



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

In this Issue

- Ex-Cons Who Turned It Around – pg. 1
- Inmate Poem – pg. 1
- Joy in Prison?? – pg. 2
- Abraham – pg. 3 - 4
- Words to Grow By – pg. 5
- A Little Humor – pg. 6
- Write Us – pg. 6
- Word Search – pg. 7
- Closing Words – pg. 8
- What Must I Do to Be Saved? – pg. 8

EX-CONS WHO TURNED THEIR LIVES AROUND

Frederick Hutson



After serving time for trafficking 3,000 kilos of marijuana, Hutson built Pigeonly, an inmate database to help people find incarcerated family members. Pigeonly's most popular app allows families to send prisoners printed photos from a smartphone.

The Fight (A poem by an inmate)

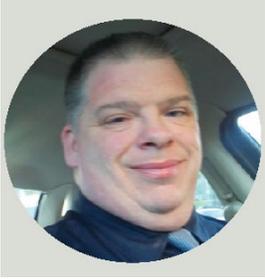
My faith is in Him above,
 It's to Him I send my love.
 But once upon a time, you see,
 My soul was trapped, it was not so free.
 I turned to drugs to escape my fears,
 I've cried a hundred thousand tears.
 Because in the dark I was blind,
 To all God's blessings to mankind.
 This went on for several years,
 Continuing on with all my fears.
 Until one day, I saw the light,
 For my soul, I must fight.
 I pray to Him, whom I love,
 My God, my Savior, the one above.
 I ask forgiveness, far all my sins,
 A new life now, my soul begins.
 I spread the word, all around,
 That it's His love, I have found.
 His love is there, for all to see,
 It's Him alone, who sets us free.
 So I tell you now, everyone,
 The fight with Satan, I have won.
 For now, I see, the wonderful light,
 This is how I truly know, I've won the fight.

By James Murray
Maine Correctional Center

Are you kidding...joy in prison?? BY DR. MATT MASON, PH.D. CHAPLAIN CROSSROADS PRISON

JOY IN PRISON

Are you kidding...joy in prison?? BY DR. MATT MASON, PH.D. CHAPLAIN CROSSROADS



Joy can be one of the hardest human emotions to explain, sometimes, joy is confused with happiness. Happiness is often determined by the things that happen to us or around us, but joy is determined from within. In fact, joy is a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23).

This means God is the One who produces joy in us as we grow to be more like Jesus. It is not self-generated. Since joy comes from the inside, we can be joyful in both good and difficult situations.

Difficult circumstances come to everyone, and just like God did with Paul, He will use our hardships to bring attention to Christ. But that seems counterintuitive to most of us. We want to see Paul as the exception—that God used Paul despite his adversity. We want to believe that Paul was hindered in his imprisonment. Yes, he was able to share the gospel, but imagine how much more he could have shared the gospel if he had been free. But that is not how Paul saw it, and this is the mind-set we need to resist. God didn't work despite Paul's difficulties; He worked through them.

When we consider Paul wrote his letter to the Philippian believers while he was a prisoner in Rome, this helps us see a real example of this kind of joy.

Joy in suffering does not discredit or devalue grief and pain, but it gives us hope in difficult times. This joy is rooted in the faithfulness of God, who ultimately does everything for His glory and our good. God used Paul's difficult circumstances to spread the gospel and build the church.

Paul remained joyful while in prison. We are called to live with that same joy. Paul told the Philippians to be joyful. Paul faced hard times, as we all will.

It is relatively easy to proclaim God's goodness when life feels great, but if that proclamation is our unchanging truth then it must remain firm even in the darkest moments.

- * God is still good, even when we go through the storms
- * God is still good when relationships are not
- * God is still good when our finances are not
- * God is still good when our health is not

As humans, we have a tendency to define our understanding from our own experience, but in this sinful world we need to learn that our circumstances in this life cannot define God. No, God is bigger than any of our problems, worries or struggles.

Ultimately, we all have 2 choices; we can continue to allow the hard stuff in our lives to crush our spirits and lead us down a road of depression and defeat OR we can look to the Savior who stands by us and will walk with us through the darkest of valleys and gently lifts us up when life has knocked us down.

As you face difficult and challenging moments in your life, may the truth of God be revealed to you. Those truths are that He loves you with an unconditional love and has made a way for you to be with Him forever!

Though we may never understand why He does not change our bleak circumstances, that does NOT change HIM, He is still faithful, loving, compassionate and trustworthy...He is still God and He is good all the time!



