

CROSSROADS YOUTH LEADERSHIP FOUNDATION

CONSEQUENCES

The Dave Houston Story



Your choices matter.
Your next chapter matters, too.

A true story of accountability, faith, and rebuilding.
With reflection questions and a personal action plan.

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At 19, my life changed.

A message from Dave Houston Jr.

I grew up in the Mississippi Delta with dreams, energy, and curiosity. Like many young people, I had a future in front of me. At 19, the choices I made led me somewhere I never imagined: Parchman Prison, within the Mississippi Department of Corrections.

I thought I was invincible. I did not take advice seriously. I believed I could bend the rules and still come out on top. Then I had to face a truth I could no longer talk my way around: my decisions had consequences.

I share my story because I believe your future is worth protecting.

This story asks you to look ahead. Think about the people you love, the goals you carry, and the life you want to build. A decision can close doors. A different decision, with support and effort, can begin opening them again.

AS YOU READ

What is one part of your future you want to protect?

Freedom became real when I lost it.

Choices can carry a cost far beyond the moment.

Before prison, I could go where I wanted, see people I cared about, and decide how to spend my day. Behind bars, that freedom was gone. Rules and walls replaced choices I had taken for granted.

The hardest truth was personal: my decisions put me there. Taking responsibility meant facing what I had done and the hurt that reached my family, my community, and me.

A moment passes. Its consequences can stay.

For the reader: pressure can make a dangerous choice feel urgent. An argument, a dare, or the fear of looking weak can make tomorrow feel far away. Give yourself time to think before you act. Walking away and asking for help can protect everything you are working toward.

REFLECT

Who can help you slow down when emotions take over?

Consequences reach beyond one person.

Think about the whole circle of people affected.

1

YOU

Freedom, time, goals, relationships, and opportunities can be disrupted.

2

FAMILY

Loved ones may carry worry, grief, financial strain, and broken trust.

3

OTHERS

Violence and theft can leave people hurt, afraid, or grieving.

4

COMMUNITY

Harm can weaken the trust that helps neighbors feel safe together.

Accountability begins by recognizing harm. Rebuilding begins with the next responsible step.

In a dark place, I found hope.

Faith became part of my turning point.

In prison, I found God. Faith gave me strength when I felt weak. Prayer gave me direction when I felt lost. I began to believe that my life could still have purpose.

I learned that even at rock bottom, I could turn toward God. My past was real. So was the possibility of a different future.

Consequences are real. So is the possibility of change.

FOR YOUR OWN REFLECTION

What helps you stay grounded when life gets difficult? For some people it is faith and prayer. It may also include a trusted mentor, counseling, family support, or time to reflect. Identify support you can turn to before a situation gets worse.

Name one source of hope and one person you can reach out to.

I chose a different next chapter.

Returning home meant facing another crossroads.

When I came home, I had a choice: fall back into the same old ways or push myself to build a better future. I chose the second path. It was not easy, but I refused to let prison be the last chapter of my story.

With God's help and determination, I started creating positive things. Dooney's Barbershop became a place for community connection. Carnival Treats and the food truck became ways to share joy through food and flavor.

Your past is part of your story. Keep building what comes next.

A STARTING POINT FOR REBUILDING

Choose one realistic goal. Find someone who will support it. Take one step today, then return to it tomorrow. Progress grows through repeated choices and dependable support.

Build something that helps someone.

From personal experience to community leadership.

Today, my work includes Crossroads Youth Leadership Foundation. Through mentoring, youth activities, school support, meals, and community events, we create opportunities for young people to connect and lead.

Cut Out the Violence brings that mission into the barbershop: a haircut can open a conversation, and a conversation can build a connection. Young people deserve adults who listen and help them see a future worth working toward.



Community outreach in Clarksdale. Photo from CYLF's website.

CUT / CONVERSATION / CONNECTION

A welcoming place. An honest conversation. A next step together.

See past the moment.

A practical conversation about actions and their impact.

An argument becomes violence

A conflict can leave someone injured, a family grieving, and lives permanently changed. Creating distance and seeking help can interrupt escalation.

Taking what belongs to someone else

Theft and break-ins can leave people afraid in their own homes and neighborhoods. Pressure or a need does not erase the harm. Ask for support before making the situation worse.

An online conflict follows you offline

A post, threat, or shared video can intensify a dispute. Stop responding, save threatening messages, and ask a trusted adult or staff member for help.

This booklet focuses on choices, harm, and prevention. It does not provide legal advice or a sentencing chart. For a specific legal question, consult a qualified attorney.

Pause before you react.

Practice this plan while you are calm so it is easier to use under pressure.

P

PAUSE

Stop typing, speaking, or moving toward the conflict. Give yourself a moment.

A

ASSESS

Ask: Is anyone at risk? What could this choice cost me or someone else?

U

USE DISTANCE

Move to a safer place when possible. Do not follow, threaten, or gather a crowd.

S

SEEK SUPPORT

Tell a trusted adult, mentor, counselor, teacher, or facility staff member what is happening.

E

ELECT YOUR NEXT STEP

Choose a safe response that protects your future. Revisit the problem with support.

If there is immediate danger, call 911 or alert on-site staff immediately.

The conversation can change the outcome.

Discuss with a group, a mentor, or someone you trust. You may pass on any question.

01

What did Dave take for granted before losing his freedom?

02

How can one decision affect people who were never part of the situation?

03

What makes it difficult to walk away from pressure? What could make it easier?

04

How did faith and a sense of purpose help Dave move forward?

05

What does taking responsibility look like in everyday life?

06

Which person, place, or activity helps you make choices you feel good about?

Scenario: Someone dares you to join a fight. Practice a response, a safe exit, and a person you would contact.

Make your plan.

Write a small, specific step. Share only what you feel comfortable sharing.

One goal I want to protect:

A situation that makes good decisions harder for me:

A safe response I can practice:

A trusted person I can ask for help:

One action I will take in the next seven days:

Check in with: _____

Date: _____

A setback is a reason to get support and adjust your plan. Keep taking the next responsible step.

KEEP THE CONVERSATION GOING

Your future matters.

Use this resource to start an honest, hopeful conversation.

I share my story because I believe in you. I came home and chose to build a future. Stay focused, seek support, and keep believing that your life has purpose.

Dave Houston Jr.

Founder, Crossroads Youth Leadership Foundation

FOR SCHOOLS, CHURCHES, YOUTH PROGRAMS AND JUVENILE INSTITUTIONS

Suggested 30-minute session: read selected story pages (10 minutes), discuss two questions (10 minutes), and complete one action step (10 minutes). Keep participation voluntary. Do not require anyone to share a personal offense, trauma, or faith belief. Follow your organization's safeguarding and crisis procedures.

SUPPORT & CONNECTION

Immediate danger: call 911 or alert on-site staff.

Emotional distress or suicidal crisis: call 988 or text 988 (U.S. 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline).

For mentoring or program inquiries: 662-302-1787

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Story adapted from Dave Houston's original pamphlet. Discussion tools are educational additions. Cover artwork is a symbolic illustration, not a photograph of Dave. Updated October 2026.