



Growth Ministries Inc.

Growth Ministries Inc.
P.O. Box 9045
Kansas City, Kansas 66112

www.growthministriesinc.org
913.730.0977

THE GROWTH JOURNAL

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As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another

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New Beginnings

“New Year, New You”. That seems to be the theme and mantra bellowing out in many sectors of society such as religion, finance, wellness and so on. For Christians, any time is a good time to grow, mature and be more like Christ. Prayer, meditating on scripture and looking for opportunities to share the love of God with others are excellent ways to grow in Christ. Growth Ministries is committed to helping you achieve your purpose in the Kingdom however God equips us to do so. We look forward to an even greater year in 2018.

#YearOfMiracles

May God bless you beyond your imagination.

Lonnie Johnson, Executive Director,
Growth Ministries, Inc.

“From the Yard” Article 1

DEAR GROWTH MINISTRIES FAMILY,

HAPPY NEW YEAR!!! This last year has been one of the most difficult years of my life, full of moments of pain and loss...But that has only made me cherish the highlights even more. God never gives us more than we can bear... Nor is having faith in Him about simply accepting whatever life brings without any activity on our part. We must live by HIS WORDS, and trust in the process that we are going through as both an individual and a nation.

The start of the NEW YEAR provides us with an opportunity to reassess where we are along the way and make the subtle changes and course adjustments that we need to achieve our goals. Life can sometimes be hard as crucible steel, and the most difficult part of this is when, the CREATOR has HIS HAND on us but we are unable to see it. We don't have to know all the answers, we only have to look at the trials and struggles that HE has carried us through to have all the evidence we need of HIS LOVE FOR US ALL....

Let all of us rededicate ourselves to do more and be more...setting aside our fears, our excuses, and our complaints in order to be more focused on how we can make the world more beautiful and beneficial than we inherited...LIFE IS SHORT. WE MAY NOT LIVE LONG, BUT WE ALL CAN LIVE WELL...

GOD BLESS YOU ALL!!!!

ALL MY LOVE & RESPECT, SWEETZ A.K.A. KHALIL

"From the Yard" Article 2

A New Assessment

FIDELIS THUKO

January 25, 2017 – I am in a cell two paces by four paces. I feel as if the walls are compressing, daily, about to suffocate me. On the dirty walls of the tiny cell, scribbled by the previous occupant, "DON'T DO DOPE", "JESUS ❤️", "7/12 STOPPED". Three strong statements.

When I was told on the 24th of January 2017 that I would be moved to a different prison I was filled with despair. I mean I was in a comfortable, safe place, making minimum wage, a positive environment and my family close. But who said prison would be comfortable. I was being transferred to an environment that had a reputation of being tough, unpredictable...Lansing Correctional Facility. Anxious, I was wondering how it was going to be; I kept a smile on my face and was hopeful. Three hours shackled on a bus, staring precariously to get a glimpse of the outside world through tiny windows above, a reminder of what freedom looked like.

Upon arrival, ushered into our cells. It is lockdown 23 hours a day, dirty, old looking. My cell at first look was dirty, uninviting, I had no mattress, no bed sheets and I had not taken a shower for quite some time. I did not have my property, not even a toothbrush to brush my teeth. Things were looking bad. I took stock of my confictions, within and without, and decided that first I needed to clean up the cell thoroughly. Afterwards, I sat on the bunk and really looked around at my surroundings and that is when I saw the three messages scribbled on the wall.

I considered them messages, because after reflection, I understood that as dire as my situation looked, something positive could be found anywhere. And to reinforce the message...I was given a new mattress, clean sheets and blankets, and the totality of despair that seemed to envelop and drown me started to dissipate.

"Whatever life's inevitable disappointments, beauty is to be found and created in the journey." –
My Nephew Mungai

"From the Yard" Article 3

Be That Man

ORMOND L. WIMBERLY, JR.

