didn’t so
54 there was just a lot of us so I end up just wanting to fit in and did a robbery and I ended up with,
55 well I got away and a couple of guys got caught and they told them. So, I woke up the next day
56 getting ready for school and the police was all outside. I was around 14, and I went to Ethan
57 Allen school for a year, but they didn’t do anything but make me angry. So, when I got out, I was
58 a whole different person, man, talking about for real. So, I decided when I got out, I was cool
59 with all my guys still on Galena Street. They knew it, but I was a different person, but I wanted
60 to be my own leader. So, I ended up moving. My brothers, they got bigger, they got older in the
61 gang, and so I brought it home. I was coming home Lynch Mob. Even though we moved Lynch
62 Mob to Galena Street, I was over here now [in the Sherman Park area]. I’m over there and I got,
63 and there was (inaudible) but it was about making money. We were all cool, respecting each
64 other. It was just about hustling, getting girls and all that type of stuff. I was (inaudible), but I
65 don’t want to beat anybody, I don’t want to be a follower, so I mean it was always put in me. See

66 I'm passionate. I'm a leader, and so I was in there, but I just used it in the wrong direction, and I
67 brought it home. My mother got involved in it. She even got "Lynch Mob Queen" on her arm to
68 this day. We all, everybody, all my brothers got involved, my little sister, everybody got
69 involved. Even to this day, all my little nephews they kind of trickled over, so it's just like man,
70 generational curse though.

71 D: What made you think that becoming a part of a gang or even starting a gang would be
72 beneficial, and how did you convince your mother?

73 R: Because the streets were rough and it was like you wanted a way out, wanted to do something
74 different but it's just like you just I was a product of my environment it was like okay I go to
75 school, but I come back and it was the same thing going on. That's all you saw. You didn't see
76 yourself. I didn't see myself being better, or I didn't see any type of good coming out of my life.
77 And I tried so hard and, but nothing would come out of it. But when I came home and then I got
78 in the gang, I guess my mother saw that I was serious, I guess. And my mother always has been a
79 leader, she hasn't ever been nobody's follower I mean, she, in our family, she was always,
80 everybody always came to our house. We never experienced living in a house by ourselves.
81 Everybody always stayed with us, so it was never like a home. It was a house, and so she had
82 that leader mentality so when I came home I guess she sort of welcomed it, and then my little
83 brothers came down in the gang and they kind of changed the game because I started going in
84 and out of prison all of us started going in and out of prison and that was just our lifestyle so it
85 was kind of like my mother just lined up with it. Still to this day, I still hear her coming in the
86 house like "Lynch Mob!" you know? And you think back like my mother was deep in the gang
87 like we sold dope for my mother, and our mother was just a leader, and I guess straight up and
88 that's all I can say about her and that's like how it happened but as time went on, we got deep in

89 the gang and people were getting hurt all over the place. We had all the girls in the hood so, and
90 then we started throwing parties [in the Amani area]. That was really bad, man it got really bad.
91 This was in the 90's, early 90's and people were scared to walk that way we were so mean but
92 we had all the girls, so we thought, "Okay, let's throw parties." And I'm telling you we started
93 throwing those house parties and it was dollar to get in and if you leave, it was two dollars to get
94 back in and it was all night and we made a bunch of money and by us having all the girls, it
95 brought all the dudes, it brought all of us so it was just a lot and our life just went to a whole
96 other level. Alcoholism got really bad for my mom, me and my brothers smoking weed, waking
97 up going to sleep drinking. I mean not just liquor but Thunderbird and Rose, 20/20, and Cisco.
98 I'm like man, even though that was back in the day (laughs).

99 D: Wow (laughs).

100 R: Yeah, you that's the type of liquor you had you were walking on top of somebody's house.
101 But yeah, and so as time went on I just ended up, we ended up doing crimes, robberies, and stuff
102 like that so we would get caught for guns. My brothers and me get caught up with guns. I never
103 got caught with a gun, but my brothers got, couple of my brothers, got caught with pistols doing
104 time, get out. But every last one of us experienced prison, which was bad and a lot of guilt on me
105 coming up. But I remember I was in prison. And then this one hit home. I was in prison. I'd get a
106 call. I'd call home and they was like, "You know your cousin J-Money got killed?" And that's
107 my mom's sister's son. He always was our family so he was like our brother and my Auntie [...]
108 and my mom would be the only one in our family to experience this outside my uncle because
109 my uncle lost a son to a murder too in Racine. My mother raised him since he was a baby, so J-
110 Money and my cousin [...] both got killed and they both stayed with us you know this weird
111 because of this gang stuff, just bringing this stuff home one day. Just decided one day to bring it

