

Unfavorable Odds

References to conferences, resources, or other special promotions may be obsolete.

Episode 31: Finding Freedom in Prison

Guest: Herman Mendoza
Air Date: November 30, 2020

Herman: Early in the morning my wife receives a phone call. She picks up the phone set, the handset, and the cops tell her, “We have your house surrounded.”

I said, “I’m here.” I raised my hands, and they handcuffed me.

My wife tells me later on, but I saw a glimpse of what they were doing, they were celebrating that they caught a big drug lord. They were taking pictures. My wife was obviously distraught saying, “They took the father of my kids and also my husband.” Now rightly so, but at the time she didn’t want to think about that. She wanted to have her husband back.

Kim: From the FamilyLife® Podcast Network, this is *Unfavorable Odds*. I’m Kim Anthony.

Unfavorable Odds is about finding hope and help in those seasons of life when things are pretty tough. Jesus has promised us that whenever we walk through those dark valleys, He’s always with us. We will never have to go it alone. So on each episode of this podcast, we’ll be talking with people who have learned *how*, during those dark times, to draw their strength from Jesus.

The love Jesus has for us is so great that He pursues us even when we’re not giving Him a second thought, and He gets ahold of our lives at the most unexpected times in the most unexpected places. Then radical transformation takes place.

Herman Mendoza is an excellent example of this. Herman was a drug lord in New York City who sold millions of dollars’ worth of cocaine up and down the eastern seaboard of the United States. He had apartments for his mistresses around the city, a nice home in the Poconos for his wife and kids. From the outside looking in, some might have thought he had it made *until* his criminal lifestyle caught up with him.

The details of Herman Mendoza’s story can be found in his book called *Shifting Shadows: How a New York Drug Lord Found Freedom in the Last Place He Expected*. Herman and I had the most interesting conversation about his life of illegal activities and what happened that led him to become a pastor and international speaker who was reaching the masses for Jesus.

Herman: I was raised in Queens, New York, and I'm the youngest of five brothers. We're five in total; boys. You can only imagine the environment in that household, a Latino household fighting with one another.

Kim: I can imagine.

Herman: My mom and dad are from the Dominican Republic. They came to America for the American dream. They wanted to expand their family and raise their children in America and really embrace all that it has to offer.

There was a lot happening in the neighborhood, in the community. A lot of kids were trying to find their identity. I got involved with the local kids and was sort of pulled into experimenting as a young person. Kim, you know you're always trying to experiment and trying to look for ways to find your identity and find a place in society or in your community. In my case, I started to experiment with marijuana here and there and eventually started using more hard-core drugs.

Two of my brothers were involved in gangs at the time. I was sort of attracted to that because I used to see them wearing different kind of gang attire, the kind of colors as they called it back in the day with the jackets and the name of the gang inscribed on their leather jackets.

Kim: How old were you when you started to get involved with drugs?

Herman: I was like 12 years old.

Kim: Wow! You started getting involved with drugs at 12?

Herman: Twelve years old, I started experimenting with drugs, yes.

Kim: Wow. Okay.

Herman: Around 13, I got involved with a gang, local gang, and eventually went to other the gangs. Then when I started experimenting with hard-core drugs, I wanted to actually sell it because I wanted to sustain that habit.

Kim: Did your mother have any idea that you were involved in drugs at such an early age?

Herman: She suspected that I had some kind of drug abuse. She didn't know how to approach it. My second oldest brother was somewhat also involved in using drugs, so some things were concealed from my mom. I tried to hide it from her. When I would smoke cigarettes, I'd try to wash my hands really good or put some cologne on and try to conceal the smell of marijuana.

But my dad was home twice maybe three times a week, so his presence wasn't there on a consistent basis unfortunately as I was growing up.

Kim: Now you were sent away because your behavior got to be so bad and you ended up in juvie, so you saw *a lot* early on.

Herman: Yes, because when I was involved with the gangs, I remember some guys came to the park where I was hanging out and swung this bat and almost hit me. I moved to the side, and my friend took a couple of steps to the right of me. Unfortunately, he got killed; got shot.

I was like 13 years old, 14 years old, seeing this young teenager killed before me. I thought that was going to change my attitude but—

Kim: That's what I was going to ask. Did that make you want to *not* pursue that lifestyle?

Herman: Yes, it's crazy. It made me—I was scared at the moment at seeing his motionless body there and not being able to do anything for him. It shook me, but it made me sort of angry because I wanted to get revenge on the perpetrators that committed this heinous crime. I wanted to do something towards them. I wanted to get a gun and kill them.

About a week or two later after I did my juvenile time for robbery, my parents decided to send me to the Dominican Republic. In the Spanish culture, they call it *shipping*. It's like if I was cargo. I'm going to *ship* them out of the United States. They sent me to the Dominican Republic. There they enrolled me in a private school. I was there for a little bit, and I was expelled.

My grandfather said, "Okay, I'm going to teach you a lesson. You're going to come work with me out on the farm." He owned land and he was in the agriculture business. There he harvested plantanos, yucca, all sorts of different vegetables and fruits. He goes, "Look, here's a machete, and you're going to work the field." [Laughter]

I'm like, "What?! I'm a city boy," so I had to learn—I learned my lesson there in that time I spent in the Dominican Republic.

There I met my wife. She became a friend, at the time, until my grandparents contacted my mom and said, "Look, this kid is out of control. He's hanging out with the wrong crowd. He's over here participating in riots against the government."

Kim: Wow! Oh, my goodness.

Herman: Yes. "We're going to send him back to the United States," so they sent me back to the US.

I met my wife again in high school.

Kim: I love that story.

Herman: Yes.

Kim: You ran into each other in the DR, and then you ran into each other again in the states, multiple times. I think at funerals was it?

Herman: At funerals, yes. It was a few funerals. From there, it's a love story pretty much. Right out of high school I told my mom, "I'm getting married."

She looked at me like, "What?!—said, "Boy, you're going to have to go to college."

I'm like, "Mom, I'm in love. I want to get married." [Laughter] "This is the love of my *life*," you know.

Kim: Right.

Herman: We got married, and we moved out and had an apartment. I remember those days. Those days that were very humble to me because I started as a young man in an apartment. We lived in a basement, and we were trying to do our best as a couple. She was working and I was working, and eventually I got laid off.

My second oldest brother and my fourth oldest brother, they were involved with narcotics. Now I knew what they were doing. I knew their involvement, but I didn't want anything to do with what they were doing because I *knew* that where it took me back in those days.

Kim: Because you were doing the right thing now. You were living a totally different life. Everything was legal, right?

