

MENTORED



ONE PASTOR'S VISION,
ONE REDEEMED PRISONER,
MULTITUDES WON TO CHRIST

BY JOHN W. KENNEDY

Maury Davis is a fast-talking,
high-energy, no-nonsense,

Texas native

who today is senior pastor of the largest Assemblies of God church in Tennessee.

The success Davis has achieved in middle age seems incomprehensible in light of his early life. His alcoholic father left the family after Maury turned 5. Maury started drinking alcohol and using illegal drugs at age 13, and partying became his chief pursuit as a teenager.

Under the influence of drugs and alcohol, Davis murdered a woman in 1975. Davis, at 18, found himself in Dallas County Jail charged with first-degree murder.

A court-appointed psychiatrist labeled Davis an incurable homicidal maniac who would continue killing the rest of his life. The district attorney refused to plea bargain and pushed for a life sentence. Davis received a 20-year term.

Dennis Brewer Sr., the criminal defense attorney Davis' mother and stepfather hired, recently had become a born-again Christian at Calvary Church in Irving, Texas. While consulting with Davis in his cell, Brewer repeatedly asked him if he wanted to pray. Davis had never prayed or even been to church in his life.

Fellow inmate Tommy Joe Wilson also told Davis about the Lord and invited him to read the Bible with him. Davis learned that the apostle Paul wrote much of the New Testament while in prison. At Wilson's invitation, Davis committed his life to Christ as his Savior.

The killing had occurred only a few blocks from Calvary Church. At the request of Brewer, Senior Pastor J. Don George came to visit Davis after his arrest.

"Following a few visits, it became apparent that Maury had a passion for the Lord," George told *Today's Pentecostal Evangel*. "It became a spiritual responsibility and a delight to begin teaching him the ways of God."

Nine months after being locked up, Davis says

he sensed the Holy Spirit's calling to preach the gospel. George arranged for him to take Berean School of the Bible courses.

"A disciple needs to understand the importance of learning God's Word," George says. "I knew if I could communicate a plan of consistent Bible study to Maury Davis, God's Word would do the rest."

So George continued to visit Davis regularly, even though Davis had been sent to a maximum-security prison near Houston and George lived outside Dallas. George disciplined Davis behind bars, instructing him, correcting him, motivating him.

"Jesus disciplined His followers by making them accountable," George says.

During his incarceration, Davis made a profound impact on the inmates around him, with hundreds converting to Jesus Christ.

"Don George helped me understand my past didn't control my future, that Jesus wipes away every sin," Davis says.

The state unexpectedly released Davis after 8½ years of confinement due to prison overcrowding. George knew the tutelage now required an increase in intensity.

"At that point, my first responsibility to him was to make sure he knew how to live as a civilian, after having been incarcerated for so long," says George.

"When a man is released from prison, it's a major culture shock," Davis adds. "He needs somebody he can ask questions, somebody to watch over him and somebody who will not only give him unconditional love, but also unconditional guidance."

Although Davis wanted to start preaching immediately, George recommended he spend six months learning pastoral duties by observing George's own ministry. So Davis accompanied George wherever he went — to his church office, on trips to preach at other churches, jogging, even on a family vacation.

Davis appreciated the mentoring.

"When a man goes to prison, his mind contin-

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ues to grow, but emotionally he becomes stagnant because there are no responsibilities in prison," Davis says. "Although I grew spiritually and intellectually in prison, when I got out I still had the emotions of an 18-year-old."

After six months, George offered Davis a job — as the church janitor. Davis impressed George with his passion for excellence in tackling all the tasks associated with the assignment. As he matured, Davis was promoted to supervise

the maintenance staff and then became George's administrative assistant. The church eventually hired Davis as youth pastor, a role in which he led dozens of young people to salvation in Jesus. Davis also met his wife, Gail, at Calvary Church, where she served as pianist for the choir.

George's commitment to discipleship has proven effective in his church's growth. He became senior pastor of Calvary Church in 1972 when 60 people attended. George

Nashville suburb of Madison when the congregation had an average Sunday morning attendance of 240. Cornerstone now is the largest church in the Nashville area, with a Sunday morning crowd of 3,300. Several judges and police officers are members of the church and are encouraged to see someone who has gone through the legal system emerge as a productive citizen.

The Sunday School program serves as the skeletal structure of Cornerstone Church in discipling members.

"If you are a part of this church and you need ministry — someone to mow your yard, cook a meal, pick up your children — you must be in a Sunday School class," Davis says.

Yet Cornerstone also is a place where hurting people can find restoration.

"If a drug addict doesn't renew his mind and close the doors of dysfunction in his life, he'll go back to his addiction or replace it with another bad habit," Davis says.

Davis knows there is hope for everyone. His own father — married seven times and absent from most of his son's life — committed his life to Jesus after being evangelized by Davis' stepfather.

George and Davis still talk by phone every Saturday night.

"I disciplined him because it was the right thing to do," says George. "I saw the touch of God on his life, but I never dreamed he had the potential that he has risen to in his present ministry."

Their relationship shows the difference a mentor can make in redeeming the life of someone society had discarded. Davis has made an eternal influence on hundreds of people. **tpe**

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E-mail your comments to tpe@ag.org.

Little did Texas pastor J. Don George know that when he began discipling inmate Maury Davis that he would be influencing a man who would become pastor of a 3,300-member congregation.

still leads the congregation, which now averages more than 3,200 in attendance each Sunday morning.

"When people come to the Lord, they need somebody who will walk with them and lift them up when they make a mistake," George says. "They need somebody who believes in them."

After four years on staff, Davis told George he wanted to launch his own evangelistic ministry. George commended him, but suggested he wait another year during which he could help him develop a strategy to line up speaking engagements. During that preparatory time, Gail gave birth to triplets.

Davis went on to become a sought-after evangelist for 2½ years, warning youth in schools about the danger of drugs.

In 1991, the Tennessee District of the Assemblies of God asked Davis to become senior pastor of Cornerstone Church in the



Maury Davis (center) joined the staff of Calvary Church in Irving, Texas, where Pastor J. Don George (right) and attorney Dennis Brewer Sr. influenced him.



Maury Davis (left) and J. Don George, who is also an Assemblies of God executive presbyter, still communicate weekly.

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September 2009



National Sunday School Day

September 27, 2009

And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. Psalm 1:3 KJV



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