



Core Truth: God changes broken lives to make them His ambassadors.

Rick Cartagena went from stealing cigarettes from his dad to selling drugs on street corners in Philadelphia. Before turning eighteen he was arrested four times and given a fifteen-year sentence. In prison, God changed him. He was “mugged” by God’s Spirit. His changed life with Christ led to an early release from prison and a life of service as Christ’s ambassador.

Prompt: Before listening to the dramatic testimony of Rick Cartagena, we will look at another, equally dramatic testimony of the Apostle Paul. Read 1 Timothy 1:12-17. Ask the students to recount some of Paul’s sins. Then relay the fact that Paul wrote 13 letters of our NT, planted more than 10 churches, and has shaped Christian faith dramatically. First God had to break him to make him an ambassador.

Let students know Rick Cartagena’s testimony will have some “intense” details, but it remains a powerful testimony of how God continues to change lives.

Play: Video of Rick Cartagena, “I Am Changed” www.buildmomentum.org/resources.html

Process: Select from the following questions to help students remember, rekindle and reengage.

- ⏪ Several times Rick said, “I don’t glory in my past. It was a living hell.” **What were some of the experiences he described?**
- ⏪ Rick said, “When you fail to live life for Jesus, we automatically involve ourselves in things that are inappropriate before our heavenly father. We have a sin nature. Bad choices happen by default.” **What other factors may have contributed to Rick’s reckless choices? How do such factors affect you?**
- ⏪ When you think of such a dramatic turnaround – from drug-pushing, gang member to truth-telling ambassador, **how do you feel about your own testimony?**
- ⏪ Read Ephesians 2:1-10. Thinking especially about the first few verses, **how does the Apostle Paul help us see the power of every testimony of faith?**
- ⏪ Read Colossians 1:13-14. Again, **what does this passage say about your testimony?**
- ⏪ Rick said, “You don’t have to be perfect to share the gospel of Jesus Christ. You have been given the ministry of reconciliation.” **How have you seen God use your failures and weaknesses?**
- ⏪ After his first chapel service in jail, Rick received two Bible studies in the mail. God used His word to break and change him. He said, “[God] set me up. It felt like He entered the room and mugged me. I felt bruised. I felt violated. He flipped me upside-down. Then he offered me hope. He offered me Jesus.” **Has God ever set you up or used you to set up someone else? Tell.**

Pray: Spend time thanking God for changing lives. As a group, encourage students to pray aloud for changes they’ve seen God do in them. Then have students pray for a person they want God to change.