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THE GROWTH JOURNAL

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

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STORIES OF EX-CONS WHO TURNED IT AROUND

Kevin Mitnick

You wouldn't think that a former computer hacker, who was also listed on the FBI's List of Most Wanted Criminals, would eventually launch his own security firm. However, that is exactly what Kevin Mitnick did – he turned a lemon-type history into "lemonade" success. Mitnick was exceptionally enterprising when he was a teen but took the wrong path along the way.

At the tender age of 16, the computer guru hacked into Digital Equipment Corporation's computer network. He also absconded with the company's software reports. Arrested in 1995, Mitnick served seven years in prison. After serving time, Mitnick went on to found Mitnick Security – a company that assists companies in discovering security issues in their computer systems.

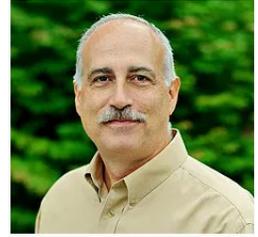
If asked if your cup is half full or if it is half empty, just respond by saying you are grateful that you have a cup.

It would not be unexpected if you were to get an unenthusiastic answer if you asked an inmate what they have to be thankful for. Being locked away with limited or no choice of what clothes you wear, confined in a small space for hours at a time, subjected to violence and harsh conditions, and many other things which are not ideal living conditions could make a person feel like they don't have much to be thankful for.

I have learned in my lifetime that when I focus more on the good I have in my life, it makes my troubles seem not as bad. Also remember that things can always be worse. Below are some very simple things we can all be thankful for.

- Are you healthy?
- Are you in your right mind?
- Is there someone outside of the prison that loves you?
- Do you have a support group inside prison that helps you survive?
- Has God blessed you in anyway lately?
- Have you been shown mercy for something you did that deserves some type of penalty?
- Are you free to worship God?
- Are your children healthy?
- Have you learned from your mistakes?
- Are you allowed to learn and be educated?
- Do you have an opportunity to earn money?

FORGOTTEN? David Beal, Executive Pastor, Church of the Harvest



There's much to be learned from the life of Joseph in the Bible. I often return to the account of Joseph's life for inspiration and encouragement when things aren't going according to my plan. Joseph's dreams, family drama and challenging life circumstances make him relatable, and his ultimate rise to a position of great importance in Egypt - with God's help, elevate him to the position of a faith giant. Life throws everything it can at Joseph to discourage him and yet his patient faith wins out. What I personally find most interesting with Joseph is that there isn't very much information about how he processes life circumstances. With David, we experience his struggles more personally and emotionally through his writings in Psalms. David shared everything about his feelings and relationship with God. But with Joseph, there just seems to be a quiet, steady, unmovable kind of faith, that when combined with his unique gifts of dream interpretation and administration, pack a spiritual punch. Every time he gets knocked down, his gifts and quiet reliance on God's purpose for his life bring him back yet again into positions of favor.

The account of Joseph's life is found in Genesis 37. The story of his life generally goes like this...when he is 17 he has dreams that he will ultimately rule over his tribe – his brothers and father and mother. As the youngest son, he's already highly favored by his father, so when Joseph shares his dreams, his brothers conspire against him. Genesis 37: 18-20 says *"Then they (his brothers) said to one another, 'Look, this dreamer is coming! Come therefore, let us now kill him and cast him into some pit; and we shall say some wild beast has devoured him.' We shall see what will become of his dreams!"*. Joseph is eventually pulled from the pit to be sold into slavery by his brothers. And so, he finds himself a slave in Potiphar's house in Egypt. Genesis 39:2-3 says *"The Lord was with Joseph, so he succeeded in everything he did as he served in the home of his Egyptian master. Potiphar noticed this and realized that the Lord was with Joseph, giving him success in everything he did."* So even idol-worshipping foreigners could see God working in this young man. But things go bad when Potiphar's wife accuses Joseph of sexual advances, and he is unjustly thrown into prison. While in the dungeon, he interprets the dreams of the baker and butler who served in Pharaoh's palace. His spiritual gift of interpreting dreams is put to use. Two years later, Joseph's unique, God-given ability to interpret dreams is remembered by the butler and Joseph is pulled from his cell to interpret the dreams of Pharaoh himself. Because of the interpretation, Joseph is elevated to the highest office in Egypt under Pharaoh where his Godly wisdom provides practical solutions to 7 years of approaching famine. Ultimately, Joseph saves Egypt from starvation, he saves his family/tribe from starvation, and reconciliation takes place as he brings his family to Egypt to live and prosper under his leadership. We have a pretty good idea that 22 or 23 years passed between the time of Joseph's dream and its' fulfillment. The full account can be found in Genesis 37 through 47.