Getting caught up in the way the world thinks can be, and is for many, very frustrating. Feeling powerless you lose heart. As you focus more on the problem instead of the problem solver, you stop praying, you stop reading your Bible regularly. Attending Bible study is "iffy", especially if you're not feeling it. Going to church now is based on how you feel. All of the above are lies from the devil designed to get you to give up hope. The devil wants you to feel helpless and powerless. The devil's tactics aren't new. Jesus is telling us what is going to happen and our course of action to take in order to remain effective. Jesus tells his disciples in John 16:33 "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world". Remember "The thief, (the devil) cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy... ". (John 10:10) He wants to steal your joy.

He wants to kill your dreams. He desires to suck the very spiritual life out of you. He wants you to just throw your hands in the air and shrug your shoulders like you just don't care. This is just the way things are. Don't lose heart yet. I want to tell you what God has to say about the matter.

Paul in Romans 8:37 is speaking a word of truth and encouragement to all of us by letting us know, "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us". No matter how things may look, victory is ours. It is vital for us to understand, that in a world of competing and confusing ideas, the only thing we can rely on for the truth is the Word of God. Our light, temporary battle which we endure for a season, is working for our benefit, even if at the moment you don't see the results. I know at the time I've gone through something it has felt like the weight of the world was on me. Guess what though? The situation passed. I endured it and was strengthened by it. Was it pleasant? No! But I had to go through the fire though. Fire purifies and strengthens you. Do any of you need to be purified or strengthened? Think about it. Whatever the problem, God is working it out if we continue to trust Him, rely on him, and cry out to Him. He's an on time God! After all your years of faithful training, you've been summoned into service for such a time as this to put your training into action. You've been called to the front of the battle. You will take back your family, community, and the country. As the Lord told Joshua in Chapter 1:9, "Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed; for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest." For the best results...follow the instructions.

In reading through the Book of Isaiah the Holy Spirit showed me that our nation is corrupt and evil. Men's hearts have become foolish and hardened, desiring nothing to do with anything Godly. We are just like the people during the time of Isaiah. Nothing has changed! After all this was revealed to Isaiah in a vision from God, He was called to go forth and given a commission. He said in verse 8, "Here am I. Send me!" Without question, our families, communities, and nation are facing many issues. Now is not the time to whine and back off from accepting the challenge. We must ask ourselves, "What can I do to make a difference?" Where does God

Be That Man Continued...

want to send you? What is God calling you to do? Come on now! There's something you surely can do to make a difference. I'm not talking about what someone else should be doing or could be doing. I'm talking about the man in the mirror. You and me. Indeed, this message is for me too. I can't escape what God has purposed for me to do any more than you can. Prison can be a barrier to serving God, but only if you let it. In the words of John F. Kennedy, "Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country?" What can you do in service to the Lord in your home, in your community, in church, on your job, and in society as a whole? Ask God to show you where you'll be effective, empowered by Him. Wherever the Lord wants to use me it is my reasonable service. This isn't something that I should consider or is optional. Romans 12:1 leaves no doubt about this. Paul says "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."

Since we're told that we're more than conquerors, I want to challenge every confessing Christian man to declare that you Be That Man who will study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman that needed not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of God" (II Timothy 2:15). I challenge you to Be That Man who will not surrender to the social pressures of the world. "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Romans 12:2). I challenge you to Be That Man by setting yourself apart from the chaos and confusion.

I CHALLENGE YOU TO BE THAT MAN WHO STANDS IN THE GAP FOR YOUR FAMILY, COMMUNITY, AND CHURCH.
 I CHALLENGE YOU TO BE THAT MAN WHO FIGHTS AGAINST ALL FORMS OF SOCIAL INJUSTICE.
 I CHALLENGE YOU TO BE THAT MAN WHO SAYS "YES! I CAN", AND STRIVE TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE. YOU CAN DO ALL THINGS THROUGH CHRIST WHICH STRENGTHENS YOU." (PHILIPPIANS 4:13)
 I CHALLENGE YOU TO BE THAT MAN WHO STANDS FOR TRUTH AND RIGHTEOUSNESS. ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE THROUGH CHRIST.

This is possible because "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10). When you see a need, remember you are That Man. When no one else will go remember you are That Man.

"No weapon formed against you shall prosper. ... " (Isaiah 54:17a). You are THAT MAN!