Herman: Exactly, exactly. Everything was legal. I was making money that was from a nine-to-five.

Now I see myself in a predicament that I'm laid off. I don't have work, and I see them with properties, homes, driving \$150,000 vehicles, motorcycles and flashing tens of thousands of dollars. But I didn't want—I didn't want to really get involved deeply in the sales of narcotics, because again, it reminded me of my past. I was using drugs. I was selling drugs just to support the habit, so I didn't want to get involved in that lifestyle.

Kim: You were clean. You weren't using drugs at that time.

Herman: I was not using drugs, no. Since high school, since I was 17, 18 years old, I stopped using drugs. I wasn't using any hard-core drugs, cocaine. Now I was drinking alcohol. I was drinking alcohol.

My brother invites me—my fourth oldest brother invites me. He says, “I want you to come to this apartment.” He had a stash house in a very affluent community. He goes, “I want you to count some money.”

I said “Okay.” What I witnessed was two MAC-10's, machine guns, and stacks of piles of money, cash. As I was counting—

Kim: Wait a minute. Let's go back to the machine guns. When you walk in and you see the machine guns is that something that was normal for you or did it make you hesitate at all? What did you think?

Herman: I wouldn't say it was normal, but I was exposed to guns at an early age. When I was in the gang life, again my friend was shot, so I'd been around guns. It wasn't like—I wasn't surprised or shocked. What I was a little bit interested was that it was a machine gun and I've never seen a MAC-10 before, but handguns, yes.

That sort of caught my attention. I was focused on the task at hand. There was counting machines there. To muffle—we had the TV on loud to muffle the sound of the counting machines. I started to count the money. At the end of the day, I counted 1.2 million dollars in cash. Now I was 21 years old. Seeing all that money at 21 years old really caught my attention. I was like, “Wow. This is *fast* money. This is quick money.” I got paid. They gave me about \$10,000.

Kim: That was your first week.

Herman: My first week.

Kim: You were able to make \$10,000 your first week of work.

Herman: Yes.

Kim: It was kind of hard to not do that to provide for your family, right.

Herman: Exactly, and looking at it I was like, “Okay, I'm not selling drugs on the street corner. I'm just counting money. This is easy. I'm not hurting nobody. I'm not using those machine guns. Everything's cool.”

I'm celebrating, and then the fact that got me hooked. I was like, “Wow, all that money.” I started to get involved with my brothers *heavily* now. I started to distribute now, not just count money, but distribute cocaine.

It started to grow and grow—this particular organization that we had. We were working with particular cartel out of Colombia, directly with the cartel. We would hand over the proceeds to them, and we'll stay with the profit, so millions and millions of dollars were passing through our hands—millions and millions.

I was making a substantial amount of money, living the lifestyle, spending money—tens of thousands of dollars a week or sometimes a night—being unfaithful to my wife, hanging out with different celebrities. They thought we were just some entrepreneur business owners, that we own construction companies. Probably some of them knew what we were doing, but in clubs, in different clubs in the city, until one day.

You know Hollywood depicts drug lords as having entourages, right?

Kim: Right.

Herman: And that when the cops come there's a shootout and a getaway.

Kim: Right.

Herman: In real life, I did have an entourage. I did have somebody behind me, but I did not get away. I drive the car, my brother's a passenger, and I noticed a cop car. I think it was a cop car. I wasn't really sure, but it was someone behind us—tinted windows—so I tried to get away.

I jump on the Long Island Expressway. I finally reach the Queensboro Bridge that separates Manhattan from Queens, and I notice a patrol car. He was cutting in front of each vehicle. I look at my brother. He looks at me and he says—he looks and goes, "This is for us."

So we jump out of the car. I was heavy back then, so I leave the car there. I jump out of the car, and I ran. He finally caught up to me, and they arrested me. They hauled me to the precinct and my brother as well and the other individual that was behind us that was a part of our organization. He was the one that was supposed to crash the cop car, which never happened.

Kim: Oh, so you already had it planned. If you get followed, you're supposed to do this and—

Herman: Yes. Like an entourage is supposed to—

Kim: —protect you.

Herman: —protect us, yes. I had people around us that, they were armed and stuff like that. At times, there were people that were armed.

Then I get sent to the precinct. The very next day—and I'm distraught—now again, I'm 22 years old at the time, and I'm like, "I'm facing 25 years perhaps." In my mind I'm thinking this. I pick up the newspaper the very next day, and I look at it. It says two brothers arrested with more than 3.8 million dollars of cocaine facing life in prison, 25 years to life in prison.

Kim: Whoa!

Herman: Right there I was like, "Whoa, this is really happening." I had—at that particular time, my wife and I, we had only one child. I had my daughter. I was thinking about her. I was thinking about my life. But not the consequences of my sins and my actions. It was more so to save my skin. I want to get out of here.

We had attorneys in place where if we were ever arrested, we would contact these attorneys. They could represent us. They were like big names in New York City. We hired them, and I remember—

Kim: And they knew what you were doing.

Herman: Oh yes. A hundred percent. I read the—when I was reading the paper, it also said that the prosecutor was Richard Brown at the time—District Attorney in Manhattan. Mayor Giuliani was governing the city. At that time there, was a lot of drugs being spewed out into New York City and across America. We were selling and distributing cocaine throughout the eastern seaboard. We had a big operation.

We finally negotiated and pleaded my case to the prosecutor. I got three to nine years because I had no violence. It was just drugs and money. We got into this program called Shock. It was sort of like a military camp; sort of like a Scared Straight Program.

At the time when I was sent there, I already had about a year and a half waiting for the outcome of my pending case. Once I got sentenced, my attorney said, "Hey, there's an opportunity for you to get into this program because now there's so many cases with drugs across America. They're trying to find ways to bring down recidivism. This is an opportunity for you to go into a rehab center."

I'm like, "I'll take it. I'll sign on the dotted line. Tell me," so I signed into the program.

My brother got four to twelve. Now this is my fourth oldest brother. He's a year older than me. My second oldest brother, he was still out doing his thing.

Kim: He was a part of the operation—

Herman: He was a part of the operation.

Kim: —but he did not get caught.

Herman: He did not get caught. It was three of us. They sent the brother that got caught with me on the 32 kilos of cocaine—they sentenced him to four to twelve years of incarceration, and they sent me off to Shock.

My mother's distraught. My father's distraught. It's like, "I have two of my sons incarcerated." She was like, "I didn't come to America for this."