112 home, and it escalated. Then when it was time I wanted out on my way out because you just feel
113 obligated you just stand there you did some stuff. But when my cousin J- Money got killed I was
114 in prison. I had just seen him too. He had just left because we were in Dodge together and Dodge
115 Correction. I had just seen him and I was like, “What’s up man?” [...] Me and him had just did a
116 robbery together. And that’s what I was in there for but he got away. But he ended up getting
117 [inaudible] for some weed. So, when he was up in there he was telling me, he said, “The police
118 like man, it was like your cousin told on you.” [...] He was like, “I know we aren’t kicking like
119 that so I stuck to my [...]” I was like, and he was like, “I know you didn’t say nothing but they
120 were saying it.” And I was like, “Man I’m glad you didn’t because they would have hit us with a
121 40 piece.” But I was talking to him, and he got out probably like three weeks later because he
122 had a little weed. He got caught with some weed, but he got [inaudible]. And I got a chance to
123 see him before he died. So when he got out he was down there on by Wendy’s [in the
124 Washington Park area], somewhere down here by the highway and he was coming out of one of
125 the little clubs. Back then it was [...], he was coming out and they killed him. Some dude came
126 around the corner and shot him in the stomach, and he dropped down and he died. That’s when it
127 was real. I was like man, you know when you’re in the gang, it’s like you’re unapproachable. It’s
128 like nobody can touch you, you know what I’m saying? Especially when you’ve got pistols. We
129 had so many pistols it was ridiculous. And we had a name and a reputation, so you feeling like,
130 “Man nobody going to kill nobody or nothing.” It’s like real. But, we were dealing with demons.
131 We weren’t dealing with people. We were dealing with demons.

132 D: Wow, what, how old would you say your cousin was when he got killed?

133 R: J-Money had to be at least (pause) he was young, he was like 21, 22.

134 D: Oh wow.

135 R: Yep. He probably had to be, yeah, he was young. He got killed young man and his killer, we
136 have not found, they have not found his killer to this day.

137 D: Oh my gosh.

138 R: Yeah, it's been a, nobody had said nothing. I mean everybody has their clues of what
139 happened and stuff like that, but I'd rather not talk about that. But everybody had their say so on
140 how he got killed.

141 D: How did this experience of losing J-Money affect you?

142 R: Well, it affected me because his mother is my favorite auntie and that was her only son. He
143 had three sisters, I mean biologically, and from his mother, he had three sisters [...]. So, they all
144 knew because that's my mom. It's kind of like my momma's favorite sister. They were always
145 around so when he got killed it bothered, you know, it affected my mind because it was like man,
146 it was close to home. That's what it is it was actually close to home so that kind of messed me up
147 in the streets, and I'm like, "We ain't untouchable." You know. Like, "Man, they had killed one
148 of mine. Who'll be next?" That's how I felt. But as time went on, is there something else? Do
149 you want to say something?

150 D: I was going to say how would you say it affected your family?

151 R: Oh man, it affected our family (pause) big time. I know my auntie (pause) even to this day she
152 still asks people to "You know anything?" You know that wound is still open. That's her baby,
153 and it affected our family big time. I mean, his sisters, my sister, I only got one sister. She's the
154 last one. See we were just talking about him the other day. It was like, man, you couldn't, she
155 just said it. She said when J-Money died she kind of missed, it kind of prepared her for our
156 brother's death that came right after that which I will get to. But it was kind of, it messed

157 everyone up. He's been gone now for a long time. I forgot the year, but I know it was around
158 2001 or something like that.

159 D: Wow.

160 R: Yeah.

161 D: How would you say it affected, J-Money's death affected our community?

162 R: Man, yeah it always will affect the community. Murder it always affects the community in the
163 inner city because you get people thinking of retaliation, you know. You've got people, it'll
164 make people scared to come outside you know. It affects the community. It affects the mind of
165 the people.

166 D: How do you think, I know you were locked up then but thinking back and receiving all the
167 information, how do you think this could have been avoided?

168 R: Making right choices (laughs) (pause) I mean everybody got their own choices I just believe
169 like how it could have been avoided it's like, staying in school, finishing school, not going down
170 a different path then what God created for you because He'll know. He'll know when you're out
171 of line. He'll know be off and you'll be sticking to how you avoid that. You got to stick to your
172 guns. You have got to stick to that path that you know is right. I believe that's how it could have
173 been avoided.

174 D: You mentioned earlier that after you got out of Ethan Allen or after you got out, you were a
175 different person, and you just said how it could have been avoided was if you stayed in school
176 and made the right choices. What made it so hard for you back then to make the right choices or
177 to stay in school?

