

PRIZEFIGHTER TURNED PREACHER

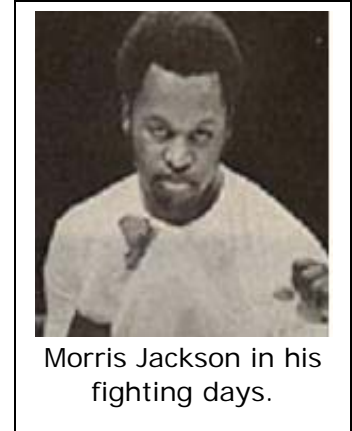
By Leo Adam Biga

In his best three-piece suit, Morris Jackson looks like just another slick do-gooder to prisoners seeing him for the first time at the Douglas County Correctional Facility, where he's a chaplain with Good News Jail and Prison Ministry. But the large man soon separates himself from the pack when he tells them he used to be a prizefighter.

Rattling off the famous names he met inside the ring — Ron Stander, Ernie Shavers, Ron Lyle, Larry Holmes — usually gets their attention. If not, what he says next, does. "My number was 30398." That's right, this chaplain did time on an armed robbery charge. The former convict now stands on the other side of the bars as a Christian Chaplain.

During the day Jackson was a sparring partner for several boxing legends, and ran with a rough crowd at night. "I started hanging with some friends who had served time. I was influenced by them to make some quick money in a hold up. I was rescued not arrested, because eventually somebody was going to get hurt. I deserved everything I got."

While serving his stretch, Jackson studied Islam and became a Black Muslim. After prison he began bouncing at strip clubs. "I got caught up in the lifestyle. I started smoking marijuana and was immersed in sin. My wife was working days and I was bouncing nights. We hardly ever saw each other. My life was spiraling out of control.



Morris Jackson in his fighting days.

"I would never have imagined I would someday be a Christian. If someone would have told me that, I would have said, 'Yeah, right, you're crazy man. Give me some of what you're smoking.' But it was my mother God used to pull me back from the brink and into the church. She staged a one-woman intervention for me. And I am so thankful she did.



Morris Jackson preaching the Word.

"My mother came over to my house to talk with me about what my life was like and how Christ was calling me. She shared the gospel in a way that I had never heard before. She spoke of God's grace and how He loved me, and had a purpose and a plan for my life. 'But, it is up to you to accept and follow the path God has for you', she said.

"I felt the presence of God and heard an inner voice say, 'the line is drawn in the sand, and if you don't make the decision now, you'll never get another chance.' I know, just as sure as I am here today, that if I had not accepted Christ into my life, I'd be dead and in hell right now. My mother closed with prayer. The next day I went to church."

Church Bible classes led to Bible college studies and, ultimately, his ordination. His first ministry was on the streets of north Omaha (a difficult place to minister). Now, he can't imagine going back to his old life. "It makes a difference when you come from darkness to light. I used to live for the weekends. Now, He is my reason for living."

Living his faith, which he loudly proclaims from the inscription above his home's front door to the message on his answering machine, are only two of his ways of telling the world that he's a Christian. He's seen enough cons turn their lives around to know he has had an effect on them. Joe Garman says, "He is one of the greatest witnesses I know."

The proud old fighter sees his ministry as his new battleground. Only, instead of knocking heads, he's all about saving souls. "Most of my teaching is biblical principles applied to our daily lives. But I'm still a warrior. Now though, when I put on my armor and go to war every day, I don't feel violent. My victories are won in my prayer closet.

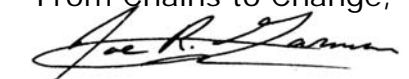
"Prisoners sometimes hang on my every word because they see a change has taken place in my life. They really can't believe I was where they are today. Having Christ in your life makes a big difference in your visible presence, in your eyes, in your demeanor, in your voice and in your conversation. Prisoners notice these things. You can't con a con."



Morris Jackson – What a beautiful man of God. Morris Jackson with his friend, Joe Garman.

P.S. BECAUSE OF YOU, AND CHRISTIANS LIKE YOU, MORRIS JACKSON IS ONE OF MANY WHO HAS PLACED HIS FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST. THANK YOU FOR ALL YOU DO FOR PRISONERS THROUGH YOUR SUPPORT OF ARM. THANK YOU FOR GIVING YOUR WHOLE SELF TO HIM!

From Chains to Change,


Joe R. Garman, Evangelist