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A Strang Publication

Attorney Tyrone Flowers seeks to mentor young men through his Higher M-Pact organization

Ministry 'Disciples' At-Risk Urban Males

O'Dell Jackson broke into houses to make money to feed his family. Shawndell Moss was selling cocaine at age 11 and two years later began serving a four-year drug sentence. At age 13 Pierre Ward was living on his own in the streets of Kansas City, Mo.

Today they all are headed to college thanks to Tyrone Flowers, founder of Higher M-Pact, a faith-based organization that disciples at-risk young men.

An attorney, Flowers is no stranger to the streets of Kansas City. He lived with his grandmother until he was 7 and then lived in state juvenile facilities until he was 17. From age 15 to age 16 he was incarcerated at McCune School for Boys in Independence, Mo., for being uncontrollable.

"I was told that I wouldn't make it and that I needed to be in special education," he said. "I was diagnosed with ADD and AHD."

At age 17, he moved in with a drug-addicted aunt but kept her addiction secret to avoid being returned to juvenile facilities.

"I had to take care of myself," he said. "We had no electricity, and sometimes I would have to steal milk so I could eat my cereal. No one had any idea that most times I didn't have anything to eat."

Flowers was a high school basketball star with the potential of earning an athletic scholarship. But a gunshot ended those hopes.

"I was on a bus with my friends, and I got into an argument with a guy from school," he said. "When we got off the bus,

he pulled out a gun and shot me."

Flowers was left paralyzed from the waist down and confined to a wheelchair. "I was planning on killing the guy, but before I could get him, God got me," he said.

During his senior year of high school, he moved in with another relative who attended Harvest Church, a charismatic congregation in Kansas City.

"I got saved and healed of the pain from that time to where I have a healthy relationship with the [shooter] today," he said.

Flowers attended Penn Valley Community College and then went on to the University of Missouri in Columbia, where he launched a weekly Bible study for students. Dr. Ellis Ingram, a Christian and prominent pathologist at University Hospital, attended the Bible study and began mentoring Flowers. "I was really impressed with Tyrone's ability to share the Word of God," Ingram said. "God really moved in those Bible studies."

The summer before he graduated, Flowers was an intern at McCune School for Boys. He thought the assignment would be easy, but the dungeon-like atmosphere revived painful memories. "I didn't think God could use me here," he said.

Then Flowers started talking with a boy in the cell he once occupied.

"When I told him that he was staying in my former cell, I'll never forget the smile on that kid's face," Flowers said. "He

was proud to have something in common with me."

The staff noticed that it took Flowers only a few hours to build the trust and rapport that took them months to develop. "These youth were abused and neglected, and a lot of them are too embarrassed to talk about it," he said. "The staff had no clue about the issues they had to deal with."

During those times of talking with the young men, Flowers said God crystallized his calling. "It became clear as the sky is blue," he said. "I realized that this is my calling. From then on, every decision I made was to fulfill this God-given purpose. That's when I decided to go to law school."

Doors began to open for him to share his testimony. At prisons, inmates clamored for his autograph. At banquets, individuals were moved after he shared his story. A ministry was being born that would send him back to where he started.

After he graduated from law school, Flowers founded Higher M-Pact to reach high-risk urban males. "I'm going after the worst of the worst," he said. "I want the guys who are sexually active, society throwaways and drug dealers. I plan on being in their lives from one to 10 years. I limit the group to no more than 15, who I call my leaders."

Jackson, Moss and Ward are part of that group. "Jesus had 12 disciples, but He ministered to the masses," Flowers said. "He gave the disciples the knowledge to create a foundation and then left it up to them. I'm not here to make decisions for them."

Instead, Flowers leads by example. "I've learned a lot from Tyrone," Moss said. "When I was locked up, he was the only one who was there for me. I'm real fortunate. He helped me learn a lot about life."

—LEILANI HAYWOOD
in Kansas City, Mo.



» Tyrone Flowers

COURTESY HIGHER M-PACT