So, what started the mess? Pride and jealousy. Joseph was proud of his dreams and shared them openly – which activated jealousy from his brothers. But there are three aspects of the story of Joseph's life that I want to focus on today. Those aspects can be described in these three words...Betrayed, Accused, and Forgotten.

Betrayed

We all experience betrayal at some point in our lives. People we trust don't hold up their end of the assumed "relationship bargain". Betrayal, unfortunately tends to happen with those we trust the most.

Joseph was betrayed by his own brothers. The very dreams that God revealed to him caused division with those he was closest to...his own brothers threw him in the pit and sold him into slavery. He was highly favored by his father, and yet his brothers wanted him dead. This is clearly a dysfunctional family. Joseph may bear some of the blame because he chose to reveal the dream in a prideful way, but the consequences of "leaning into his gift" were disruptive and disastrous.

Accused

Even as a slave, Joseph found favor serving in Potiphar's house. Genesis 39:6 says "So Potiphar gave Joseph complete administration responsibility over everything he owned." Yet, the very next verse says, "Joseph was a very handsome and well-built young man, and Potiphar's wife soon began to look at him lustfully... 'Come sleep with me', she demanded." But Joseph refused." His skills and God-given looks got him noticed. Getting noticed can be good. Getting noticed can be bad. As a result of getting noticed, Joseph was then falsely accused of trying to seduce Potiphar's wife – he had no chance to mount a defense. Circumstantial evidence and accusation led to an undeserved sentence and he was sent to prison. In the midst of temptation, Joseph revealed his Godly character. Proverbs 10:9 tells us "Whoever walks in integrity walks securely, but he who makes his ways crooked will be found out." Joseph didn't give in to temptation that was set before him. This is an old trick of the enemy. Instead, he honored his God and the master of his house.

Let's pause here for a moment. As men, we can intellectually understand betrayal and accusation. We can sometimes "figure out" how to respond...or at least we think we can. As men, we're 'fixers'. Give us a problem, and we can develop a strategy or action for fixing it. With betrayal and accusation there is a person, place or thing to engage with, or react to. We can assign responsible parties for our hurts and direct our disappointment on someone or some specific relationship dynamic. But as good as we are at fixing things, betrayal and accusation - when repeated, can harden our hearts. The true solution, the only ointment for the hurt that comes from betrayal and accusation is revealed in Psalm 147:3 which says "He (Jesus) heals the brokenhearted and bandages their wounds." If we allow our hearts to be hardened, God can't use us for His purposes. If we soften our hearts by reading God's Word and prayer, knowing that God has something much bigger in mind outside of today's circumstances, we stay open to direction. A hardened heart confuses our thinking. Ephesians 4:18 says "They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart." Betrayal and accusation can harden our hearts toward God...but ONLY IF we let them. Joseph wouldn't give in, and from what I can tell, never sought to "get even". He stayed focused on the bigger picture for his life...remained confident in what God had for him in the long haul.

Which brings me to Forgotten.