Abraham BY PASTOR MIKE HERNANDEZ, CHURCH OF THE HARVEST

Every month this year we will look at a different man from the Bible. It made sense that in January we started with the first man, Adam. In February, we will look at the “Father of our Faith”, Abraham.

“Now the Lord had said to Abram, ‘Get out of your country, from your family and from your father’s house, to a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.’ So Abram departed as the Lord had spoken to him, and Lot went with him. And Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haren.” - Genesis 12:1-4

At the age of 75, Abram received a command to leave his country and family as well as a promise that he would become a great nation. Abram was quick to obey the command to leave, and I’m sure he did his part to try and conceive, but there was one problem...he and Sarai did not have any children.

“After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, saying, ‘Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward.’ But Abram said, ‘Lord God, what will You give me, seeing I go childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?’ Then Abram said, ‘Look, You have given me no offspring; indeed one born in my house is my heir!’ And behold, the word of the Lord came to him, saying, ‘This one shall not be your heir, but one who will come from your own body shall be your heir.’” - Genesis 15:1-4

Abram was around 85 years old when this promise from God came. God said that the heir would come from his body, but God never said that it would come from Sarai’s body. So when Sarai had the idea to give her husband her handmaiden (which in that culture was common), Abram listened to his wife. Now based on all the information Abram and Sarai had, this was a good plan.

“Then Sarai, Abram’s wife, took Hagar her maid, the Egyptian, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan. So he went in to Hagar and she conceived. And when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress became despised in her eyes.” - Genesis 16:3-4

“Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to Abram.” - Genesis 16:16

Now I have heard men use this story as an example as to why they shouldn’t listen to their wives as they blame Sarai for giving bad advice. I think for the moment and the culture, the advice was not bad advice. However, I think Abram failed in not taking the question to God and asking God if he should take an additional wife to fulfill this promise. Whenever we try to help God without asking first if He wants our help, we can create an “Ishmael”. And just like Abram had to deal with the issues of Ishmael, we may have consequences we didn’t foresee when we acted in helping God.

When Abram was 99 years old, God had another conversation with him.

“No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you a father of many nations.” - Genesis 17:5

“Then God said to Abraham, ‘As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. And I will bless her and also give you a son by her; then I will bless her and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of peoples shall be from her.’” - Genesis - 17:15-16

“Then God said, ‘No, Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his descendants after him.’” - Genesis 17:19

So 24 years after Abraham received his original promise from God about becoming a great nation, God finally adds that the nation would also come through his wife. Don't you hate it when God doesn't give you all the information right away? I'm sure if God would have told Abraham about the descendants coming through Sarah when he was 75, he would have never created Ishmael. However, God doesn't need to explain Himself to us, we just need to believe Him. This is exactly what Abraham did.

“Who, contrary to hope, in hope believed, so that he (Abraham) became the father of many nations, according to what was spoken, ‘So shall your descendants be’. And not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah's womb. He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform. And therefore ‘it was accounted to him for righteousness.’” - Romans 4:18-22

One of the amazing things about Abraham was that he hoped even when he had no reason to hope. He knew his situation, that he and his wife were too old to have children, but he believed that if God promised a child, God would make it happen. We need that kind of faith! We need the faith that if God makes a promise, despite how it looks to our natural eyes, He will make the promise happen.

This was also evidenced when God asked Abraham to sacrifice Isaac.

“By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, ‘In Isaac your seed shall be called,’ concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense.” - Hebrews 11:17-19

Abraham believed God that Isaac would be his heir and even when God asked him to sacrifice Isaac on the altar, Abraham believed that God would raise Isaac from the dead. Now please realize that Abraham planned to offer Isaac up as a sacrifice, meaning that after killing Isaac, he was going to burn Isaac on the altar. So he believed that God would not only raise Isaac from the dead, but God would put Isaac back together. Also, at this point in time, nobody ever had been raised from the dead so what Abraham was believing was impossible. Abraham had incredible faith!

We need to have faith like Abraham. Has God given you a promise that seems impossible? I want to encourage you to believe in the God of the impossible! God always comes through on His promises. It may take time (it took Abraham 25 years to receive his promise), but God is faithful to complete what he started!