178 R: Good question. I was in Wells, and I'm telling you, I was going back to school and getting my
179 credits and stuff like that but when I got out, I mean, my mind, I changed up. It was just like
180 when I hit the streets, I went back to that. That's what made it tough when I went right back to
181 that environment. I'm going to tell you, this is crazy, is that when I got out, I told my mom,
182 "Ain't nothing changed." Everybody was doing the same thing. It was just everybody was
183 drinking, smoking, not working. Violence continued, you know. Hearing ambulances every day.
184 It was just like there wasn't a way out.

185 D: Then since you were an adult, and this may not have crossed your mind, but did you have the
186 option to relocate?

187 R: Yeah, I had the option to relocate since I was, well my son's mother, his name is little Rob
188 Robert Jr, and we ended up getting a house. I was probably like 18 to 19, and we ended up
189 getting a house and it was [in the Washington Heights area]. And we were in an apartment
190 building, and it was next door to this grocery store called [...]. But back then our apartment
191 building was a nice area and all that and I loved home. I loved staying in that home. I didn't even
192 want to come outside some days but I, every time I get a call or something like "Hey man, hey
193 hey such and such" and then I got to come out because everybody was still in the game. I'm just
194 telling you, I'm being honest with you even though I brought it home and I did that, I wanted
195 out. But when you've got little brothers in the gang and your momma, she's right in the thick of
196 it, it's like you just feel obligated.

197 D: What gave you the courage to finally walk away, to finally say to your little brothers and your
198 mom that you wanted to change, and how did that affect them?

199 R: Well, my whole life went down like after my brother got killed. When I was in prison, and I
200 wanted to change, and I was changing because I started going to bible studies in prison. I started
201 doing what was right and I ended up, and I was getting out and I was like, "I'm going to change"
202 and all that. But I get a call one day. The social worker told me to come. I was getting out. My
203 brother got killed February 12th, and I was getting out February 28th. And I get a call from the
204 social workers, and they call me and tell me to come down to the office and they told me my
205 brother was murdered. And so, it kind of messed me up. Here I am ready to get out, I was on the
206 right page. I had my mind all in the right place and that took me right back to drinking heavy
207 (pause) and that lasted. Then I ended up getting married. Well, I was already married before that
208 and so that. Then the marriage wasn't working, and my life was just tumbling man. I was just
209 drinking then. Going in and out of prison, county jail. I mean all of this, just constantly, man.
210 Just constantly. And one day I was with this girl, and I was sitting in the house. I wouldn't come
211 out for months. I would drink and just stay in the house. Get beer. It was like I was scared to
212 come outside. It was just my whole life went down, and I was just sitting in the house one day
213 and I was drinking and smoking a cigarette literally and I was turning the tv channel and there
214 was this gospel station and he said that the devil, he said, "You, watching tv right now." He said,
215 The devil. God will give you back everything the devil has been stealing from you." And I heard
216 God speak to me. I heard my whole heart burned. I mean literally my heart burned. And I put
217 down the beer and the cigarette and I put my hands in the air, and I said, "Lord, I hear you
218 calling me, but I don't know no way out." But I remembered this staff member at Teen
219 Challenge named [...] and so I called him, and I said, "Hey man, I hear God calling me," and I
220 said, "I don't want to live like this anymore." And he was like, "Come on to the program." And I
221 was there, and I got there December 12th, 2012. And I had a made-up mind. I was never the

222 same. I went in there, I haven't drunk a beer or smoked a cigarette or any type of drugs, no
223 alcohol none of that. Or been violent since that day.

224 D: Wow. I mean it sounds like God literally touched you.

225 R: Yeah literally. I was never, never the same.

226 D: When you, so I know your big issue was before concern about your brothers and your mom,
227 how did you tell them about this new change?

228 R: I didn't. I wanted them to see it, you know? I was like, I'm not going to be a talker anymore.
229 Let me get myself, let me deal with some issues in my life and let me practice instead of being
230 angry let me practice kindness (laughs). So, I was asking God to help me in these areas, and then
231 I mean really took off in my life. But I was like "No, I'm done talking. I want to let them see,"
232 and so one of the wounds that I had was a father wound because I never met my real father. I
233 never met him. So, I always wanted to meet him and stuff like that but something really tragic
234 happened with my father, with my mother, and how I was conceived. And that's going to be in
235 my book coming out soon, but I always wanted a father and that's what it was. It was a father
236 wound. And I remember walking into a counselor's office and I got to Teen Challenge about a
237 week in and he was like, "Robert, I noticed that you talk about you wish you had a father and
238 stuff like that," and I said "Yeah" and he said "Well look" and got me a piece of paper and a
239 crayon and said, "If you knew your real father, what would you be doing with him right now?"
240 And I drew a house, a kickball. We were all in the yard, and I was like 33 man. (laughs) I was
241 probably like—

