

The Woods of Havoc

by Ezequiel Gonzalez

Many of our parents think they failed us in life. They think that their support didn't meet our needs as children. They blame themselves for not trying hard enough. In true honesty their worries blind them from seeing reality. They did what they could, but the burning fire from the Woods of Havoc was inevitable.

What are the Woods of Havoc? It is evil that begins in elementary school starting with the admiration of gangs. That is when the wood is gathered, stacked and prepared. In middle school the match is dropped and fire begins to spread in the form of gangs, crime, and drugs. By the time we are in high school the fire is fully burning and it's hard to make it cease. Water seems helpless. The fire is lethal and can cause major chaos. If we start in elementary school removing the wood by keeping children busy in sports, programs, and loving them, there will be nothing to ignite in middle school.

Stacking the Wood

In elementary school, I was so young, and trying to fit into my social environment. I started stacking wood. I stacked this wood by admiring the gangs. At the age of 8, I walked to the store and noticed gang members enjoying the streets, dressed to impress with no worries in the world. They seemed untouchable to me. One of them offered me \$5 with no hesitation. At that time \$5 seemed like \$5,000 because my lovely single mother, with 4 kids to feed, was struggling to keep us alive; money was tight. To me the gang members seemed like gods. At the age of 9 I inhaled THC for the first time, eagerly wanting to fit into their world. At the age of 11, I experimented with methamphetamines seeking the gang's acceptance.

Lighting the Match

I lit the match into these lethal woods when I was in Middle School. I was 12 years old when I joined a gang. I was proud that I had finally found acceptance in the burning fire, but I didn't know that there was one way in and one way out, or so they say. After joining this gang I was told who my enemies were. They were people I had never met before, people I never held a conversation with. No problem was born between me and these people, but since my gang was their enemy, so was I, and my life was now in danger. When recruited into a gang, you are severely beaten for 13 seconds by 13 members of the gang. With this experience and the knowledge of the weapons they possess, one would be a fool to tell on them or even quit on them. The brains of teenagers are immature and there is no option but to proceed with this burning fire.

The Fully Burning Fire

Once you are introduced to this lethal game, your life will change forever. My mom sent me to Mexico to try and keep me away from this perilous lifestyle. In Mexico I found a gang that accepted me and protected me in difficult situations. I returned a year later

when I was 13 years old. I was supposed to be on my way to High School, but I was busy trying to make up for lost time. My mother tried to extinguish this burning fire by enrolling me in school, chasing me around the hood to take me home, taking me out in her spare time, which was little. She even enrolled me in some type of program with a social worker, with no success. The wood burned even more. The Woods of Havoc were in full burning mode, burning away any hope of rehabilitation. I became the Woods of Havoc, spreading deadly flames to light others' wood and recruiting them to his miserable lifestyle. My mom gave up, realizing that no one could extinguish this chaotic flame but me. But I didn't know that. The flames were so warm and cozy that I didn't want to listen to my mom's pleas, which I also burned down to ashes.

After 3 years of pure destruction, demolition, and no remorse, I was arrested for a crime I did not commit. After my arrest, the flames seemed to have a flaw. I came in with a lethal mentality, mad at the world, and at myself. I was arrested for attempted murder and gained 3 more charges during my arrest, thanks to my ignorant mentality. I didn't know any better. No one tried to teach me the way of life and the people that did, like my mother, didn't have much knowledge of this perilous lifestyle. I fought my fitness for 27 pathetic months. My arrest occurred on July 17, 2008 and I was processed into Central Juvenile Hall the next day. After I lost my fitness, a battle that kids from age of 14 and up have to fight in order to not go to adult court, where the punishment for our actions is merciless, I was sent to adult court in the Criminal Court Building located on Temple and Spring in Downtown Los Angeles. This was September of 2010 and it is now July 23, 2011. This is my first time being arrested and now I sit behind brick walls. I was not given a second chance in juvenile court, like so many other kids. I was not given the benefit of the doubt. I was just sent to adult court to fight 54 years to life.

But let me tell you I have not given up on myself...

-Ezequiel Gonzalez now sees life with clear eyes and with a heart that loves God.

© Ezequiel Gonzalez 2011