“Words to Grow By” BY LINDA LEWIS, GMI DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS

Peace in The Midst of a Storm

God never promised us this life would be easy, but He does promise this; He is bigger than any storm we face in this world. And He’s always working for our good, even in the places where we can’t see, even in the circumstances that we don’t fully understand. He is with us, right in the midst of all we walk through. *Hebrews 13:5 NKJV*

Our storms might look different in this life, but they all have the opportunity to change us - forever. And God is the Only One Who has the power to take what seems tragic and devastating and turn it around for good. It may not happen as quickly as we’d like, it may feel like a struggle; we might find ourselves longing for another way, but blessings will come from it. For it’s the way God works. The “good” will shine through.

In some of the most difficult times in life, I’ve learned the power of praying God’s Word back to Him. It alone holds the ability to soothe our souls, to refresh our spirits, and cause hope to rise above the pain we might be feeling. And though our circumstances may not be immediately changed, though our hearts may still be hurting, we’re reminded through His Truth, to set our eyes on Him. And that’s the best place for them to be – in all of life.

Psalms 121 NKJV

Be assured today, He knows your way, He sees your pain, He hasn’t forgotten you, and He’s still at work, even through the most difficult of times. He’s able!

John 14:27 AMP

²⁷ Peace I leave with you; My [perfect] peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be afraid. [Let My perfect peace calm you in every circumstance and give you courage and strength for every challenge.]

A Little Humor

Q. How do you make Holy Water?

A. Get regular water and boil the devil out of it.

Q. Why did Noah have to punish and discipline the chickens on the Ark?

A. Because they were using “fowl” language.

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

A. He was Ruthless.

A lady was at the beach with her children when her four-year-old son ran up to her, grabbed her hand, and led her to the shore, where a seagull lay dead in the sand. “Mommy, what happened to him?” the little boy asked. “He died and went to Heaven,” she replied. Her son thought a moment and then said, “And God threw him back down?”



A Sunday school teacher asked the children just before she dismissed them to go to church, “And why is it necessary to be quiet in church?” Annie replied, “Because people are sleeping.”

Write Us



We would love to hear from you. If you have a testimony, a prayer request or a question about your walk with the Lord, send us a letter. We would love to pray or rejoice with you.

Maybe you are a writer and you have a spiritual word of encouragement for the readers of our newsletter. We would love to review your article to see if we can use it in our newsletter. We also like to share poems from the more artistic saints.

GMI WORD SEARCH BY LONNIE JOHNSON
 NAMES OF GOD

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

SAVIOR
 OMEGA
 ABBA
 ELOHIM
 CHRIST
 LORD
 YAHWEH
 JEHOVAH
 GOD
 YHWH
 JAH

SHEPHERD
 FATHER
 ALMIGHTY
 CREATOR
 REDEEMER
 ALPHA
 TEACHER
 DELIVERER
 EMMANUEL
 MESSIAH
 LAMB

MAJESTY
 SPIRIT
 HOLY
 SANCTIFIER
 SHADDAI
 JESUS
 THEOS
 KING
 MASTER

Closing Words BY LONNIE JOHNSON, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, GROWTH MINISTRIES INC

Is Jesus ashamed of you?

Everyone seems to have a relative that has a way of embarrassing the family. They always say the perfect thing that is inappropriate at family gatherings. Most times we can only shake our head or walk away from the scene. Feeling that way is understandable in those times. But what about the person that starts talking about the Lord at a social setting or a basketball game? Or what about the co-worker that mentions God while on the job? Do you shy away from that person? Are you a little ashamed that other non-Christians may not be ok with you guys having that conversation in public? I mean we are here to play basketball or do our job, right? This isn't the place for all that, right?

One day right after preaching one of his sermons, Jesus was talking to his disciples and it is written in [Mark 8:38 \(ASV\)](#) that he told them, ***“For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of man also shall be ashamed of him, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.”***

I don't know about you, but I don't need Jesus being ashamed of me. Of all the people that could or would be ashamed, it just can't be Jesus. When people are ashamed of you they avoid you, they don't want you around, they omit you from activities. I obviously wasn't there when Jesus said it, but he had just finished preaching and there were probably some that were skeptical of what he was saying or probably denied believing in his message when they were around those that opposed Christ. Jesus had a hard message for those that were ashamed of Him and his Word.

Now I ask you again, **Is Jesus ashamed of you?** Is Jesus sitting in heaven shaking His head when He sees you around your non-Christian friends? Do you keep your “holy personality” undercover at certain times? Do you pretend to be on His team at church then pretend not to know Him in other places? Where does that leave you with Him? Instead, be like Paul who said in [Romans 1:16](#) **“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes:”**

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 4375, Olathe, KS 66063