242 D: (laughs)

243 R: Yeah, literally like 31 or 32 somewhere around that area, and he said, man, so we talked about
244 it a little bit so then when I end up leaving his office. From 6 to 6:30 is our counseling session
245 and everybody, all his students they're at study hall from 6 to 7, so we were done at 6:30 but
246 usually he would walk me out of his office and walk me up. This day he stayed in his office. He
247 seemed, I was broken. I never felt that way before about how important a father was, so I walked
248 out to the hall and I took like eight steps, literally, I started crying man. I'm talking about
249 weeping and asking God to forgive me and like all my faults like starting coming home, bringing
250 the gang life, my brother getting murdered, my cousin getting murdered, and I want to talk about
251 my brother too a little bit mor. But my brother getting murdered, my cousin getting murdered.
252 All these thoughts start flooding my mind. All the wrong I was doing and all that, all the shame,
253 all the guilt, all the fear, start flooding my mind, flooding, and flooding it. Then I just spoke out
254 to God. I said, "Father." I mean literally I said, "I want to find my real father." So, I probably
255 wouldn't have been in so much trouble had not taken this road I took, and I mean literally, and it
256 got really quiet, and I heard God the Father says to me literally, He said, "I've been your father
257 the whole time." I heard God speak to me and nobody can take that away from me, as real as
258 day. He said, "I've been your father the whole time." And man, I just, joy started shooting
259 through my body. I've never experienced the Holy Spirit like I did. It was powerful. And I was
260 changed and since that day in that hallway Him speaking to me made the difference man. I didn't
261 know He spoke, and He spoke to me, and it's been real in my life to this day. That voice that day
262 changed my life. So right after that I started going to a different ministry because Teen
263 Challenge, we go to different churches, and we start, we do testimonies, and we sing songs
264 because it's not government funded. So, we go all around Wisconsin and get donations to keep
265 the business running, [Vogel Park area]. And at the one service, I did my testimony and this guy

266 walked up to me and was like, “Hey,” he said, “Listen. I’ve never felt the Holy Spirit like this in
267 10 years.” He said, “10 years,” I’ll never forget. He was like, “I am convinced that God wants
268 me to pay for your school, your first year of ministry school. You’ve got to go to school, and I’m
269 going to pay for it.” And so, I was like, “Oh man.” I was like, “Dang.” I couldn’t believe it. He
270 gave me check. I took it back to Teen Challenge and once I graduated, they put it in the safe and
271 once I graduated Teen Challenge, I was able to go back to school, Eastside Ministry School.
272 Once I got done with the, I was close to the end of the first year, which was scary because I was
273 in the classroom with lawyers and judges, prominent people. People that, I’m a 9th grade dropout.
274 I’m sitting in these classes, you know and I’m like dang, but I got all A’s. I got a couple B’s, and
275 my knowledge is just outstanding and all these people around me, they noticed my gift as well. I
276 just have a passion for the Word, and so I was at the end of my first year, and then all the sudden
277 [...] of Teen Challenge ministry, he was like, “Hey how are you doing in school?” and I said,
278 “I’m about to graduate and get my certified level,” and he was like, “How would you like it if I
279 paid for your license level?” I said, “For real?” “Yep.” And he paid for my license level, so right
280 back-to-back. See, God was keeping me focused and putting something before me so I wouldn’t
281 stop, that’s just how He always had to deal with me. God deals with different people in different
282 ways. Some people can just walk without seeing anything sometime and I learned that, but I’m
283 able to see something and He knew that time in my life I had to have something right there or I
284 would probably go back. And so, the third year, I ended up paying for my own year, the ordained
285 level, which is the highest level in the Assemblance of God. I ended up paying for myself and I
286 graduated with honors. God sent me a wife, which, who is outstanding, named Patrice Bell, and
287 is an awesome wife. Got seven kids all together, and we got three older boys and four girls, and
288 this God brought two families together. So, ever since then I’ve been doing okay and then.

289 D: Wow. So, instead of talking, as you said, you showed the changes in your life. What
290 happened with your siblings and your mom?