I remember when I arrived to this facility, the very first thing that happened was these ex-marines came up to the group of inmates that was with me, screaming at us, "Get in a parade rest. Shut up. Look at us." Prior to me reaching there, I was in Rikers Island, the notorious jail, Rikers Island. There was a lot of stabbings and killings inside the prison, and they sent me to Ulster County. They shave your hair off, you get humiliated, and all sorts of things that happens when you're incarcerated.

Kim: Do you mind taking me back to Rikers? When you first entered into that place, tell me what your thoughts were.

Herman: I've heard so much about Rikers.

Kim: Yes.

Herman: As we arrived, as the correction officers crossed us over to the island—because it is an island that has ten jails—obviously very frightening because of all I've heard of Rikers Island. It's been lots of deaths, gang activities, over 14,000 inmates incarcerated on this particular island.

Kim: It's a city.

Herman: Yes, it's a city. The thing is that we had an individual that was with us out on the street. He was one of my muscle guys. They knew a lot about him, so we never had no problems in prison. But I've witnessed a lot. Just to highlight some, not to be graphic, but there was a lot of stabbings.

We learned some of the jailhouse culture because if you wanted to cool cartons of milk—those little quarts or cartons of milk, the little small ones, pints—and it may sound nasty but this is the way they do it—you put it inside your toilet because the water's cool. It cools off and it refrigerates the milk.

Kim: Oh, my goodness.

Herman: People used to do that. Put milk inside the toilet.

Kim: Wow.

Herman: I was in a cell. It was a single cell, just terrible condition. You can't really see the outside. It was very distorted through the window, the gated bars, but it was just really difficult. The smell, the stench of alcohol, drugs, urines, a lot of people coming out from the streets—

Kim: Okay.

Herman: —and all I was just thinking of was to get in shape. I was just focused on exercise—doing my push-ups, pull-ups, being creative in prison, holding the bars, jumping on top of that and kind of lifting myself up. You'd be surprised how creative inmates can get in prison.

When I was in Shock, the military camp, I remember I went into a chapel that very first week, and I was—I went there to sort of, to negotiate with God—

Kim: Okay.

Herman: —to have a conversation with God, to say, “Hey, if you help me with my deal, I promise you I'm going to try to live a straight life of no crime, no criminal involvement. I'm going to be good God.” That was my thinking.

Kim: Okay.

Herman: I went into this chapel and I said, “I promise you, God, if you allow me to be released from this prison, I'm not going to drink alcohol for six months upon my release.”

Kim: So it wasn't, “I'm never going to drink again.” It was just, “I'll give you six months for me to not drink.”

Herman: Exactly. [Laughter] It was ignorance on my part and also trying to negotiate with God, you know?

Kim: Yes.

Herman: I was released. I finished the program.

Kim: How long was the program?

Herman: Six months. In total, I did close to two years incarcerated. When I was released, I held up to my promises and lasted six months without drinking alcohol. I remember after the six months of my sobriety, I said to a friend of mine, “Listen, let's go have a drink.”

We went to a bar and we started to drink. I look across towards my left and I run into an old acquaintance. He looks at me. In Spanish he says, “What’s up? When did you get out?”

I was like, “How did he hear that I was incarcerated?” He found out I was incarcerated, and I told him.

He says, look his uncle was controlling one of the cartels in Colombia and was controlling over a ton of cocaine. He said, “If you want in, you let me know. Whatever you want on consignment. I’ll give you 100 kilos, 200 kilos, whatever you want. I’m controlling over a ton of cocaine.

Kim: A 100 kilos would be valued at what on the street back then?

Herman: Back then, each kilo was about anywhere from 28 to 32,000. If you take it to Ohio or other states, it can sell up to \$42,000, so we’re talking about millions of dollars.

Kim: Yes.

Herman: I’m over here fighting with my conscience. My heart is saying one thing. My mind is saying the other. I was with a friend of mine. He goes, “Who’s that guy?” so I told him who he was. He said, “Hey, man, like old times. I’ll work for you. Let’s get back in it.”

I went up to my friend, the Colombian, and I said, “Look, okay, I want in.” It reminds me of a scripture in the Bible in Proverbs 26:11 where it says that “As a dog returns to its vomit, so a fool repeats their folly.” That’s what I did. I repeated the same behaviors. I accepted the offer, and I took nine kilos of cocaine just to start off.

Kim: Herman, you had actually gotten a job doing legal activity.

Herman: Yes. I was a sales person as a sorbet—selling sorbet ice cream. I was really good at it. I was making money just to support my family. I had an apartment. I was again, back again, nine to five.

Kim: Right.

Herman: Just when I went over to have this drink and I run into this guy, I get trapped in this sin again and I get caught right back into the same behaviors. I was working a nine-to-five job as a sorbet sales representative. I’m back in the enterprise, the business again selling hundreds of kilos of cocaine.

My second oldest brother gets arrested in Miami, and they extradite him to New York because the case was out of New York. When they extradited him to New York, we

bailed him out on a half a million dollars. When he's bailed out, he says, "What are you up to?"

I explained. I said, "I'm working again with the cartel."

He says, "Okay. I have a friend of mine that owns a trucking company. He used to do a lot of my distribution. He owned those 16-wheeler tractor trailers. He had a secret compartment in it where we housed the drugs there to conceal it from the police." He said, "Look we can work with this guy."

I said, "You trust him?"

He said, "Yes," to me, "I've been working with him for many years."

We start working with him and we give him 11 kilos. We first give him nine and then another two kilos. Actually it was a total of 14 kilos.

Towards the end of the last kilos of cocaine that we gave him through one of our workers, he owed us money. He kept on stalling us saying, "Oh, I'll bring it next week. I'll bring it next week." When he finally brought a portion of that money, he was still short about \$80,000.

Kim: That's a lot of money.

Herman: Yes. Then we figured, "Something doesn't sound right here," but we thought he was just trying to stall us for another week, whatever the case may be.

Kim: This is a person you refer to in your book as John?

Herman: Yes, that's John, yes. This is now Emilio and I. We find out one day that the money was in sequence, sort of all numbered in a way that seemed obvious to us that this money came from the Drug Enforcement Agency. My brother and I looked at each other and said, "We've got a problem."

Turns out that he was working with the DEA, Drug Enforcement Agency. From that day on, I was having people drive me around. I was just drinking alcohol to try to just figure things out; trying to find a way out to try to make some *more* money—make hundreds of millions of dollars and flee the country.

It didn't happen that way. One day we're driving, and we get arrested in Manhattan. It was by the DEA agency. I tried to conceal—I had a little black book that had all my contacts in sequences—I was trying to conceal that black book that had all my contacts. They arrested us and took me to MDC, Brooklyn. I was there for about a few weeks and got bailed out on a half a million dollars.