Genesis 40:23 points out: "Pharaoh's butler, however, forgot all about Joseph, never giving him another thought." Another version of scripture says, "Yet the chief butler did not remember Joseph." As if that isn't enough, the scripture adds poetic emphasis by repeating the crushing blow – "...but forgot him." A few years back I was laid off from a job of 25 years, and I spent the past two years with constant and consistent reminders that no one recognized or valued my experiences, abilities or input. I had a plan. I had success. But in an unexpected moment the plans and successes were forgotten. I applied to over 200 jobs, but no one seemed to care. Having no value in the eyes of others, realizing that the skills, energy and passion I had invested in for many years as a faithful employee no longer made a difference was a crushing blow. I found that being forgotten was the greatest emotional challenge of all because I had no specific person or process to blame. I couldn't develop a response plan and work things out. I was helpless, and totally reliant on God. I had to develop faith for the long haul, the bigger picture, and realize that God was developing something in me beyond my current place and purposes. I think Joseph must have gone through similar realizations as he see-sawed between great successes and dynamic pits in his life.

When you're forgotten, you feel worthless and hopeless. Joseph was forgotten...the ultimate disgrace and emotional low-point of his life. Yet in the midst of this long-standing and strenuous history of betrayal, accusation and being forgotten, Joseph had the inner strength and confidence to stay steady and keep the faith. How is this possible? I found a hint or revelation in Genesis 40; 6-7. "When Joseph saw them (the butler and baker in prison) the next morning, he noticed they both looked upset. He approached them and asked, "Why do you look so worried today?" Man, if I was Joseph, I would be having a pity party. The natural response to betrayed, accused and being forgotten is to crawl into a hole and trust no one. If anyone had a right to give up on others and think only of himself and the injustice of it all, it was Joseph. He could have easily developed a hardened heart towards others and refused to engage in relationships. Why care about anyone else anymore? And yet Joseph finds the strength to take the first step to engage or help someone else. Here's the point...**in this life, suffering is inevitable, but MISERY is optional.** Joseph's willingness to engage with those who were hurting is what provided opportunity for him to use the gifts God gave him. He could have shut down, avoided practicing His gift, in order to get even with others – or get even with God. When you give of yourself in the face of injustice or invest in relationships when no one wants to be friendly, your spiritual gift will often be revealed. It's risky business, because you may experience yet another hurt. But no encounter with others is an accident if we stay in tune with God's voice. Joseph understood that God's plan and purpose for his life was much bigger than his own circumstances. He was willing to look past his own pain and unfair treatment in order to engage with people in pain.

Sometimes God delivers us out of hard situations...other times He delivers us THROUGH them.

Problems and adversity are to be expected. They are part of life. We're called to suffer for Christ's sake. The Bible tells us that just as we share in eternal life with Christ, we will share in His sufferings. Joseph is an old testament snapshot of someone who handled adversity well, remained faithful, was open to caring and engaging with those in need even when life wasn't fair to him, and understood God's bigger purpose in his life.

So be prepared for adversity, know that it will come into your life at some point, prepare for it by remaining true to God, building faith in Him when things are going well. That way when adversity does come, the anchor of faith will be firmly planted, and we can remain faithful during times of trouble.

"WORDS TO GROW BY" LINDA LEWIS, GMI DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS

OH, GIVE THANKS UNTO THE LORD...

Psalms 136, Psalm 107:1, 1 Chronicles 16:34, Psalm 118:1...all scriptures, with the same instructions, the same pearls of wisdom, "**Oh give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever.**"

We've been taught that if we repeat things over and over and over again, they are soon committed to memory, to habit. So, if God's Word tells us the same things over and over and over again, it means that it's something we should be doing, committing to memory, to habit.

Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! Stop right now, close your eyes, and think about how good God has been to you. I guarantee that no matter where your journey has taken you this far, there is a memory of something that makes you smile, something that makes you laugh, something that makes your heart grateful...something that you know, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that only by the Grace of God, you were able to receive it, hear it, see it, be a part of it or even delivered from it. *Ephesians 3:20*

For His mercy endures forever! Now that's Good News! It means that no matter who you are, where you are, what you've been through, what you're going through or even what it may look like or feel like right now...God's got YOU and your circumstances.

