



THE GROWTH JOURNAL

Growth Ministries Inc.
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ISSUE 6, VOLUME 2 – APRIL 2018

As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another. Proverbs 27:17

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“WORDS TO GROW BY”

LINDA LEWIS
GMI DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS

Change

The Secret of Change
Is to focus All of your Energy,
Not on fighting the Old,
But on building the New.
Life will only Change
When YOU become more
Committed
To YOUR Dreams
Than you are to your Comfort
Zone.

Romans 12:2 NLT

THE MAIN REASON WE CELEBRATE EASTER

Why do Christians celebrate Easter? Many people think it's all about baskets of candy, fancy hats, bunnies, and eggs. But that's not what we're talking about. We're talking about who we celebrate on Easter and why we celebrate Him. You came for one sentence. Here it goes.

We celebrate Easter to worship our eternally perfect God who separated Himself from every other deity by choosing to give up His own rights and life to restore and save the rights and lives of His creation.

Read that again. There is only one God who gives up what He deserves to give His creation what they don't. That's our God. He's why we celebrate Easter. Maybe you're not a one-sentence type of person.

Jesus took on the darkest evils of the world through the worst death, just in case you'd decide to believe in Him 2,000 years later.

Other reasons:

1. Because without Easter our Savior is dead in a grave, but with Him, our human failings are dead in His grave. 1 Corinthians 15:17
2. Because this one day sums up the reason God left heaven to enter His immeasurable creation as a tiny, crying human. Romans 14:9
3. Because we killed the author of life, but God used Jesus' death to give our story a happy ending. Acts 3:15
4. Because our God carried out His plan to give up what He deserved to give us back what we never earned—and deserved to lose. John 3:16
5. Because Jesus Himself said it was the day He'd be glorified. John 12:23-25

Wait on the Lord

SUFFER FOR FASHION MINISTER RYAN STEMMONS





Resurrection Sunday or what is more commonly known as Easter Sunday is upon us. It's that time of the year when many find themselves visiting the malls or local clothing stores in hopes of finding the perfect outfit to wear to Sunday service. Every so often I hear the words "you have to suffer for fashion" when it comes time to wear those clothes that may be a little snug in some spots. Or maybe when you put on those shoes that really aren't comfortable, but you wear them anyway since they go so well with your outfit. Even before attempting to put on the outfit, we know it's going to be uncomfortable to wear and may need some help getting into it. We go to the extremes of curtailing our dinner portions because the outfit constricts your body to the point of making it difficult to breath after consuming a simple dinner salad.

Some are more willing than others to suffer these consequences for fashion and it makes me think how the same can be true even with our walk with the Lord. Try to look at the word “fashion” as a verb which means to “make something into a particular or required form”. For example, “the bag was fashioned from recycled paper”.

As a believer we must remember we are “fashioned” by God. Our former ways of thinking before we came into the knowledge of Christ are no longer acceptable. **Ephesians 4:20-24** reminds us of this by saying...

20 That, however, is not the way of life you learned 21 when you heard about Christ and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. 22 You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires;23 to be made new in the attitude of your minds; 24 and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

It's never an easy task breaking old habits and trying to do something new, but is extremely rewarding whenever you reach your goal. Effort and dedication are required whenever you initiate change in order to prevent reverting back to the former way of doing things. It can be said nothing worth having comes easy. You have to be willing to suffer for fashion or in this case suffer to be fashioned. The challenges of life don't cease once you've accepted Christ. But it is in these challenges that we are fashioned into His image for a greater purpose and reward.

So let this be a reminder to be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that you may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that you may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

Hold firm to your faith in Christ.

From the Other Side of the State

BY DONALD R. RAYTON, JR. AKA DONNY

Enjoy this piece by one of the Brothers at Norton.

Many of us have heard the saying; "everything isn't always what it seems". This is only part of a larger truth that has manifested itself in my life.

When I was told that I had to pack my stuff to be shipped to the other side of the state, I was comfortable in my current surroundings. I had graduated Brothers in Blue Reentry, I'd made the honor roll at Donnelly College, received a Certificate of Honor from Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society. Everything I was doing with my brothers in A.A.O. and so much more was preparing me for this moment in my life. I didn't see it then.