291 R: Oh man, what happened was once I got started walking with the Lord and staying consistent
292 in kindness and then staying consistent with staying away from alcohol and drugs and stuff. I
293 didn't even have taste for it. That was big. God took that away from my life. That was huge to
294 help me in that area, so I could tackle other areas. My mom and my dad and my siblings they
295 were actually proud of me. They were like, man. But once I became, as I continue, I ended up [in
296 the St. Joseph area]. I'm the Pastor now at the Life Church Milwaukee Campus. I was here and
297 God turned my life around, but my mom is, and my dad is still drinking heavy. Like my mother
298 got so little you could see her bones. And a lot of that drinking came when she lost my brother
299 that she never healed from that wound, but she's doing a lot better, let me get to it, but she never
300 healed from that wound. And so, when I got here, I was driving one day and I said, "Lord please
301 don't let the devil kill my mom and my dad," and, because I saw how little she was. Here He was
302 helping me and I'm doing very well. I'm in this community and I'm like man. And I heard God
303 clear as day while we was driving. He said, "See how the devil used you for your family a long
304 time ago?" Basically. I didn't understand how He said it to me, but it was clear, "You see how
305 the devil used you and look at the tragedy that you brought to the family." He said, "But now
306 watch my power." And literally He said, "Now watch my power with your family," and I start
307 screaming in my car. I had just left the church. Screaming in my car. I said, "Thank you, Lord"
308 just like, "Thank you." Because I remember that voice. It was that same voice that changed my
309 life. And probably months. My mother came to this church one time. She just had to see for
310 herself what God's done in my life. And it blew her mind when she came. Like, "My son is
311 actually a pastor. He's actually got ushers and worshipers." Kind of blew her mind. So, she

312 started to come and one day she called me, and she said, “I’m done drinking baby.” She said,
313 “I’m done.” Because she was still coming here and then would leave and drink and stuff like
314 that. It was like a couple Sundays then I guess the Holy Spirit hit her hard, so I don’t know. But
315 she called me one night and said, “I’m done.” I said, “Mama don’t say nothing,” I’m like, “Don’t
316 say nothing. Every time we say we’re going to start [inaudible] And she was like, “No, I’m done
317 sweetheart.” She said, “I’m saved now. I accepted Christ in my life. I’m done.” My mother been
318 sober since that day, that’s been three years. I’ve been here four years, it’s been going on three
319 years my mother’s been sober three and probably a couple months, my mother’s been sober and
320 healthy and vibrant. She’s on the host team here at the church. My sister, my baby sister, she’s
321 consistent. She loves the church, and my brothers go periodically. They’re still knuckleheads, but
322 they aren’t killing anybody, all of them have families and they all call me. So little by little, I got
323 all my nephews and my nieces they all come here periodically. They just bounce in especially
324 when they’re like, “I need to talk.” So, I was using my gift in the wrong way but now I’m using
325 it for what is as created for, meant to help people in the right way.

326 D: You got me over here crying, laughing, and crying (laughs)

327 R: (laughs) and hey I want to talk about my brother, can I?

328 D: Yes, please talk about your brother.

329 R: Yeah, I and I just want to say when I got that call February 12th, I think it was around 2006
330 somewhere around. You know I’m so confused man it kind of like was a blur. That I was, they
331 called me down, said, “Your brother was killed last night at a club called [...] on Green Bay,” or
332 some street like that. And I remember when I got out I went and looked at this club, and it was so
333 little. And I’m like, “Man what were you doing here?” But you know some people just you know

334 it's crazy how people be in a certain places and you'd be like, "Why was he here?" You know?
335 And they said, so that night when I went back to my cell that night everybody knew they were
336 like, "Rob Base," because my alias is Rob Base, but everybody knew I was changed. I am not
337 with all that. So, there was a lot of respect for whatever I did, whatever I chose, and I went in the
338 room that night and for some reason my roommate that day had to go out of town because he had
339 a case. He was going to Oshkosh somewhere for a case. And it's quiet and so, and God knew I
340 needed that time alone, but I remember I was laying there, and I was heartbroken, man. That's
341 my baby brother. Me, [my brothers] under me, Kenny was the third of us. James, we called him
342 Tydow, that's who got killed, and then Pee-Wee he's the fifth. And then my sister is the last, so
343 he was right in the middle and man it broke my heart. And I still have thoughts of him when he
344 was a kid. I used to always have to watch him, and he used to cry a lot. My mom always you
345 know, they called him Popeye Fish. My grandma called him that and was like, I remember we
346 used to cry, "Boy be quiet." It was always a respect level. He always had a respect, all my
347 brothers. But I remember I went that night I was laying in the bed, and I went and unlocked my
348 locker. I took some pictures out. You don't take pictures out and put them in on the walls cause,
349 "That was my girl we used to go together," and mess your whole bit up. So I took out pictures
350 and I had two. Took all his pictures out and for some reason that night it seemed like he was
351 cold, man, because I could just see him laying in the street like they said. You know he had one
352 leg up looking up. And so, I put his picture on my chest because I thought he was cold. It was
353 like my mind just left man. It was crazy. And my mother was broken. Man, I just know. And
354 then that's what made her drink (inaudible). My sister said, she was telling her the other day, we
355 was talking about J-Money and how she said how J-Money helped her to deal with my brother
356 Tydow's death because they both were so close knit. But my mother won't eat. And I'm hearing