Kim: Was that just money that you had floating around from what you made?

Herman: Actually, with the feds it doesn't work that way. They have to investigate where the money came from, so I put up a house that I owned. But it wasn't under my name. Then I put up another house that was owned by my oldest brother. When I was released, the very first thing I wanted to do was drink and party. I was like, "I want to forget all the stuff I was dealing with." I was drinking heavily every morning.

I remember one day going to my attorney to have a discussion with him about my case. He told me, "Listen, Mr. Mendoza, you're facing 25 years because this is your second case and you were convicted already on 32 kilos of cocaine." He says, "Your case is not looking good."

That scared me. I was like, "Man." I decided to jump bail, right. I was supposed to go to court the following week, and I didn't go. I jumped bail, so I was now on the run. I had around six months on the run.

Kim: Where did you—where did you go?

Herman: I was staying at different girlfriend's homes, friends that had properties, that had apartments around the city. Sometimes I would go to casinos, Atlantic City, and stay there and just gamble and just drink all day trying to numb the pain and try to figure things out.

Kim: By this time did you have three children?

Herman: Yes, by this time I had three children.

Kim: Okay, and two of them were with your wife.

Herman: Yes.

Kim: Who was the other one with?

Herman: The other one—when I was out in the world doing crazy stuff, I had a mistress. She became pregnant and we had the child, which was a blessing to have a child. It was not a blessing for me to commit adultery but happened to happen this way, so I had three kids, right.

Kim: Then you're looking at the possibility of 25 years in jail. You would miss out on their childhood.

Herman: Exactly, exactly.

I remember one night of partying and drinking—a drinking binge—I decided to go home to see my kids. I was in a club and a VIP. I was drinking and drinking Cristal and trying, again—numb the pain.

Kim: Right.

Herman: I told my driver; I said, “Take me to my home.” I lived in a gated community and he drove me there.

He said, “Are you sure you want to go to your house?”

I said, “Yes, I want to see my kids.”

As I enter into my property and I went home, I laid down. Early in the morning my wife receives a phone call, and the cops tell her “We have your house surrounded. Tell your husband to open the door. If he has any guns, to toss it out the window.” The very first reaction was “I’m going to escape,” so I open the back window and I try to jump out.

The cops is right there and they say to freeze. I go back in the house, and told my wife “Listen, open the door. My life is over.” She opens the door. I remember it was horrific scene because my sister-in-law was there staying over at my house. My kids were asleep. Cops come, guns drawn.

My wife just develops this anger towards the cops, this strength of just fighting with the cops. She says, “Put the guns down. He’s going to give himself in. We have no guns in the house.”

I said, “I’m here.” I raised my hands and they handcuffed me. They were searching the house for any guns.

As they haul me into the adjacent car there, the marshals—it was the marshals, DEA agents, state police and local police—I remember I was in the back of the car handcuffed; as they drive away, my wife tells me later on, but I saw a glimpse of what they were doing, they were celebrating that they caught a big drug lord and they were taking pictures.

But my wife was obviously distraught saying, “They took the father of my kids and also my husband.” Now, rightly so, but at the time, she didn’t want to think about that. She wanted to have her husband back.

Kim: I do want to talk about your wife and what she was experiencing when you were going back and forth to jail and running and selling drugs. What was her life like as she waited for you?

Herman: I've always won her over. Again, being persuasive, loving on her, taking her on trips and keeping her secure and away from the lifestyle that I was once living, so she wasn't seeing the magnitude. She could only imagine because she experienced obviously coming to visit me at Rikers Island, which even for family members, it is *horrendous* what they put them through just to visit someone who's incarcerated in Rikers Island. They're humiliated. They're patted down. The whole system is just to really break down families and also break down the inmate.

She experienced that, but she was covered in the sense—even though she was scared because she didn't know what could happen to me or to her because they could have—people could have found out where I lived and kidnapped us. There were cases like that in the New York area. As a matter of fact, which I don't mention in my book, but it happened to my brother.

Kim: Really.

Herman: Where they—yes, they handcuffed him. They beat him, looking for money and for drugs. It happened, so she was aware of that.

Kim: These were not law enforcement.

Herman: No, not law enforcement.

Kim: Take me back to when you were driving in the back of that car after they had arrested you in your home.

Herman: I'm back at that car. I lived, again, in a wooded area, so I was looking towards my left and towards my right. It's just pine trees; sort of a lonely road leading out to the major highway. I told the marshals, "I want you to open the back door because I want to end my life." I said, "My life is not worth anything right now."

He said, "Look, you never know what could happen," and he gave me a glimpse of hope.

Kim: Which is odd in your situation.

Herman: Yes, yes, because I knew what I was confronting. But it was just a weird feeling. I tried to gain my composure again because I knew I was going to prison and I didn't want to look weak. But I was obviously—I was obviously hurt.

When I say hurt, meaning I was in a place of no escape. I knew that my pending situation was sort of like a doomsday for me. I would never see my wife again and my kids and never get to see daylight. Once again, in the sense that I was never going to be free out in society until my later years. That reality set in.

They took me to a local jail. I remember that my kids came over to see me and my wife. My son and daughter wanted to embrace me and touch me and there was a separation. It was sort of like a glass partition between us with a handset, with a phone set. That's the way I was communicating with them.

My son and my daughter were saying, "Dad, tell them to let you free; that you're going to be a good person. You're not going to be bad." He said "I just want to touch you. I want to play with you. Can you come around? Let them know. Let them know." That broke me.

That day my wife said, "I'm not coming back to a prison ever with the kids."

I said, "Rightly so, rightly so." They took me to—once I left the visiting area, I went back to my cell.

This is the very first experience I had with—because again I was living in darkness, so I didn't know about the Lord—my dad was a protestant, but he had left the church—my mom was a devoted Catholic and she did her best, but she didn't have, at the time, a personal relationship with Christ to really instill those biblical sound doctrine to me and not just dogma or speculation of who Jesus is or sort of a—more of a personal genuine relationship—I didn't know because she didn't know and she was raised in Catholicism in that regards in terms of her knowledge of the Bible—my very first experience with darkness, even though I was *in* darkness, but it was more of *exposing* darkness to me in a way that I didn't ever see it before.

I was in a cell, right. This inmate comes up to me and he goes, "I'm having *terrible* dreams." He starts sharing the dreams with me. He said, "I'm seeing demons, and they want me to *cut* myself. They want me to end my life." But when he said that, it didn't seem like it was just a dream. It seemed real—that this man was disturbed, and not mentally disturbed, that he was disturbed by some kind of force outside of him. That was like my first experience like that.