God bless you and keep you!

Word Search

Creation

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

Adam	Garden	Stars
Animals	Herbs	Sun
Birds	Man	Trees
Create	Mist	Woman
Days	Moon	
Earth	Paradise	
Eden	Rest	
Eve	Rib	
Fish	Seeds	
Fruit	Sky	

Stories of Ex-Convicts Who Turned Their Lives Around

Each month we will try to share with you cases of individuals released from prison that went on to make a positive impact on society.

The Lawbreaker Who Became a Lawyer



Before he became a lawyer and prolific supporter of prisoner rights, Daniel Manville spent three years and four months in the slammer for manslaughter. Manville continued to study while incarcerated and eventually earned two college degrees during his sentence. He became enamored with the legal profession and went to law school right after his parole.

He finally passed the bar exams in Michigan and Washington, DC after waiting many years to be approved by the respective boards. Afterwards, Manville worked tirelessly to improve the prison system and represented various inmates and prison guards in civil cases. Nowadays, Manville teaches law at Michigan State University, where he hopes the insights he shares with students inspire them to someday help improve the system as well.

Just for laughs...

Army of the Lord

A friend was in front of me coming out of church one day, and the preacher was standing at the door as he always is to shake hands. He grabbed my friend by the hand and pulled him aside.

The Pastor said to him, "You need to join the Army of the Lord!"

My friend replied, "I'm already in the Army of the Lord, Pastor." Pastor questioned, "How come I don't see you except at Christmas and Easter?"

He whispered back, "I'm in the secret service."

The Back Pew - Jeff Larson



In their 35 years as neighbors on Earth, Arnie and Bart never knew they were both Christians. FUNNY isn't it? *Do your neighbors know what you believe?*

“WORDS TO GROW BY”

LINDA LEWIS, GMI DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS

New Beginnings!

Today, let's close the door to the past,
Open the door to the future,
Take a deep breath,
And step on through
Starting a new chapter in our lives.

Remembering God's promises:

Fear not, for I am with you;
Be not dismayed, for I am your God.
I will strengthen you,
Yes, I will help you,
I will uphold you with My righteous right hand. *Isaiah 41:10*

For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. *Jeremiah 29:11*

And last, but certainly not least He said, I am making all things new. *Revelation 21:5*

TRUST AND BELIEVE...2018 THE YEAR OF MIRACLES!

When I say, “I am a Christian” A Poem by Carol Wimmer

When I say, “I am a Christian”
I'm not shouting, “I've been saved!”
I'm whispering, “I get lost sometimes!
That's why I chose this way”.

When I say, “I am a Christian”
I don't speak with human pride
I'm confessing that I stumble
Needing God to be my guide

When I say, “I am a Christian”
I'm not trying to be strong
I'm professing that I'm weak
And pray for strength to carry on.

When I say, “I am a Christian”
I'm not bragging of success
I'm admitting that I've failed
And cannot ever pay the debt.

When I say, “I am a Christian”
I don't think I know it all
I submit to my confusion
Asking humbly to be taught.

When I say, “I am a Christian”
I'm not claiming to be perfect
My flaws are all too visible
But God believes I'm worth it.

When I say, “I am a Christian”
I still feel the sting of pain
I have my share of heartache,
Which is why I seek His name.

When I say, “I am a Christian”
I do not wish to judge
I have no authority...
I only know I'm loved.

Closing Words

LONNIE JOHNSON, GMI EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Don't Quit

We are faced with many obstacles, challenges, tests, trials, threats and difficulties as a Christian. I believe that is a testimony from the enemy that we are doing something right. That we are headed the right way. I believe that he wants to distract us, but most of all he wants us to give up. Our faith is in God, and in God's Word, which is what gives us the strength to carry on. We have to believe that God is always on our side and that he will get us through whatever we are going through. No matter how long it takes, no matter how tough the challenge.

I want to share with you one of my favorite scriptures that gives us some promises from God about our situation. *Bless you.*

2 CORINTHIANS 4:8-11 (NIV)

⁸We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair;⁹persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. ¹⁰We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body.¹¹For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may also be revealed in our mortal body.

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