357 about it, and man I'm broken. You know how long two weeks is when you getting out on the 28th
358 and your little brother gets killed on February 12th. I couldn't even make the funeral and none of
359 that. It was crazy. But it was all three of us who was in there. The only one that was out was KG
360 my third oldest brother. I told you it was me, Nate, KG, which is Kenny, and James, and they
361 was together, but me, Nate, and my brother Karl, which is my youngest brother, we was all in
362 prison. We was all locked up when he got killed. But these two were together that night. So, KG
363 said, well he was, he called, I called him. He was like, "Man, Bro." He said, "I told him man. I
364 told him, 'Be quiet man.'" And he said they were inside there, and it was over a girl. And my
365 brother's handsome you know. All my brothers. And it was over this girl. And I guess the bar
366 owner and all them, that was his girl and something like that, but she liked my brother. It was
367 cool. My brother was like, "Man, hey look man." They're trying to talk it out and then they're
368 getting tough. You know my brother, none of us, we ain't never backed down. We all got killed
369 that night. Or somebody else. I don't know. But I know we never back down, and I could just see
370 him. And then K knew they were outnumbered. They had pistols and everything, and he said this
371 night they didn't bring them for some reason. And he said they were just out kicking it. And he
372 said that he tried to pick him up. He was telling me he told Tydow to be quiet, and he said, "I
373 even had to pick him up big bro." And he's telling me the story, walking, and he couldn't hardly
374 breathe. And he's all, "I told him. I told him bro. I told him." So, when they got outside, he said,
375 "We were just about the leave." He said, "And all the dudes was coming outside, surrounded the
376 car with pistols and all that. And K was like, 'Man this is my little brother.' He was like, 'Man
377 we're about to get up out of here, and you all have one up on us. Man just, we're just leaving.
378 Let's squash it.'" He tried to squash it man. And he said everything was cool, and then all of a
379 sudden one dude came out of nowhere and was like, "Man, F that [n-word]" and shot my brother

380 in the chest. And then they said my brother Tydow, the one who got shot, told everybody to
381 “Run!” because my other little cousin was there too. See they was all standing around. He was
382 like, “Run!” And boom. Everybody started to run, and KG said, “Why you running?” because
383 Tydow tried to run, too. And he said while they was running all he heard was (mouths gun shots)
384 like that. And but everything cleared out. He said it was black. Everybody gone. Skidding off in
385 cars, and then all the sudden you just, he said he went back and he looked and he saw somebody
386 laying there in the street. And he knew it was Tydow so he went back. Tydow was laying on his
387 back with his leg up and he said his eyes was open looking up. And he said he was just
388 screaming and hollering. He said, “Man.” You know that haunt him to this day. That haunts my
389 brother to this day. Seeing your brother killed and was with you. And so that affected me man.
390 To this day. And I always think that if I never brought that stuff home, or you know you can’t
391 take stuff back but you be like, “Man.” You know the devil, that guilt, play that guilt trip. I’m
392 forgiven, I know I’m forgiven for all things, but every now and then that guilt trip come back
393 because that’s the devil on the night he was killed still yelling, “Lynch Mob.”

394 D: Oh, wow (pause) what could we do to eliminate or lower gun violence?

395 R: They always say you know get, we need stricter laws and all of that, but I think we got to
396 keep being a voice, you know, in the communities, not just in the church, you know. I think we
397 got to like, pastors, we need to come outside to church. We need to stand on every corner and be
398 heard. Get this on the news, get this on billboards because you have all these rappers on these
399 billboards and steady constantly putting this garbage in these streets. All this rap about killing
400 and all this. You’ve got all these billboards. Take that garbage down and replace it with stop the
401 violence, but also I think one of the biggest ways is, see I look at it from a spiritual standpoint
402 and I know behind the scene we’re dealing with something bigger than guns man. We’re dealing

403 with demonic forces, man, behind the guns that triggered the guns. And I just believe that we
404 need to go get in our families and talk to the ones that we know are knuckleheads in our families
405 instead of just using them for when somebody gets slick with you, you know what I'm saying?
406 And then they come over shooting and all that type of stuff. You know just having that
407 relationship like that with them. But no, just get in their ear and being the light. Be an example.
408 Like me, I'm around my nephews and some of them are up to no good but when they see me,
409 I'm a light and I always have something to say, and I always got a voice against violence and
410 that may be a trigger. But don't stop speaking up on it in our families. And one of the things I got
411 wrote down here was I truly believe small groups and churches are very important, like men's
412 groups, women's groups, youth groups, which I'm apart of here tonight every Wednesday at
413 6:30. And I think those small groups, just, "Hey man come." You know just getting a hold to
414 those people, your families and your friends and getting them to a local church. Just inviting
415 them like, "Hey man," because I believe God can change anybody. I'm an example man. I was a
416 very violent person, and it took some people that I saw that cared and that stayed consistent with
417 me with their love and stayed consistent in their own lives with drinking. They weren't doing
418 that. Every time I've seen them it was the same people that were like. And sometimes we can't
419 help a lot of people because we're not consistent in our own lives. They see you this way this
420 way. Stay consistent for a little while for these people but, that's how I was helped. It was people
421 that were consistent and that I saw that cared and then we went out to lunch, you know? And I
422 still had these same thoughts, but I was sitting with somebody that cared about me and that's,
423 I'm telling you, that's how things change. So, I'm thinking like in our church here on 56th and
424 Burleigh, a reason why our growth is so exponentially literally with every race comes to this
425 church, every race, because that's my heart. And we're trying to reach everybody, every

