

Tony, 44

So my Question to you is this: What does 'Christian Faith in Action' mean to you? I'll tell you what it means to me, Tony. It means love, care, support, empathy. It means everyone should be given a second chance despite race, colour, religion, lack of religion or sexual orientation. It means someone like me coming from a background of children homes, prisons, homelessness and drug addiction can be given a second chance to make something of their life. To be a father to my children, a son to my mother and father, a brother to my brothers and sisters, it allows me to become a productive member of society once more. All this and so much more has been given me with the love and support of the Bournemouth YMCA.

I first arrived in Bournemouth having just completed another prison sentence where I was given the opportunity to go to a treatment centre to take yet another look at my drug addiction and the inner workings of my mind, all other attempts had failed. In fact I had failed at all most everything I set my hands to in life. My life was a mess and it never looked like getting any better. I completed my six months in the treatment centre and was faced with what to do next, back to London and drug addiction or try something different. I tried something different. I tried the YMCA where I was loved back to life and given a second chance to make something of my life. I was given a set of keys to my room and a great relief came over me. I haven't had a set of keys before and this wasn't lost on me. In that moment I felt empowered and trusted.

In the two and a half years since having the backing of the YMCA, I have managed to educate myself at college, obtained jobs, been responsible for my own clean time and sobriety, and I am now finally ready to move into my own flat with my two children. I could not have done this without the YMCA's encouragement and support.