Again, when I was in darkness, I was seeing a lot of darkness. I was seeing a lot of evil, but it was different because I was in it and it was a big party life. In this place, I was confined into a cell, so I was actually *seeing* what was happening.

They extradited me back to New York. On the way to Brooklyn, I remember they chained me to my wrists and to my legs—can't hardly walk—and they haul me to the vehicle.

It's true what they say in the movie, *Con Air*,—

Kim: Yes.

Herman: —where they have inmates and they transport them. It's just like that. It's one of those Boeing aircrafts where they put a whole bunch of inmates in there like cattle, and the plane is surrounded by federal agents. It's like presidential kind of security.

Kim: Wow.

Herman: I witnessed that. I finally arrived to Brooklyn. When I arrive to Brooklyn, they send me to this unit called Five South. Little did I know that my brother was in Five North. Now my brother gave his—again, as I mentioned before earlier, my brother had given his life to the Lord. This was his prayer: “Father, send my brother to the same facility, same dormitory so I can share the gospel with him—”

Kim: That's incredible.

Herman: “—because if not, they are going to kill him out in society.” Because he was hearing that I was drinking, and running wild and drinking.

Kim: Yes, so he was praying for you to come to his—

Herman: Yes, and to the congregation.

Kim: And to the congregation in jail.

Herman: In jail.

Kim: —in prison. Okay.

Herman: It was like an in-prison kind of chapel where inmates were running the chapel.

Kim: That's amazing.

Herman: Every single day, there was services being run by inmates. The inmate preacher—my brother shared this story—he said, “Look, please pray for my brother. I'm praying for my brother so he can come to this prison so I can share the gospel.” Now just want to give your viewers an idea of the federal system. They never allow two brothers to be in the same case to be housed in the same unit. That just doesn't happen.

Well, God would have it no other way. There will be no other recourse. I got sent to Five South. Someone heard my last name, “Mendoza,” so the guy wakes me up—an inmate. He says very quietly, because in the prison culture you don't wake up a prisoner from his sleep because that's his way of escape out of reality. He kind of taps me lightly and he says, “Mendoza, Mendoza.” I get up, and he says, “Someone wants to see you next door. It's your brother.”

I'm like, "My brother! What?"

Kim: Oh my goodness.

Herman: So I walk to Five South to the recreation area, because they allow you to go to the recreation area, and my brother sees me and extends his hands up in the air. He says, "Praise the Lord! Praise God!"

I look at him and I say, "Praise the Lord. Praise God." I say, "Man, we're in *jail*. What are you talking about?" I didn't know. His new language, his countenance was different. He had a glow; like his whole demeanor was totally different from the person that I knew before, you know?

Kim: Yes.

Herman: He starts sharing. He goes, "One day, you'll know. You'll understand." He starts sharing the gospel little by little with me. He invited to this church service which I found interesting, but I wasn't moved. I was just trying to resolve my problem. I wanted a way out again. I was selfish. I wanted to deal with *my* issues. I didn't think that God was greater to resolve *my* issues.

I wanted to always bargain with God or barter with God until my first attorney said, "Man, I don't want nothing to do with your case. You're just crazy because you don't want to listen to me. You jump bail. You don't follow the conditions of probation." He goes. "I had it," so I fired him.

I hired another attorney and I told him, "Look, if you get me ten years of incarceration, I'm happy."

He comes back. He says, "I can't do it. The prosecutors don't want to bargain. They want to give you 18 to 25 years of incarceration."

At that point, my wife had left me and I was really broken and depressed and trying to find answers. I said all the things that I was doing in the past with all the money I thought I had power. I had women. I had property. I had possessions. I thought that those things will fulfill my life. Those things would make me happy. Even though it was illegal, but I thought that it would—that it would make me happy, a happy man, right.

My brother goes, "Listen, I want you to come to chapel. I want to pray for you."

As I was walking to the chapel—it was a few steps to get there because it was in the unit—it was about 120 inmates housed in this particular unit—I enter the chapel and I sit in the far end of this day room where it was pretty much used for inmates to write letters, write to their attorneys. I sat in the back, and I heard the preacher. He was giving

an interesting sermon and highlighting the psalmist and his iniquity and his sinful acts and how God through conviction forgave him for his sins.

This conversation I was having with God—I was telling God, “If you’re for real, fill this void that I’m feeling. I want peace because I didn’t have peace in prison. Plus out in society I was running wild.”

He said “Look, there’s an inmate—” amongst about 60, 70 inmates that were there, he said, “—he’s been chasing after things and all those things have led him down a road of destruction and a dead end.” He says, “You know who you are. God is calling you to have a relationship with you. He loves you. He wants to give you that peace that surpasses all understanding.”

I knew it was for me. I approached the altar, makeshift altar that they had there, and I just fell to the ground. I bowed down, got on my knees and cried out to God. I said, “This is me. I’m the sinner you’re talking about.”

What’s amazing, Kim, is people have different experiences as when they convert, when they give their lives to Jesus. I can personally attest to the fact that when God met me there in that prison—broken, convicted of my sins—I felt that warmth that enveloped me. I felt “a peace,” as the scripture says, “that surpasses all understanding” and that burden, that weight that I was carrying of the sins that I’ve done in the past, felt that it was lifted out of me, that God had taken it all away.

The very next thing that I felt in my heart was a strong conviction of the things that I’ve done in the past. I wanted to make amends and make it right.

I thought about my wife obviously. I thought about my kids. I thought about my mom, my dad. I thought about the people that I hurt by spewing drugs without seeing them, because again I was in a different level. Basically, I was distributing the cocaine and giving it over to other organizations where they then themselves will distribute it out into different street corners or stash houses, so I wasn’t physically seeing what was happening, but God was showing me the lives that I was destroying, right.

Later on in my studies, it’s sort of like the story of Joseph, that God takes Joseph—innocent man though—in my case, I was guilty obviously—but God takes what the enemy meant for evil, God turned it around for good, right. I was understanding. I wanted to learn more about God.

I grabbed the handset. I made a phone call. I contacted my mom. I said, “Mom, forgive me for the things that I’ve done to you.” I said “I’m born again. I’m a Christian.”

She didn’t understand this new conversion. She was skeptical. She was like, “Yes, Christian.” But she goes, “I’m happy for you.”

Then I wanted to contact my wife, and I couldn't get through to her. My brother and I started to read more and study more. The pastor, which is again an inmate, he got sentenced and they were about to send him off to another facility. He tells my brother, "I want you two to become the pastor and co-pastor of this chapel in conjunction with the chaplain of the facility."

