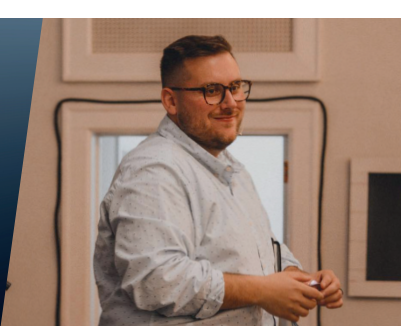


# From Dealing Drugs to Sharing Hope



## *Overview*

Ricky Wilson's journey begins in a tumultuous environment.

Born to parents who became drug addicts when he was just 12 years old, Wilson experienced a childhood marked by neglect and abuse. His parents exposed him to dangerous substances and subjected him to harmful situations, leaving deep scars on his young soul. "I would look at people with this anger inside of my heart, knowing that I didn't have parents who cared for me, knowing that I didn't have a family who cared for me," Wilson said.

## *Battling Addiction*

As he entered his teenage years, Wilson became a drug dealer, selling drugs to his peers and resorting to violence to protect his territory. Violence became routine as he spiraled deeper into a world of darkness and despair. To cope with the anguish he carried within, Wilson turned to drugs that offered him temporary relief from his inner turmoil. For eight long years, he battled addiction while also shouldering the responsibilities of raising his young niece, who had been sold into trafficking by her own mother.

Amidst the chaos and brokenness, a glimmer of hope emerged in the form of Wilson's oldest sister. She invited Wilson to church, but he initially resisted, harboring negative perceptions of what church represented. "I didn't want to go to church because I didn't think they cared about me," Wilson said. However, after persistent invitations, he relented and agreed to accompany his sister.

## *Experiencing Grace*

The moment Wilson stepped into that church and heard the song "Nothing but the Blood," something within him shifted. "When I heard that, something inside of me snaps. It felt like I had been changed," Wilson said. Just months prior, Wilson had taken someone's life in a moment of rage, an act that haunted him. But as he sat in that congregation, the words of the pastor echoed in his ears, proclaiming the boundless love and forgiveness of Jesus Christ.

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