



The bible given to Johnson eight years ago.

a life reformed

story and photos by Rob C. Witzel



Looking up towards the heavens, a Gainesville Correctional inmate reacts to the words of Thomas Johnson inside the prison's chapel.

An ex-junkie's path to devotion



Thomas Johnson prays with inmate Blaine Schwall

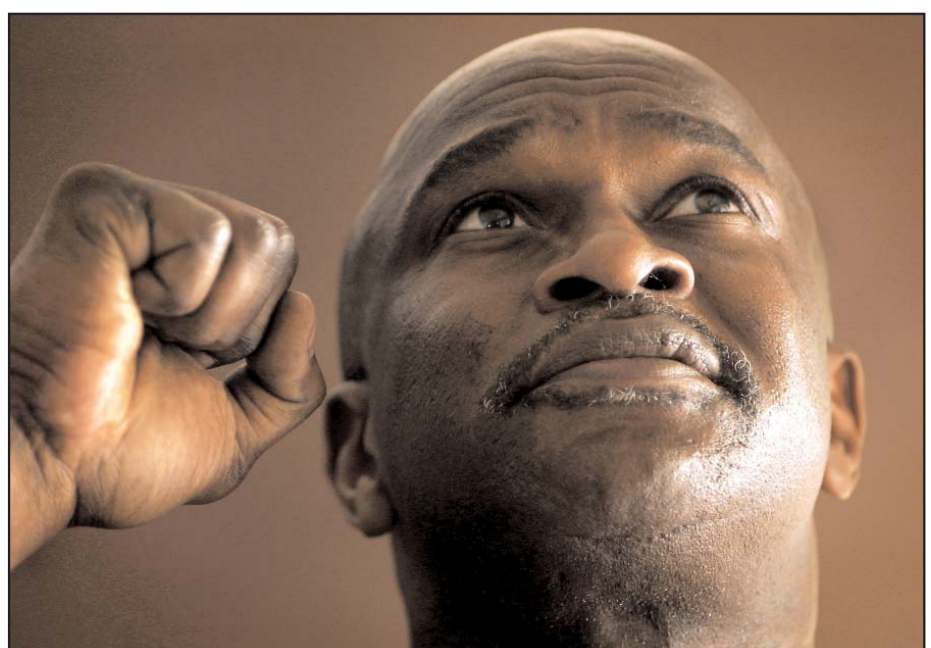
For more than forty years, Thomas Johnson roamed the streets of New York trying to survive his own demise. Drugs, alcohol, prostitutes and guns were his daily life as things like food and hygiene became secondary. By the mid 1990's, Johnson weighed 130 pounds and was living on the floor of Grand Central Station. Crack cocaine was the ruler of his life. However, a February 1995 trip to the Upper Room soup kitchen changed his life forever.

While eating his dinner, Johnson was approached by Pastor Billy White, who managed to convince the street-ravished Johnson to try walking "in the light of Christ." Johnson gave it a try, staying at the Timothy House, which

helps rehabilitate junkies through religion. He has never looked back since.

It has been more than seven years since that day and besides being an ordained minister, Johnson also has become a husband and a father.

After moving to Gainesville in 1997, Johnson has become a source of inspiration for prisoners on the brink of their lives and with little hope for improvement. Johnson travels to area jails and prisons as a volunteer Chaplain to tell his tale of mayhem and redemption and assures inmates that there is an answer and a way. In addition, Johnson serves as the director of the House of Hope, a religious rehabilitation house founded by Johnson for parolees seeking a new life through religion.



After being in in prison Johnson was introduced to Christ in a soup kitchen called the "upper room."

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