



Local pastor and former meth user weigh in on new Georgia Project ads

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AUGUSTA---The ads are intentionally graphic to discourage anyone , especially teens from using methamphetamine. It is called the "Georgia Meth Project." News 12 talked to a pastor and a former meth addict about the ads and the big picture.

While the ads and messages on screen may be powerful, Pastor Charles Pennington of Berean Baptist Church says it is going to take a message from a higher power to get through to some people to overcome their addiction.

You wouldn't know it by looking at him, but Stuart Waller used to be hooked on meth.

"I started using drugs in the fifth grade," says Waller. "I started drinking and one thing led to another and the last drug I was involved with was crystal meth which was ten years of my life."

Ten years of dark memories, says Waller. The husband and father says his life was a vicious cycle almost ruined by drugs.

"I got jobs and I lost jobs," adds Waller. "My wife said, Stuart, I am tired of living like this because this stuff is killing you."

The threats grew even greater, the deeper he got into drug.

"My wife said 'I am going to leave Stuart, he's doing that crystal meth and using drugs pretty heavy and and it is causing problems'," recalls Waller.

Then a friend invited them both to church. That is where he found the strength to turn his life around. Waller now heads a drug addiction program called "Reformers Unanimous" at Berean Baptist Church.

The pastor of the church, Charles Pennington, says he is proud of Waller's accomplishments. Pennington has had his own trials and tribulations but not with drugs. Since 1979 he says his life has been about helping others see that the message of God can help you overcome any stronghold. He says these new ads may be powerful, but so is the word of God.

"Everybody will say 'I can quit this anytime'," says Pennington. "You don't just quit methamphetamine, because when they get inside, they attack the whole body."



Both men say the ads will turn some lives around but there is something else that a recovering addict may need. That's why they minister at Garden City Rescue Mission. They are hoping that the change they both have experienced in their lifetime can be realized for others who may be struggling with addictions or struggling with their faith.

"I'd probably be dead," says Waller. "I really do believe that. I knew a lot of people that had meth labs or I probably would have been in jail."

Pennington says his church has already saved some lives and some homes in the battle against addiction.

"There's maybe six families that we've reached right now that's off this meth," says Pennington. "God's putting their homes back together."

Pennington and Waller both say they are not criticizing the ad campaigns but they believe that a strong support group like in a church works well long term. For more information on the church's addictions program and how to get in touch with them:

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