Kim: Oh my goodness.

Herman: So my brother and I, we took over this small little chapel which is insane. It starts to grow, and we start to acquire help from the outside.

There was a man that we heard on the radio, a radio personality by the name of Leroy Ricksy. He pastored a church in east Harlem called the Church of the Resurrection. I was just so intrigued by his intellect, his knowledge of Scripture, so we send him a letter for him to become our mentor. I applied for a Berean Bible Institute from the Assemblies of God. We used our gifts that the Bible says your gift will make room for you.

Kim: Yes.

Herman: We used our business savvy to incorporate it in ministry *in prison*. We contacted The Children of the American Bible Society. We contacted the Billy Graham Organization, other ministries; local ministries, the Brooklyn Tabernacle, and we said, "We need Bibles," and they started to send us Bibles. Amazing.

We trained up our deacons. We called our deacons. We trained them up that every inmate that would arrive in our unit, we would give them Bibles. Because eventually, they switched me over from Five South to Five North.

Kim: Where your brother was.

Herman: I was with my brother in the same unit—exactly.

Kim: Did they not have any idea that you were related? Somebody had to know.

Herman: The counselor knew it. The warden knew it. The prosecutor knew it. Everyone knew that we were housed in the same unit. But God was using us.

Not to over exaggerate or sensationalize the story but what the warden even recognized what we were doing there because at first, he thought we were doing some other things. He's like, "These guys are organizing all these inmates." He realized what we were doing. That we were helping folks, not just the spiritual aspect of it, but we were helping folks also with their education.

We were growing the ministry and growing the ministry. An inmate would come in, we'd give them a Bible and say to a new inmate, "Welcome to Five North to the house of

God. We welcome you to the back chapel table day room. We have services every night. Here's some food. Here's a sandal. We're here for you. If you need prayers, let us know." So we started to evangelize.

Kim: That's amazing. How did those inmates, those new guys coming in, respond to that?

Herman: Oh, they were elated because of the fact that they were going into a prison environment facing multiple life sentences due to the fact they were being extradited from Columbia. Other people had horrific crimes, so when they heard something like that, they used to come.

There was one incident where this Columbian man, we invited him to the services. He never attended but one day he attended crying and screaming and in pain. We're like, "What's wrong? What's wrong?" They had killed his wife because he was cooperating with the DEA and he was sharing that news with us—stuff like that. We were the spiritual mentors and leaders of these people.

There was one individual that I'd like to highlight that was one of our church members. He was coming through our facility. His name is Christopher Yuan, and he wrote a book. It's called *Out of a Far Country*. He mentions my brother and I in his book. He has written now three or four books. We were his spiritual mentors or pastors at the time. He eventually got out of prison and studied at Moody Bible Institute and went to Wheaton College.

Now he's a professor at Moody Bible Institute. Now he had a different kind of story or lifestyle even though he was selling drugs. But he was doing other things in terms of his sexuality. We didn't know his testimony in prison until he got released. But amazing how God used him. We were his pastors and now he's a Professor at Moody Bible Institute. [Laughter] Amazing.

Kim: Only God.

Herman: Then I was praying for my wife and fasting one day for three days for her salvation with another inmate, fellow inmate, and she came over to the visiting area. I thought it was my attorney. I didn't even know. I see her sitting across the room. I sat next to her and she said, "Look, I got *bad* news to tell you."

I said, "Hold up. I've got *good* news to share with you. Give me a few minutes." I started to share my heart with her. I confessed my sins. We really started to speak to one another.

The Holy Spirit was *tugging* on her heart, and she said, "Look, I want what you have. I want that Jesus that you're professing and you're speaking about. You're more free in prison than myself that I'm out in society." She said, "I want Jesus."

She said to me, “The reason why I came here was to let you know that I want a divorce. I want to end this relationship. But now hearing your story and Jesus touching my heart right now and knowing that there’s a better life in Christ and that I could be fulfilled through the Word of God, this is what I want.”

She confessed her sins. I confessed my sins as the scripture so describes in James, “Confess our sins to one another.” God began to heal our relationship there. The very next week she went with my sister in law—my brother was incarcerated with me in the federal prison—his wife got saved too—so my wife went with my sister in law to her church, and my wife got baptized in water.

Kim: That’s incredible.

Herman: I went up and I gave the news to the church.

The time came for sentencing and 2001 hit—9/11, so they send us off to our cell. We were just praying for America; praying for the situation at hand; what we were dealing with. Even as inmates, we were with some of the people that were arrested, terrorists that were arrested. They were brought to MDC Brooklyn, so they had us pretty much confined 24 hours a day in our cells. I prayed.

I was supposed to get sentenced pretty much that same month. They postponed it three months later. I remember when my attorney comes back with the probation report, he says, “Look, you’re facing a max time of a 135 months of incarceration.”

I told him, “Look, whatever the Lord decides, I’ll listen to the Lord’s report. If He wants me to do more time, then amen.”

Kim: There was truly a life change because it’s no longer about you and how you can get out of a situation. You were totally and fully yielded to God and what His will was for your life.

Herman: Yes, amen. Yes.

Kim: That is absolutely phenomenal.

Herman: Totally surrendered my life to Christ. I didn’t care if they had given me 15 years, 20 years, I was going to serve the Lord, regardless. Regardless, I was going to serve Christ to the fullest. I would be put through a number of tests. Praise the Lord, I passed all those tests.

In prison, again I could have been exposed to drugs, alcohol, to consume alcohol. Even—I don’t share this in my book but there was even a correction officer, a woman that was kind of attracted to me. She was trying to lead on to me. Even that—even

that—I rebuked that. I rebuked the whole thing, because again I was dealing with I was so unfaithful to my wife. I’d slept with a lot of women and things like that. God even protected me from that situation. I could have been with a disease, you know. Amazing what God has done in my life. It’s just amazing.

Kim: All the things that you had struggled with even in prison, the enemy used them to try to tempt you and bring you down—

Herman: Exactly.

Kim: —from where God had taken you.

Herman: I go into the courtroom and the prosecutor begins his monologue and he says, “Your honor, this man has done this crime. He’s gotten arrested before for drugs. He’s done all this stuff.”

Then he goes towards the end, “*but* the things that he was doing inside a prison environment, I hope that he would continue to do those things *out* in society.” He said, “He has helped many with their education. He has helped many through the spiritual journey.” He says, “Whatever time you impose, I agree your honor.”

I look at my attorney. I’m like, “Did he say that?”

My attorney begins his presentation and when he gets done with his presentation, he goes, “It’s your turn.”

