



**GOD LOCKS HIM
UP TO SET HIM
FREE** then doctors say he will lose
his sight completely in Six
months time

In 1983, I was wrongly convicted of aggravated bank robbery and was sentenced to 21 years in the Texas Department of Corrections now known as TDCJ. I served 7 years of that sentence at a unit called Darrington, located in Rosharon, Texas. My first two years were very difficult because I was angry with God and everyone else. But God had a plan for my life. As I look back and reflect

on all that has happened, I can truly say that God had to lock me up just to set me free. You see after these two very long hard years, I finally gave my life to Christ. The persistence of another inmate named Lonnie Provo convinced me to attend one of the unit's bible studies. I went and as the spirit of the Lord began to work on my heart, I was touched and my heart softened. There I was, one who was once so bitter and angry at God, not yet quite understanding His plan for my life, feeling the tears running down my face. All I can remember is hearing my trembling voice cry out "I Surrender Lord. I Surrender." Then I was led by a fellow inmates to Romans 10:9 and at that moment I became a born again Christian. ³⁴

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The journey ahead of me was great. I was now a new creature. My walk, talk, thoughts, and attitude towards life had changed completely. It was like a weight had been lifted off my shoulders. Even though I was still physically in the same environment, my spirit and heart were set free because of the Holy Spirit dwelling inside of me. I had truly become the living word according to 2 Corinthians 5:17. I was no longer a hard case on the Darrington unit. I became a model inmate for the rest of my time served there. In fact, God was so good to me that His hedge of protection kept me from all of the harm and danger that was taking place in day to day prison life. My heart was on fire for God! I served in whatever capacity I could. I witnessed to other inmates sharing the new joy that I had found in Jesus Christ. I also prepared and served refreshments for the church groups that visited the unit. Because I made up my mind to be committed to His will and way, God showed favor over my life in everything that I did. In April of 1990, I was paroled. I promised God, myself and loved ones that I would never put myself in a position for something like this to ever happen again.

During my incarceration, I was blessed to have the support of my family and most of all my current wife of 21 years, Johnetta Stanley, whom I met in



1977 while I was serving in the United States Army. What more can I say than her unconditional love for me is one of those favorable things that God blessed me with during that trying time. She was and still is my very best friend. Johnetta, better known as "Tutsy", always saw what God saw—The Best In Me (smile). She encouraged me to stay on my walk with God and advised me in many of the endeavors that I sought. I can still hear her saying things like "If you don't want to end up in the same situation, you must change your playmates and your playground." She would tell me, "Stan you are a smart man. With God you can do anything." I thank God for her because those were the type of words that I needed to hear. I eventually joined the same

church that she was attending and my servitude continued there with diligence. I became the Armor Bearer to my pastor for over 15 years. I was also an instructor for Disciple Net bible study and a mentor to the young men. It was during these years that God was preparing, pruning, shaping, and fine tuning me for such a time as this. He was getting me ready for the anointed calling that He had on my life. Yes, I was walking worthy of and into that calling—To minister the word of God and pastor His flock.

I could see my life progressing in leaps and bounds. Leaning to the wisdom of God allowed and helped me to become a successful entrepreneur. Yet in 2003, I once again faced a daunting challenge. I was declared

legally blind by the U of H Eye Institute. I was told by man that I had only 3 to 6 months before I would completely lose my sense of sight. Once again, here was another test in my life. So many thoughts engulfed my mind. It was like my faith was on trial. How was I going to keep my businesses running successfully? How was I going to provide for my family? What kind of man was I going to be if I could not do these things? I kept thinking, Lord, why me? What am I going to do? Then as clear as day, I heard the voice of the Lord say, "Whose report will you believe? Haven't I always supplied all your needs?" Immediately, I couldn't do anything but surrender my all to Him and trust Him once again. While enduring this experience, I



learned to totally depend on God to sustain and keep me in perfect peace. I had to keep telling myself, "Whose report will I believe? I believed the report of the Lord! I believed by His stripes, I was healed. Every morning I wake up with the ability to see my wife and daughter, I can also look in the mirror and see a miracle. It has been 8 years now since man's report and I still have my sight. To this day my desire is to minister to those in prison (physically and mentally), those who are blind (physically and spiritually) and all who are lost where they may be delivered and set free from the stigma placed on them by society. With an overcomer's attitude I have been doing motivational speaking for the Department of Blind Services (DBS) in Houston, Texas and I regularly speak at the University of Houston Eye Institute. Because of his determination to go beyond what doctors said regarding my eye sight, I was chosen as the spokesperson representing Houston and the state of Texas at the National Federation for Blindness and American Federation for Blindness in Atlanta, Georgia. I went on to attend Southwest Seminary and continued my spiritual education, growth, and development through the study of God's word. I have earned my Bachelor's Degree in Christian Counseling. In addition to being

a Certified Christian Counselor with the State of Texas, I am also pursuing my Masters in Christian Counseling at Christian Bible Institute Seminary (CBIS).

I have certainly seen so much more in my life than in an average lifetime, but the most clear and amazing vision that God showed me was His will for my life. This awesome vision started years ago, even before my mother and father conceived me in my mother's womb. God spoke what I would accomplish in this world for His Purpose and His Glory. The office of a Pastor is a noble task. 1 Timothy 3:1 states, "Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer (Pastor), he desires a noble task." (NIV). A Pastor is simply a shepherd called to lead God's people, to love God's people, and to teach God's people how to exemplify His Glory in their lives. I have a passion for the homeless. I minister to the needs of the destitute in the downtown Houston, Texas and in the surrounding areas. My heart-felt desire is to help the ones who society deems undesirable to the world, but who are truly desirable to Christ, by showing love, compassion, and mercy to their physical and spiritual needs.

Thus, Grace Christian Fellowship Ministry came into existence. Grace Christian Fellowship Church was started on October 18, 2006 in our home with me (Pastor Harold Stanley), my wife (First Lady Johnetta Stanley), our daughter (Hannah Stanley), and two other core members. It was a humble beginning because I wanted to first teach my family God's Laws and how to apply them to our lives. Once we accomplished that goal, God began to lead others to our weekly Bible Studies held on Saturday evenings. As we continued in God's Word, the heart of this ministry was formed and we moved from Bible Study on Saturday evenings to Sunday Morning Worship Services with 10 people in attendance. We now incorporate 150+ strong and dedicated members who share the vision and who are committed to seeing its fulfillment in the world. Although we consider ourselves to yet and still be a young church, we know without a doubt that God is using us to do great things for His kingdom. ☺