Here I was thinking I was headed to the "pit of despair". I was angry and confused. I didn't know that God was putting me right where he needed me. Right where I was supposed to be. See it's said that, "all things good to know are difficult to learn". And this lesson was one of the hardest yet.

After taking a brief time out, upon landing on the yard six hours away from my family, I began to see the truth.

Some people see stumbling blocks when faced with diversity. It took two weeks when I started to see the stepping stones in front of me.

Norton is under new management and the treatment of its population has improved. More than anything is that the new Warden is open minded and trying to change the moral of his staff and the men in the prison. But believe me when I say that if you are a positive force and leader it will shine.

Everything I have learned by being around brothers Ormond Wimberly, Hollywood, Deon Dean and many others has come to fruition. There are many young men here that are unaware of the positive driving force of Umoja. They're unaware of their history and place in it. They didn't know the reason they were snapping their fingers in a group meeting.

I thank God daily for blessing me with the chance to man up and be a leader and teacher myself. When all eyes are on you, you must walk the walk, not just talk it! When you have a full toolbox, it will do you no good if you don't take the tools out and put in the work God has destined you to do for Him.

From the other side of the state, I am telling you that there is yet much work to be done. But with self-determination and faith you will find your purpose in the moment. Believe me when I say that God has a purpose for everyone reading this. It is up to you to listen to that small, still voice and act on it.

Just remember that life is what happens when you're making plans. Things may seem as if it's all bad, but in truth, it's the very best thing for us!

God Bless my Brothers and thank you for all you have done in my life.

Salutations from the other side of the state!

Stories of Ex-Convicts Who Turned Their Lives Around

Each month we will try to share with you a case of an individual who has been released from prison and went on to make a positive impact on society.

Chess Taught Ex-Convict the Right Moves in Life



While chess aficionado **Eugene Brown** made a lot of questionable decisions early on in his life. Classified as a high-risk youth, Brown frequently mingled with the bad eggs in his hometown of Washington, DC, ending with his participation in a failed robbery attempt and subsequent incarceration in a New Jersey prison. During his stay, Brown met his future mentor, a man named Massey with whom he often played chess. It was during one such game that Brown realized the practical applications of chess to everyday life and how he had been making all the wrong moves up to that point.

After he left prison and went back to his hometown, Brown taught his grandson—who was also experiencing behavioral problems—to play chess, with very positive results. Before he knew it, he had established his own chess club, which became hugely successful teaching young people the right lessons in life. As for Brown, he later became a thriving real estate businessman, but has continued to mentor his young wards in the game of chess and life.

A Poem

Keys to Growth, by Kevin Smead

The keys to growth in
Christian life
Are prayer and study, pain and
strife.
Fellowship with other saints
Will help you when your heart
is faint.

Prayer will bring you sweet
relief
And heal the heart ache caused
by grief.

The Word renews your heart
afresh
And helps you as you fight the
flesh.

Pain and strife though never
fun
Will draw you closer to the
Son.

Good fellowship with saints
will mend
Your erring ways lest you
offend.

Thank God for every special
grace
By faith His promises
embrace.
Make the best of each new
day
And through the testings'
watch and pray.



Just for Laughs



Q: At what time of day was Adam created?

A: A little before Eve.

Q: Why didn't they play cards on the Ark?

A: Because Noah was standing on the deck.

Q: Why didn't Noah go fishing?

A: He only had two worms.

Q: Did Eve ever have a date with Adam?

A: No, just an apple.

Q: Who was the greatest female financier in the Bible?

A: Pharaoh's daughter. She went down to the bank of the Nile and drew out a little prophet.

Q: Why couldn't Jonah trust the ocean?

A: Because he knew there was something fishy about it.

Q: What kind of man was Boaz before he married Ruth?

A: Ruthless

Q: What do you get if you cross a Jehovah's Witness and a Unitarian?

A: Someone who goes around knocking on doors for no apparent reason.

Q: Who was the greatest comedian in the Bible?

A: Samson, because he brought the house down.

