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Cartez stories of hope

I grew up in a home with an alcoholic father and we used to watch him beat my mother. I was 10 when they divorced, which was a difficult and confusing time for me. My parents parted ways with my father in Los Angeles and my mother and us in San Diego. I began living a two faced life, acting one way in front of my mother and another way in front of my friends. In the 6th grade I smoked weed and became a part of a gang as well to be a part of a group that would overlook my shortcomings and would simply accept me. I grew worse as I became older, and at age 13 I was selling weed and running illegal aliens across the border. My mother could no longer handle me and I ended up moving in with my father who was very demanding of a perfection that I could not give. I continued to get into trouble in college from selling and using crack and became homeless. I did a lot of bad things, robbed people, and kicked in people's houses. At age 22, I got my first job in Kansas City in air conditioning and heating. I stopped using crack, but moved to alcohol, dog fighting, and weed. In my mind I thought that I was

ok because I had beat my addiction to crack, dog fighting was a "sport", and alcohol was legal. I found though that I could not stop drinking. I could not control this addiction and as a result I kept on getting DWI's. After the 10th DWI I finally came to the end of myself and voluntarily went to treatment. That was the longest walk for me from the parking lot to the treatment center. I walked with my head hung low and praying all the way. I finally realized that God was giving me a choice that day and saying "who are you going to serve"? I finally threw up my hands and said, "You, Lord!" I prayed that God would take me by the hand and lead me. As I reached the hall of the treatment center Pastor Luther, who was counseling at the center, saw me and took me by the hand and told me that he would be my mentor. God had answered my prayer. Today I am grateful that God is a God of second chances. He gave me a beautiful wife in 2004, gave me two sons, and the opportunity to lead my family. I also am blessed to lead the Straight and Narrow men's home and to disciple men to know Christ, which I love to do.