

# The Cross & the Switchblade

by David Wilkerson (1963)

David was reading an article in Life magazine about a teenage gang on trial for murder when God told him to “Go to New York City & help those boys”. He used “fleeces” before the Lord. He went to NYC in 1958 & happened to be there the day of the trial & happened to get the last seat in the courtroom. His picture was in the paper as some rural preacher trying to see the boys. He felt this brought shame on his family, but it gave him favor with the gangs. He kept making trips to the city to talk with the gangs. God directed his path & showed them many miracles.

He never got to talk with the boys in the article, but he reached much more. The greatest problem teenagers have is loneliness. They seek others out to find companionship and there you have gangs. He felt they needed a fresh start & to feel loved. Nicky Cruz--- was the leader of the Mau Mau gang, who threatened David. David’s response was: “You could cut me into a thousand pieces...& every piece would love you.”

They had a revival & many came to Christ (including Nicky), but there was no follow up. So they learned they needed to be plugged into local churches. Soon God had him leave the church he was pasturing in PA to work with the youth in NYC in 1959. The first **Teen Challenge** center was at 416 Clinton Ave, Brooklyn, NY in 1961; the second was in Chicago.

Graduates from a bible college came to be staff and really met the human needs (physical, emotional & spiritual). He told them not to use “empty” words, but with much prayer make them personal. The teens felt that unconditional love & 500 came to Christ that year, 100 came to the center for counseling, but only a handful needed to live at the center. The busy schedule kept them out of trouble. Nicky came back from bible school married. He worked with the parents of troubled teens & his wife worked with young kids before they got in trouble.

The drugs were death on the installment plan. **Most kids start on marijuana** (addicts the mind, but not the body) then move to the stronger stuff. Only 15 days of continuous heroin use produces addiction (mind & body). The cost of the addiction makes them sell drugs (more profitable than stealing since stolen goods only sell for 1/3 the value), but then they have to get their own customers. Withdrawal is agonizing for 3 days. **90% of addicts that tried to get free returned to their old habit.** Drug addicts die of TB or bronchitis at a rate of 4:1; pneumonia @ 2:1; & brain hemorrhage @ 3:1. The power of the Holy Spirit delivered many from drugs.

Quotes: “As long as He remains in charge, the programs will thrive. The minute we try to do things on our own power we will fail.” (DW)

Books: Run Baby Run (Nicky Cruz) & The Ultimate Pursuit (Dennis Griffith)