Pray, Believe, Trust and, "**Oh give thanks to the Lord for He is good! For His mercy endures forever!**"

Many Blessings to you, your family and your loved ones!**WORTH FIGHTING FOR** Dr. Doris Moore

Today, I want to share with you a message of Hope. It's important that you know regardless of your trials, situations, mistakes, temptation or whatever you may face....you're worth fighting for!

Every day people are faced with very hard times. Some are overwhelmed by the pressures of life while others are hurting because of finances, bad relationships or health problems. It's evident that life isn't easy and even as Christians, we don't always live our lives without problems. The Bible says, "*Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble.*" (Job 14:1) In other words, not only can life be difficult, we have an adversary, the devil, who is like a roaring lion, walking around seeking whom he may devour. (1 Peter 5:8)

Even though you have an adversary, one whose primary purpose is to kill, steal and destroy you and your family; you also have Jesus Christ who came to give you abundant life. (John 10:10) It's important to know that you have the Son of the Living God, Jesus, right now in heaven interceding on your behalf. Despite your current circumstances, you have a friend, not like any other friend. His name is Jesus. He loves you and has already won the victory for you and me! He proved, you're worth fighting for.

God desires to set you free from doubt and transform you into a victorious person of Faith, if you let Him do it! However, victory doesn't come without a fight. Whatever it is that keeps you from being free, whether it's fear, doubt, sin or your past, God Almighty is waiting to accept you and make you an over comer. Satan is a liar and the father of lies. He's the master of deception, preys on our weaknesses and tries to get us to believe things that are not true. Satan attempts to deceive us because he has already been defeated. He knows once people know the truth, they will be free from his reach.

Recently, we celebrated Veterans Day which annually falls on November 11 and commemorates the anniversary of the signing of the Armistice, which ended World War I. We set aside time as a nation on Veterans' Day to thank and honor veterans for their service and sacrifice. Even though most physical wars have ended, there's still a war going on; it is a spiritual war. Despite what it looks like, you are worth fighting for!

Remember earlier in this article I said, "Victory doesn't come without a fight?" Well, it's time to start fighting. It clearly states in Ephesians 6:11-18 that we must be prepared for spiritual warfare: "*Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. ¹²For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.¹³ Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.¹⁴ Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness. ¹⁵And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; ¹⁶Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. ¹⁷And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: ¹⁸Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.*"

As Christians, our weapons for battle are not guns, bombs or knives; they are spiritual, "*For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds.*" (2 Cor. 10:4)

Praying and reading the Bible not only gives you strength, it gives you hope and perseverance! But you can't give up because you're worth fighting for. You are so important to God that He sent His only son to die so that you [and others] could receive salvation and spend eternity with Him in heaven.

God has given you a promise found in 1 Cor. 2:9, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." God is telling you that He has great things in store for us if we don't give up. So don't give up, don't give in, don't give out because....you are worth fighting for! I hope you will be encouraged and blessed by the lyrics of this song entitled, "Worth Fighting For."

Worth Fighting For by Courtney Wilson

[God] You met me deep in my despair to show me You would never leave me there.
You claimed because I was made for so much more, I am Your child and I'm worth fighting for.
Though heavy with the weight of my mistakes, You carried me and refused to let me sink under the pressure; You meant for me to soar. I am Your child and I'm worth fighting for. Eyes haven't seen, ears haven't heard, all You have planned for me, and nothing can separate me from your love when there's so much more still worth fighting for.

Now I'm moving by faith, not by sight, towards victory by the power of Your might.
You're straightening out my path and opening every door. I am Your child and I'm worth fighting for.
Eyes haven't seen, ears haven't heard, all You have planned for me, and nothing can separate me from your love when there's so much more still worth fighting for.