426 ethnicity. And, but we have these groups here, small groups like women's groups that help
427 struggling mothers, men groups that help brothers that think they tough or think they somebody
428 else other than what they were created to be. We got youth groups here, which I took out a
429 couple, like tonight we be talking about comparison kills compassion and we don't have to be
430 nobody else. So that will be our subject tonight. But the last couple weeks, we talked about how
431 to deal with depression and last week we talked about don't lose hope. So, we have all these
432 subjects, and I'm talking about the subjects here are so powerful and these kids open up. These
433 actually, youths open up, and it starts with us being honest. I started being honest first, and they
434 opened up. They start opening up, and they talk about all types of stuff. But I have pizza, we
435 have foosball, we have paintball, we've got video games here and all that so, because people are
436 social before they are spiritual, they open up, so it's just about building relationships. That's the
437 key, if you don't get anything else, I said it's about building relationships and not being afraid to
438 go to those places that seem dark. Because you're the light, you know? You can't be afraid. I
439 think we need to get out and go to these neighborhoods or go to a barbershop and sit down
440 giving free haircuts just open up a conversation about gun violence and how it's affecting our
441 community at an all-time high. I always think about mothers, and they lose their children, man.
442 My mother was affected, and I know you were sister Debra and my auntie [...] losing her son to
443 violent crime. My uncle [...] his son [...] to a violent crime, and you can't get over that type of
444 stuff. But it can lose its power of having you in this dark place the more we help like what you're
445 doing, helping other people and that's how God helps you and that's very important. That's an
446 important part of healing, helping other people. That's where my healing came. I was helping
447 other people. I am so concerned about Milwaukee. But I truly believe that we need to open up
448 places for small groups just to talk to. I truly believe that. Just build relationships.

449 D: I completely agree with you. What you you like to say to our elected officials?

450 R: I respect all authority and just like what I've been saying this whole time, like don't just talk
451 about it. You have to be about it.

452 D: Question, are they authority or public servants?

453 R: I say both, I say both. They're government officials, and, but I believe that they're authority
454 but they're also servants and they're here to serve the people. And that means we have to see you
455 in the inner city. We have to see you in the community. We have to see you in the community.
456 We have to see you and I mean often, and often in areas that are heavily affected by gun violence
457 and let, because that, lets because when people know you care it changes things man. "I want to
458 talk to you, man. I'm not trying to, listen I know you've got a gun but let me talk to you," you
459 know? And I have that courage because I come from that background. It don't scare me like that
460 you know? And I think a lot of times they be scared because they don't come from that soil.
461 They can make a law for the inner city but sometimes when you don't come from that soil, you
462 can make bad decisions when you don't know the soil. Or you can, you can be fearful to go into
463 that culture.

464 D: What would you say to our community?

465 R: Man, I would say if everybody can hear me now in our community, I would just say I love
466 you, and I wish we could all just start loving each other and build relationships. We just need
467 those relationships. Honest to God. Man, we're so segregated. Milwaukee is so segregated, and I
468 think that's the big problem. And I'm just like, man, people on the northside go on the southside
469 see how they do. People on the eastside come on the northside, you know see how they do. It's
470 so segregated. Suburbs and inner city, everything is so segregated. And I think we can do better