The judge looks at me and I said, “Your honor, the man that you see here before you today is a new man in Christ. If you give me the opportunity to reintegrate back in society, I’m going to work with young people and I’m going to be a law-abiding citizen. Please grant me this request.”

Now there was 120 letters that was sent out to the judge on my behalf requesting leniency on my case.

Kim: Who were those letters from?

Herman: Inmates, church members, because remember I was in a detention center. I was there for about three years, close to three years, just waiting for the outcome of my case. A lot of inmates used to go through passing through waiting to get sentenced. I remember after that the judge looks at me and goes, “That’s all you have to say.”

I said, “Yes, your honor.”

He looks at me and he sentences me with his gavel—“Forty-eight months of incarceration.”

Kim: And you had already served how many months?

Herman: I had served, at that point, around 30 plus months.

Kim: Okay.

Herman: I had another probably six to seven months left on my sentence.

Kim: That is a miracle. [Laughter]

Herman: I was like, “Wow, praise—a miracle!”

The day came for me to be released and all of a sudden, the New York State parole officers come to pick me up. They handcuffed me and said, “Look, Mr. Mendoza, you’re going back to Rikers Island.”

Kim: Nooo.

Herman: I’m like, “What’s going on?”

He says, “You remember your first case?”

I’m like, “Yes.”

He says, “You violated your parole condition. You got rearrested on a federal case.”

I’m like, “Okay Lord, you want me to go to Rikers Island to minister over there. Amen.”

Kim: Just another opportunity, huh?

Herman: It’s another opportunity.

Kim: Was it really that simple for you to say, “You know what? I guess the Lord has an opportunity for me over here,” or did you wrestle with that at all?

Herman: I didn’t wrestle with it. It was really that opportunity. But at the first announcement of the news, obviously I was saddened at the fact that I was not going to get released obviously. But then reality set in, “I’m going there,” so I’m like, “Lord, use me.”

I was sent to Rikers Island. Then the day came to see the judicial judge. He looked at my case and studied it and said, “Look, where you’ve been in prison, it’s unbelievable. I’m going to give you a revoke and restore.” Basically what it means is that they will

release me back into society. I will again start my parole as if I never violated the parole conditions. That's what I did.

They finally released me. This is what I did when I crossed that turnstile gate in that prison. They gave me a metro card and some money to make a phone call, some coins. I contacted my mom and I told her, "Mommy, I'm a free man. I'm coming home." She prepared for me a delicious Dominican dish.

I spoke to my wife. I found a track that said in the book of Joshua, "Who will you serve? Choose to serve the Lord. I choose to serve the Lord, me and my household."

Kim: Yes.

Herman: It kind of shook me because I was like, "This is the beginning steps I'm going to take, and for me and my household, we're going to serve the Lord." I said moving forward toward today out as a *physical* free man because the Lord delivered me from my spiritual darkness and I became free in Christ. Now I'm going to have my physical freedom.

I go into the bus and I cross over this bridge because it's an island that separates the mainland from the island. When I get off the bus, the very first thing I do, I get on my knees and I kiss the ground. [Laughter] I'm serious. I kissed the ground and I extend my hands and I said, "Praise the Lord! Thank you, Lord. Use my life. Here am I."

Kim: Full surrender.

Herman: Like the prophet in Isaiah, "Here am I. Use me, Lord!"

I went home, hugged my kids, my wife, and this is what the Lord did. I started an organization working with young people. My brother was released six months after me. Then my other brother that was incarcerated in the same prison, he was released a few years before me, so Emilio and I—that I described in the book—my second oldest that was with me in the federal case—we open up an organization to work with young people and a company.

Now we opened up a newspaper company. It was called Trinity Tribune. I get *press credentials*—an ex-convict with press credentials, and now I'm in the newspaper business. [Laughter]

Kim: Did you have any experience?

Herman: No experience. It's all reading and learning. I didn't go to school to become a journalist.

Kim: Self-taught.

Herman: Again, I'm working with the youth. I started a basketball clinic—started getting some recognition in the community with elected officials.

I was attending the church with my mentor, the Rev. Leroy Ricksy, the late Rev. Leroy Ricksy—went home to be with the Lord. He supported me. I have a strong base. I have support of a church. I'm attending the church. I'm getting recognized by these elected officials, and they connect me over here. I'm having speaking engagements in different parts of the city.

Then I connect with an organization. They connect me with folks that are ambassadors at the UN, United Nations. Then that gives me a different platform so I can share my story and get involved in the community in a larger scale. Then they invite me to discuss history of the Dominican Republic because I wanted to learn more about my history and the history of my parents in Dominican Republic.

I started learning more about Haitian culture and Dominican culture, so I connect with Wyclef Jean. He's a hip-hop artist. We worked together to bring about a movement called One Voice to bring awareness in the Island of Hispaniola and to bring people together for dialogue, to pray, and to help one another as countries that we share the same island but two different nations.

From there they invited me to Columbia University to have this discourse. Then there I meet the Ambassador from Dominican Republic representing the Dominican Republic in Washington DC and the ambassador from Haiti in Washington DC representing his country.

Kim: Now what are you thinking as you are being exposed to all of these people; the Lord is opening doors for you? Are you just thinking like, "What in the world is going on?"

Herman: Exactly. I am in this position now in a different platform, a different level. I'm like. "God, what are you doing?" But I'm just kind of rolling with it. I'm kind of running with it. It's happening—

Kim: —so fast.

Herman: —fast. I've become a chaplain, a certified chaplain in New York. I meet a captain of the supreme court in Manhattan. He goes, "Your story is amazing. I want to introduce you to two sitting supreme justices in the courts of Manhattan."

I'm like, "What?"

He's like, "Yes, come."

He introduces me to a judge, supreme court judge by the name of Donna Mills. She's impressed by my story. She passes me her business card, and she says, "Stay in touch."

Then he walks me over to another judge that wrote, *Carlito's Way*, the movie, *Carlito's Way*. The judge says to me, "Listen, I want you to come back here. Whatever you need of this courtroom to work with youngsters, you let me know."

Now I'm having—my friends are now law enforcement, supreme court judges. [Laughter] I'm like, "Lord, what are you doing?" right.

Kim: Right.

Herman: Now one of the judges, we become friends, and she connects me with her friend that was the attorney for President Reagan—one of his legal attorneys during his presidency. I'm working with her and she invites me to her home. They're contributing to my not for profit organization, thousands of dollars, right.

Then this is what God does. Time goes by and I connect with another chaplain. He invites me to minister to the players at the Mets Stadium, at Citi Field. I'm over here now ministering to major league baseball players. Then I connect with a friend—now we became good friends, but back then I met him, Allen Houston from the New York Knicks.