That's why I'm pressing towards the mark, cause the calling on my life is worth fighting for.
And I'll keep my mind stayed on You Jesus, because the peace it brings is worth fighting for.
And I'll be faithful to my wife and children, because my family is worth fighting for.
No, this world is not my home, but Your kingdom here is worth fighting for.
I got a mansion over in glory and my new home is worth fighting for. Til I see it I'll shout Hallelujah, Hallelujah. Life with You is worth fighting for. Eyes haven't seen, ears haven't heard, there is so much more still worth fighting for.

They Say that I'm Nothing, but I'm Something

By Londeka Zondi

They say I'm poor.

They say I'm nothing.

*They say I'm poor and they say I'm nothing
because I've got nothing to offer to any living soul.*

*I've got no money, no food, no child, no wife nor
husband and no home to go home to that is
because I've got no money.*

But I say I'm blessed.

I'm blessed because God told me so.

*He loves me the same way he loves every life on
earth. I'm blessed because I'm still alive.*

I breathe the same air that rich men breathe.

*I walk on the same ground that rich men walk . . .
therefore, I am no different.*

I am rich with life.

I am rich with love.

*I'm rich with hope that one day they will see the
beauty that God treasured in me because I am
something indeed.*

"FROM THE YARD" EACH MONTH WE TRY TO BRING CONTENT FROM ONE OR MORE INMATES DOING TIME

LOVE



"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels and have not charity, I become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and have all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing!" 1 Cor. 13:1-2

Love is the only savior of the world. Somehow, we seem to forget that no matter how much we know, or how much we have, none of this matters if we do not love the recipients of our efforts. Love is not an emotion in the sense that many of us regulate it into being, Love is the nature of the Creator. Look at all the undeserved kindnesses and mercies that He bestows upon us, who violate His Divine Laws on a daily basis, and yet HE so loved the world that He sent His Only Begotten Son.

For what purpose, if not to show us it is not what Love made flesh can achieve. We have a duty to what we love, and we all know it. This is what makes parent's hearts ache for the things or opportunities that we sometimes are unable to afford to give our children, and will make a single mother\father get up and go to work at "can't see in the morning" to "can't see at night" in order to produce what our children need.

Love cause us to sacrifice for those we love, and there is no greater example of this truth than Jesus. In fact, this is the real reason that we honor our heroes with such adulation and adoration, as they show us what love in person looks like. These examples are what inspire us to do and be better in our everyday life. There are so many everyday examples of love embodied in our neighbor's lives that we have somehow become desensitized to such acts of kindness. WE, often, overlook or downplay the small acts of kindness that others do for us and talk about how far the world has gone astray.

No matter what material riches we may amass in this life!!! No matter what talents, we may be born with!!! No matter what wonders we may produce...! No matter how many sermons we may speak, gifts we may give, or songs we may sing...without love as our inspiration, then it is meaningless. Empty words and empty works from empty people will not produce the kind of change in this world that we live in. Each of us are born with the Love of God within our souls, let's not let bitterness and cynicism rob us of our joy and wonder.

It is wonderful to pray but it is even better to be the answer to a prayer...!

