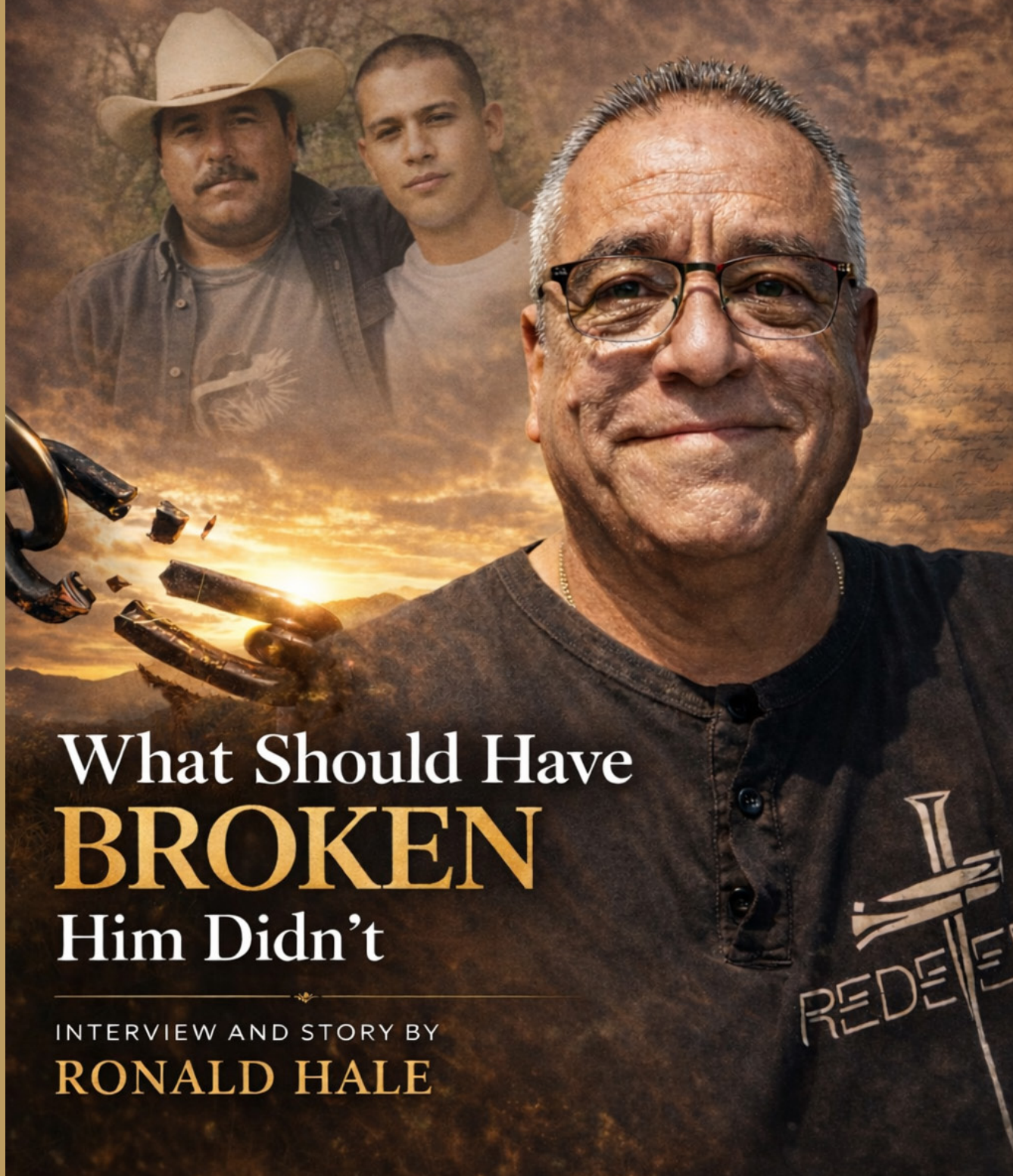


# OUR CULTURES

STORIES THAT SHAPE US



## What Should Have **BROKEN** Him Didn't

INTERVIEW AND STORY BY  
**RONALD HALE**

***When Eddie Guerra learned that his wife had passed away, he was sitting in a prison cell with no way to reach her and no way to say goodbye.***

It was September 25, 1991.

Most people would expect something like that to break a person apart, but Eddie remembers it differently. It did affect him, but what stands out is how he responded.

“I remember praying,” he says. “That’s all I could do.”

There were no clear answers. Only loss, distance from his children, and the reality that life outside those walls kept moving without him. Instead of breaking under it, he became more focused. He stayed out of trouble and kept to himself. He held onto the one thing that had remained constant in his life.

“I never let go of God,” he states. “And He never let go of me.”

That experience didn’t mark an ending for Eddie. It opened something in him he wouldn’t fully understand until years later.

Still, his story didn’t begin in prison.

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Long before that, his life had already taken on responsibilities that most people don’t face until much later. He was married at fifteen and became a father by seventeen, working to provide for his family while still trying to figure out who he was.

“I didn’t really have a childhood,” he recalls.