Kim: I know Allan. [Laughter]

Herman: We start working together. I invite him to the UN. I did an international day of prayer there, and I invite him as the guest speaker. So he comes and shares a message with our dignitaries and world leaders. It was his first time at the UN. He was really impressed.

Then I take a course with the Billy Graham organization, and then the hurricane hits, Katrina. I go to serve as a missionary in Louisiana. I did that for a couple of months. Then the earthquake hits in Haiti. I organize some doctors, and I go there to assess the damage five days later. I bring five containers full of medical supplies, food worth over two million dollars because of my connections with the UN now.

Kim: Yes.

Herman: I'm giving food and helping the folks and ministering and sharing the gospel; helping them folks out there.

It really taught me something, because God can use anyone. He reminded me of scripture. It reminded me of where the apostle Paul highlights, and it says that for those

that are perishing, the cross may seem foolishness; but those that are being saved it is the power unto God.

It also made me think about how God uses the foolishness of this world to confine the wise. I would be with important figures or celebrities now and they would never suspect that I lived the life that I once lived before. A lot of pastors, too, they will say to me, “You’ve been through everything.” [Laughter] “I can’t believe it. You seem like a nice man that was brought up in a Christian home,” you know?

Kim: Yes.

Herman: It’s only God and it’s to shame the wise. It’s to bring those that think that their position and intellect and their degrees is what makes them. No, it’s Jesus that conforms—that makes us the person that we are—our true identity.

I started off talking about, I was trying to find my identity. Well, my identity was found in Christ.

Kim: Amen.

Herman: He found me and He revealed Himself to me and gave me a different perspective of our purpose and our calling: that we’re here for a greater cause. We’re not just here like mere humans to exist and eat and be merry. We’re here to tear down the schemes of the enemy and to shed light where darkness is. When light is being presented in darkness, people see it for what it is because light overshadows darkness.

That’s why I call my book *Shifting Shadows*, because I was in all these different shadows shifting here, shifting there and God would—His hand was on me because He allowed me to be alive. He allowed me to be here today to have this discussion with you, Kim.

Kim: Yes.

I want to close us out by having you share what your family is like today.

Herman: Oh, it’s a very good question. My family, every day they praise God for the life that we are enjoying now in Christ. Before they lived with so much tension and afraid what would be of our lives. Today, they rejoice in the fact that God saved me, that God saved them, that they’re seeing the hand of God on each and every one of us. It is *amazing*.

My prayer is that through this story that it will inspire you. That it doesn’t matter what place you may find yourself in, how deep you’ve gone in with your sin, with addictions, with being unfaithful, whatever it may be, God can restore your life. All you have to do is call on His name, “Jesus, help me,” with a sincere heart and He will transform you. He

will change your life. As the scripture so describes that you will be born again. It's a new experience. Therefore, whoever is in Christ Jesus is a new creature. The old is gone.

It's true. You'll have some scars. I have some scars to show and those scars are just a reminder of where He took me out of. We have our moments as believers, but we know who to hold on to which is Jesus Christ.

Kim: As I was talking to Herman, I kept thinking about how *different* he is from the person he used to be. At times, it was as if he was telling someone else's story. I caught myself thinking, "There is no way that this godly man I'm looking at is the same one who committed those crimes and lived such a self-centered life."

On the other hand, you could say that it's true. According to 2 Corinthians 5:17, He is not the same man. "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come."

The main thing I was drawn to in our conversation was the living proof of the power of Jesus and His ability to transform the life of a man who seemed so far out there that many may have thought he could never change. Yet God in His grace and mercy pursued him. Yes, he was being pursued by quite a few others as well, including the feds. But God *used that* to get him to the very place where he would be locked up; yet set free at the same time—only God.

Luke 19:10 says, "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." Jesus persistently pursues us. Is He pursuing you? And are you continuing to run? If so, I hope that Herman Mendoza's story will help you to rethink what it is like to live a surrendered life in Christ.

I tell you, the type of joy I saw in his eyes, the peace I saw on his face can only be a result of having a personal relationship with Jesus. Maybe you have that relationship with Jesus but you're still running. This time you're not running from the relationship per se, but maybe you're running from the call He has on your life.

I know what that's like. It can be scary. You may not feel—you may not feel qualified or you may be afraid of what people will think about you. I get that. But you know every time I stopped running from God and chose to surrender to His plan for me, I have never regretted it.

Sure it's not always easy and some people, they won't understand. But they are not the ones you'll have to stand in front of on judgment day. God's plan for us is *so much greater* than any plan we can come up with. We see that clearly in the life of Herman Mendoza. The destruction that went forth from his own plans cannot compare to the positive influence he is now having as a result of surrendering his life to Christ and His plan.

Now this story is not about “When you come to Jesus, He’ll get you out of jail.” It’s about finding freedom and joy no matter what your circumstances are. We saw this when Herman was facing additional years in prison. He was determined that he would serve God either way, in prison or out. Now that’s a new man, a new creation in Christ who is free indeed.

Thanks for listening. If you want to find out more about Herman Mendoza or his book, *Shifting Shadows: How a New York Drug Lord Found Freedom in the Last Place He Expected*, check out our show notes on the *Unfavorable Odds* page at FamilyLife.com/podcasts. There you’ll also be able to listen to the other podcasts on the FamilyLife Podcast Network.

If you enjoyed today’s conversation, I hope you’ll subscribe. You can search for *Unfavorable Odds* wherever you get your podcasts. You can also try asking your smart speaker or digital assistant to play the latest episode of *Unfavorable Odds*.

If I could ask you for a favor, would you take a few minutes and leave a review of *Unfavorable Odds* on Apple Podcasts? And if you think your friends would enjoy today’s episode, consider texting them the link or posting it on social media.

Next time on *Unfavorable Odds*:

Lindsey: My doctor comes back in. She holds my hand and she says, “Lindsey, it’s not good.” I just immediately start crying. She says, “We can’t seem to find your baby’s skull.”

Kim: That’s Lindsey R. Dennis, next time.

I’m Kim Anthony. Thanks for listening to this episode of *Unfavorable Odds*.

Unfavorable Odds is produced by FamilyLife® and is a part of the FamilyLife Podcast Network.

We are so happy to provide these transcripts to you. However, there is a cost to produce them for our website. If you’ve benefited from the broadcast transcripts, would you consider [donating today](#) to help defray the costs?

Copyright © 2020 FamilyLife. All rights reserved.

www.FamilyLife.com