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OUR MISSION:

Passionately sharing the love of Christ with hope to transform the lives of urban youth, their families, and the communities in which they live.



Sozo Missions

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Life is a journey we all must endure but no one person's story is the same. My story is one of a felon turned executive director.

My name is Dwayne Parker, better known as Bishop Freeze. I was born in Bradenton, FL and when I was 11 years old my family relocated to a rough neighborhood in Tacoma, WA – it was this move and my mother meeting my felonious stepfather that my life took a turn for the worse. My family moved constantly to stay one step ahead of the law. By the age of 14, my stepfather taught me how to steal, sell drugs, fight, and shoot a gun. Like many young children, I was easily influenced by my surroundings and the people in my life and found myself drawn to life in the streets of Hilltop Tacoma – a life of crime and wrongdoing was all I knew, it became second nature to me. I spent much of my juvenile life committing crimes and in and out of detention centers (7 times to be exact). Gangs ruled the streets, and I realized that to survive I would need to either be in a gang or start a gang. I came to the conclusion that if I had to be in a gang, I was going to be the leader, so I chose to start a gang – to become one of the worst gangs in Washington – and I was dubbed as “OG Freeze”. We committed numerous felonies and for the better part of the next 13 years, I found myself in and out of prison. By 2000, I had done and seen enough to realize that the life of crime was not one I wanted to continue to follow, but it would take something powerful to turn this hardened criminal around. And it happened one October day when I reluctantly decided to go to a chapel service in prison presented by a local prison ministry. There I heard something I had never heard before ... I could be loved. I could be loved despite all the bad things I had done. That night while in my prison cell, I was drawn into repentance by God. I got on my knees in fervent prayer and surrendered my life to Christ, asking the Lord to come into my heart and change me from my wicked ways and break the curse of sin, crime, violence and gangs in my life. From that day forward, the man known as “OG Freeze” was no more and the reformation of the man to become “Bishop Freeze” had started. I couldn't get enough of the message that love was available to anyone, and I wanted to know more about this God who could love someone like me. I was due to serve life in prison without the possibility of parole, however, when I stood before a judge in court just 15 months after that life-changing moment in my prison cell, I was only sentenced to 3 years.

After being released from prison in 2003, I did not go back to my gang and life of crime; I joined Youth for Christ and helped start Sozo (which means *salvation*), an inner-city, outreach ministry in Hilltop Tacoma – the same community where I had started a gang over 15 years prior. In 2011, God called me back home to Bradenton, FL and it is here that I started Sozo Missions. Similar to the Sozo in Washington, I founded Sozo Missions with the vision to see spiritual transformation in urban youths, their families and their communities by sharing the love of Christ and engaging them in a life of positivity. And now, I also have the privilege of going into juvenile detention centers to minister to youths in hopes that they, too, will come to know this God whose love and mercy is available to even those whom society has put away.

Sozo Missions takes aim at a mostly pushed aside and discouraged demographic – children who live in neighborhoods surrounded by poverty, violence, crime, substance abuse, stressful family life, and few positive adult role models – and our work is to be intentional and effective in sharing Jesus in a way they can connect with. We see hope and potential in each of these young lives and our message to them is ... **you matter** – not only to us, but to God.

Would you please prayerfully consider joining our team with a monthly financial donation of any amount to help fund my personal staff support with Sozo? These tax-deductible donations can be made online via the Sozo Missions website (www.sozomissions.com) or can be mailed in by check to the address noted below – checks should be made payable to Sozo Missions and in the memo note my name, Dwayne Parker. If a monthly donation is not doable, single donations are welcome and very much appreciated. You can also join my team by becoming a committed prayer partner.

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. – Philippians 2:3-4

Together we can show young people that they matter and bring hope to this generation, and the next!