471 in our city if we had relationships. If we learned how to build relationships, get to know other
472 people, because it isn't always what you think man. I'm telling you a lot of people look at me
473 because I've got this cut on my forehead. You know I had a tumor that happened when I was
474 younger, but I got a cut right here and then a one on top of my head and so people will ask me,
475 they'll be like, "Man what happened?" They'll judge me just by scars like, but when I open my
476 mouth, or my size, because I'm a pretty big guy and so when I'm standing next to somebody
477 they like, "Man, you lifting weights?" "Yeah, I take care of myself." But they first thought like
478 "Man, dog, I bet you'd rip a dude's head off," and all that type of stuff but then when I open my
479 mouth, they be like, "Oh my God," (laughs). You know, and I think sometimes we judge people.
480 We're too quick to judge people, and we don't really know them. I think that's the biggest cause
481 of racism, prejudice. I really do. I think it's all about building relationships and it isn't just about
482 racism, but I think that's the key to that, too, and prejudice. It's relationships. Everything I'm
483 saying is about relationships but even inner-city violence it's about relationships. It's about us
484 going around making relationships with cats that we know aren't any good for our city. But by us
485 building our relationship I promise you're going to be the one they call. It a bunch of guys that
486 go here now, I did a funeral probably like a month ago and they, this woman, this mother, she
487 lost she left eight kids behind and all of them, like probably 23, they steps going down all the
488 way down to probably ten or something like that, and it was just sad. And I went there and I
489 talked to them, and I said, "You know what," I was like, "I want to get to know y'all man,"
490 because I didn't, I facilitated, but I wasn't, I didn't officiate the funeral, but when I got to talk to
491 them I was like, "Hey look," and they were all sitting right there you know clean cut, they were
492 player type dudes, like sister, and I looked at all of them and I said, "Look man, I really want to
493 be in your life." Because you could tell by, they were talking about hustling and selling dope and

494 all that type of stuff like, “Y’all are going to be taken care of. I’m going to take care of my
495 sisters,” and talking like that. And, “You know, how we do it. You know.” And I was straight out
496 with them. I say, “Hey, I want to be in your life. I have a church that’s so loving that we have
497 every circle, because relationships are built in circles man. And you can come here. We’ve got
498 women’s groups, men’s groups, we got an afterschool program every day, we’ve got youth night.
499 We in the neighborhood. We do so much stuff with the Lord’s help. People invest, but we do so
500 much.” I said, “We can help y’all.” And I promise you after that service, I walked up to them and
501 got their number. And I said, “Let me get your number.” I said, “I am going to call you.” And
502 these are tough acting dudes you know. I said, “I’m going to call you.” So, every now and then I
503 call them, but I’ve been seeing them every Sunday. I’ve just seen one this Sunday. God know
504 I’m not lying. He walked up to me, he’s like, “Man, pastor, you are bringing it. I understand.” He
505 said, “Man, I understand.” And I was so happy because I am from the streets so, I got, when I
506 preach, I bring it to you. You need to be able to eat off this plate. It’s like okay, and even my
507 verbiage, I get gangster sometimes, but I stay holy. But I had to reach these guys and once I
508 reach them I’m good. I am not going to sag my pants to reach them. I ain’t not wearing no belt.
509 But what I can do is build relationships and be like, “Let me get your number, and I know how
510 you’re living. I know, but I can call you.” And man, every time I call, they’re like, “What’s up
511 Pastor Bell! What’s up?” They be excited because I’m taking time out of my day, and they know
512 they’re living crazy, but they know I care. They know I love them.

513 D: That goes back to your consistency (laughs).

514 R: Right.

515 D: Well, I’m at the end of my questions, I want to thank you unless you have something you
516 want to add?

517 R: No

518 D: I appreciate this. This was just uplifting. I had a roller coasters of emotions. I cried. I laughed
519 (laughs). I yelled, "Hallelujah!" You couldn't hear me, but I did all those things (laughs).

520 R: I just hope that what's been said today will help somebody because I was that person. And
521 God, I just don't think it worked without God. And this is mine, this is my segment, I know y'all
522 going to play my segment but this the way I think, this is what I feel, and I just feel like I said at
523 a violence program that we had here at church when I met you, sister Debra, I just feel that when
524 God is not first in a person's life, listen, people pick up a gun but if you decide to start living like
525 keeping God first and things like that I mean you're a different person. And I believe in
526 programs. I do. Like I said I think we need to have service, you know, build service and things
527 like that. But I just truly believe if like what I did I put God first and it changed everything. Man
528 listen. It changed everything, man. Even today I woke up, soon as I woke up, "Lord, I thank
529 you." That's putting Him first. "Guide me through this day, you know, and that I don't think
530 about killing nobody." I'm thinking about helping people but when I put Him in my life it took
531 all this selfishness and it allowed me to see people for who they were, man. And then when you
532 do get to know other people, you kind of find out like, "Man, this person ain't that bad." And
533 now some people you be like, "Okay. Alright. God bless you brother. Keep it moving," you
534 know because you don't want anybody who's going to subtract in your life or divide. You're
535 looking for all people who's going to multiply you and that's going to add to your life. And I'm
536 not saying everybody, you know, is going to fit the criteria of what I'm talking about, but
537 everybody can get to know somebody. Can build relationships with somebody. And you can pick
538 them out. You can be like, "No, it's cool," but love everybody. You know everybody needs to
539 be loved, but God will put people in your life that you will know like, "I got to be concerned

540 about this,” like them kids I was talking about. These are all teenagers, and for some reason I
541 think they’ve got guns. But the more I stay consistent with them maybe something will spark.
542 D: Amen! Thank you I want to stop recording.