That early responsibility came with pressure, along with emotions that didn’t always have a safe place to land. He describes a long period of anger in his younger years, influenced by experiences like being bullied and having to mature too quickly.

“I had a lot of rage in me,” he admits. “I was still a kid trying to understand what it meant to be a man.”

At the same time, his early life would later take on a different meaning. He often accompanied his mother while she cleaned houses, and in those

homes, he would come across Bibles that people had left out. He began reading them... not out of obligation, but out of curiosity.

Eventually, people started giving them to him. He came across a Spanish Bible and taught himself how to read it by placing it next to an English version, working through it line by line.

“I didn’t understand it then,” he notes. “But now I do.”

What felt random at the time no longer feels that way. Still, Eddie’s life did not follow a straightforward path.

Some choices pulled him in the wrong direction, as anger often took over and the same patterns kept repeating. After serving

time and returning home, he was back in prison within months.

“That’s when I realized something had to change,” he adds.



Even with that realization, change didn't happen immediately. There were still years of trying to escape what he was feeling rather than confronting it directly.

"I tried everything," he says. "Drinking, drugs... none of it fixed anything."

Then came another loss... one that could have easily pushed him past the point of recovery. His son was murdered.

"My only son," he shares quietly.

*"You don't force anything.  
You don't judge. You just show up."*

Some situations in life leave no room for explanation, only response. For Eddie, that response was not to walk away from his faith, even when it would have been easy to do so.

"I never turned away from God," he says. "Never."

For a long time, Eddie describes himself as running... running from pain, responsibility, and from the direction his life was meant to take. That changed in a single moment. He was alone and praying, not out of routine, but with complete honesty.

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"I told God, take everything away from me, and I'll follow you," he states. "My life belongs to you."

It wasn't a gradual shift. There wasn't a long process of negotiation or hesitation.

"After that, I didn't want that life anymore," he shares. The things that once held his attention no longer did. The desire for them was gone.

That turning point changed how Eddie approached everything, especially how he engaged with others.

Today, he serves as a chaplain, working closely with individuals who are often overlooked or judged based on their worst decisions. His work is rooted in presence, not authority.

"A chaplain is there for people," he says. "You don't force anything. You don't judge. You just show up."

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That perspective comes from his own life. He knows what it feels like to be dismissed, defined by past mistakes, and told change might not be possible. Because of that, he meets people where they are, without assumptions.

“They’re still people,” he says. “They just made mistakes.”

During one program he led, there was a man who barely spoke throughout the process. Week after week, Eddie continued to show up without pushing him to open up.

Over time, something changed.

By the end of the program, the man approached him and said he wanted to do the same kind of work.

“He told me, ‘I want to do what you do,’” Eddie recalls.

For Eddie, that experience wasn’t about recognition. It confirmed that change can be seen, even when it isn’t announced.

Eddie does not present his life as perfect, nor does he distance himself from his past. Instead, he sees it as part of a larger picture that he understands more clearly now than he did before.

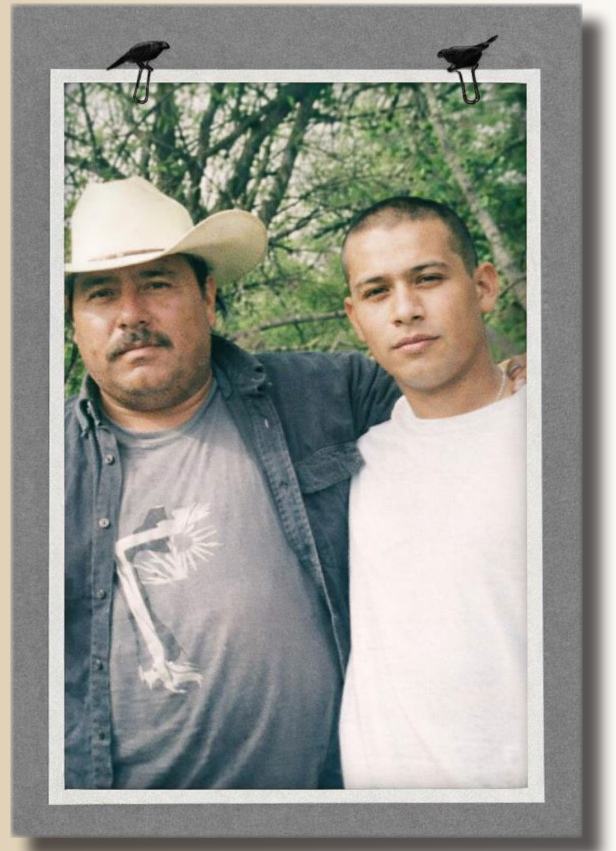
“My life has had a lot of ups and downs,” he notes. “But I can see now that I was never alone.”

Today, his focus is on helping others see that their current situation does not define their entire story. Whether he is working with individuals in difficult circumstances or simply listening, his presence reflects a belief built through everything he has experienced.

When asked how he wants to be remembered, he answers without hesitation.

“As someone God used.”

It’s not about perfection or achievement, but about purpose. For Eddie, that has always been enough... *and it still is.*



*“I never let go of God...  
And He never let go of me.”*