



Monday Matters

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Second Chances

What would it be like if you were known for the worst thing that you ever did in your life?

Catherine Rohr stands at the front of a drab, fluorescent-lit classroom on Midtown Manhattan. Her 27 students, who sit crammed into chair-desks, are ex-cons whose crimes include narcotics trafficking and murder. These men are part of a class called Defy Ventures, a yearlong, M.B.A. - style program that Rohr created to teach former inmates how to start their own companies. They learn cash flow, balance sheets, accounting, and taxes. They learn how to behave in a professional setting, how to speak in public, and create business plans.



Rohr says that many of the qualities that made these men good at being bad guys (until they got caught) are the same qualities that made effective entrepreneurs. Some of the men had up to 40 employees working for them. They had the ability



Second Chance Music Video

Quote of the Week

"America is the land of second chance - and when the gates of the prison open, the path ahead should lead to a better life."

~George W. Bush~

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Ron Nelson, CCA

Linda J. Nelson

MondayMatters.us@gmail.com

to motivate a team, identify new markets, manage risks, and inspire loyalty and hard work. Her goal is to help these students apply their abilities to legal endeavors.

In 2004 Rohr started the Prison Entrepreneurship Program in the Texas prison system. She believed God had called her to this ministry. She incorporated a lot of religion into her classes because it fueled her passion and because religion is an unspoken requirement for any rehabilitation program in Texas. Five hundred students have gone through the program with 60 of them starting their own legal businesses. In addition, the recidivism rate dropped to 10% (national average is 40%). This was a successful second chance program.

At a time in her life it all came crashing down on Rohr. A scandal broke and she now was no better than the men in the PEP program in Texas. She lost her position, her husband, her life as she knew it.

Rohr had often spoken at churches and conferences and would ask the crowd, "What would it be like if you were known for the worst thing that you ever did in your life?" Now she was in that very same situation, asking herself that very question.

Rohr said, "I went through a period of questioning my calling, or that I could be worth anything or do anything good in the world ever again."

Today Rohr stands before a classroom of ex-cons and future entrepreneurs and shares her story of failure but also of second chances. She knows God gives second chances and Defy Ventures is the second chance she has been given. She says, "I've spent my whole life talking about grace and second chances, and I have now been a recipient of it."

God is the giver of second chances. Aren't you thankful that He is?

by Ron Nelson

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ArtByLJNelson@bellsouth.net
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Second Chance
Hezekiah Walker & The Love
Fellowship Crusade Choir

Thanks to the July 2012 article in Inc.
Magazine for inspiring this post.