Q: What excuse did Adam give to his children as to why he no longer lived in Eden?

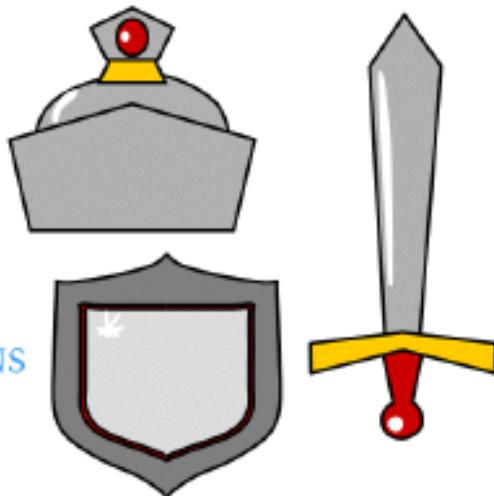
A: Your mother ate us out of house and home!

Armor of God Word Search

D	R	O	W	S	R	B	C	J	P	E	A	C	E	S
B	R	E	A	S	T	P	L	A	T	E	N	E	H	T
S	N	O	I	T	A	T	P	M	E	T	O	L	T	A
B	A	T	T	L	E	S	S	P	C	W	I	B	U	N
B	R	L	S	T	H	P	N	E	P	O	T	I	R	D
B	E	O	H	H	I	E	T	S	R	H	A	B	T	F
B	G	G	M	R	O	O	L	R	A	A	V	L	P	X
W	I	O	I	R	R	E	P	M	Y	D	L	S	S	K
F	G	T	A	P	A	H	S	G	E	W	A	W	X	E
D	L	E	I	H	S	W	E	A	R	T	S	I	J	D

ARMOR
BATTLE
BELT
BIBLE
BREASTPLATE
FIGHT
HELMET
PEACE
PRAYER

PROTECT
SALVATION
SPIRIT
SHIELD
SHOES
STAND
SWORD
TEMPTATIONS
TRUTH
WEAR



Closing Words

LONNIE JOHNSON, GROWTH MINISTRIES, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

It's Never Too Late... AND... Tomorrow is Not Promised

When is the best time to accept Jesus as your Lord and Savior? I have heard people often say, "it's never too late". I am sure I've said it myself as I've evangelized to people. Saying "it is never too late" is a way of letting you know that as long as you have breath in your body, you can set things right with the Lord. The "Thief on the Cross" is the prime example of this. So that leads us to the simple fact that **right now is all we have**. We cannot allow the things we have done to hold us back. **Yesterday is gone**. You cannot change the past. Whatever your past is, God will forgive you for it. That leads us to another fact which is **tomorrow is not promised to anyone**. You could literally drop dead while reading this sentence.

If you were to pass away right now would you be ready? Is your relationship with Christ right? Are you waiting for the right moment? Do you feel that your time has passed you by? Do you think that your situation is too messed up to take it to God? These questions of doubt are all lies from Satan. God loves you. He created you for great things. He is sitting in Glory watching you right now hoping you reach out to Him and take His hand. The hand He has had extended to you all of your life.



It is never too late to accept the best life possible. Love and peace that you can't imagine is waiting on you. But remember, **tomorrow is not promised**, so don't wait too long. Don't gamble with your soul.

So, when is the best time to accept Christ? **The best time is right now**. God is speaking to you at this very moment.

Romans 10:13

For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

What must I do to be saved?

If you have never accepted Christ as your Lord and Savior, or if you have turned away from Him living a life of unrighteousness, and wish to be connected to Him then take a moment and say the prayer below:

"Lord, I confess that I am a sinner and ask for your forgiveness. I believe that your son Jesus died on the cross for my sins and was resurrected with all power. I invite Jesus to be the Lord of my life and your Holy Spirit to come into my heart to guide me for the rest of my days. Amen."

Romans 10:9 says that *if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.*

If this is you, please write Growth Ministries and we will gladly help you start your new life in Christ.

Growth Ministries, Inc., Attn: Executive Secretary, P.O. Box 9045, Kansas City, KS 66112