HUMBLY SUBMITTED BY YOUR BROTHER & SERVANT

SUN KHALIL, Lansing Correctional Facility

GMI WORD SEARCH BY LONNIE JOHNSON

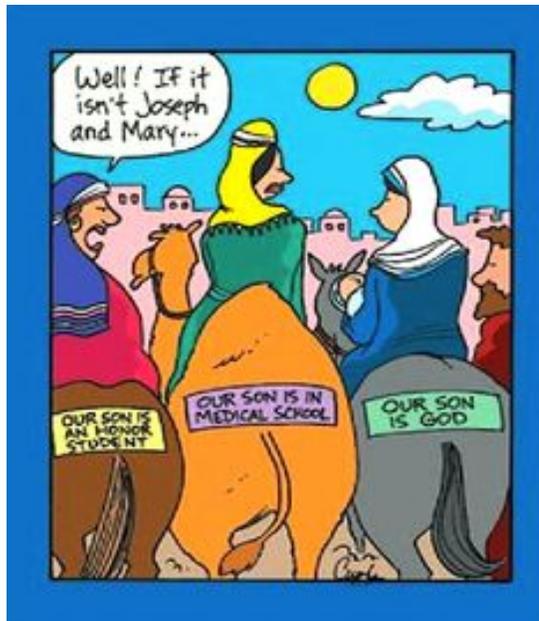
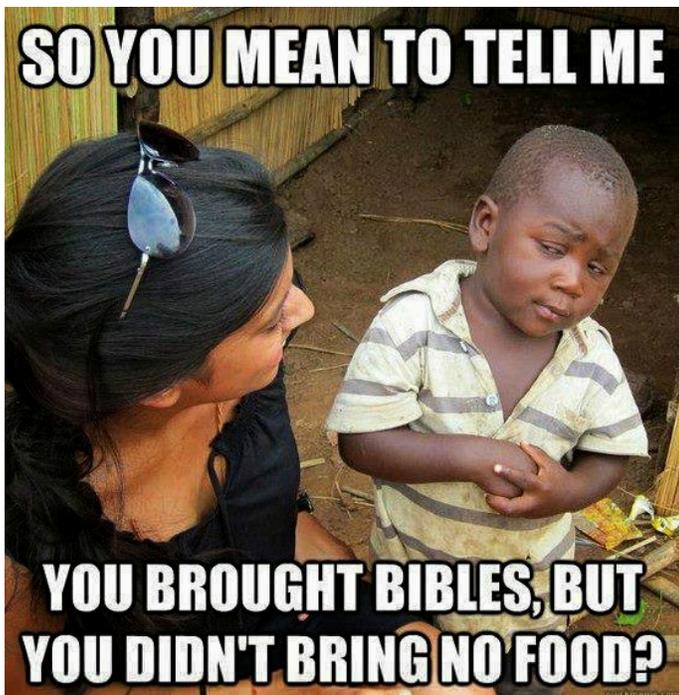
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E	L	B	I	B	N	I	A	C	Y	I	D	N	Y	C
Z	A	E	T	G	O	S	P	E	L	Y	B	R	X	I
I	S	V	H	N	H	B	I	W	R	A	T	H	U	G
L	F	O	E	C	E	N	L	A	N	S	I	N	G	E
W	E	L	T	V	N	P	L	L	I	O	N	A	H	P
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U	J	O	W	O	R	D	A	D	N	I	L	U	A	P
S	H	O	L	L	Y	W	O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

God
 Jesus
 Holy Spirit
 Growth Ministry
 Lansing
 Shipman
 Olathe
 Eve
 Lonnie
 Chiefs
 Super Bowl
 Pardon

Hollywood
 Lisa Henry
 No Condemnation
 Testify
 Cyndi
 Seven
 Principles
 Bible
 Cain
 Hutch
 Repent
 Praying

Paul
 Tithe
 Heaven
 Gospel
 Righteous
 Wrath
 Love
 Ark
 Word
 Linda

Just for Laughs



When Someone Doesn't Capitalize The G In God.



Thanks to Stephen Birch (See Genesis 4-8) 05-19-2002



Closing Words

LONNIE JOHNSON, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, GROWTH MINISTRIES INC

Body Control

How well can you control your body? In 1st Thessalonians 4: 3-6 Paul says to the Thessalonians, **“*It is God’s will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; ⁴that each of you should learn to control your own body in a way that is holy and honorable, ⁵not in passionate lust like the pagans, who do not know God;*”** These were people that were saved but were still carrying on with all sorts of nastiness. He directed them to “learn to control their bodies”. This implies that we have to work on something that many of us say is impossible, but it is not.

In prison, sex is still one of the biggest stumbling blocks for believers. There's pornography, masturbation, inmate on inmate sex, and hidden moments that occur with female employees. I hear you saying to me, “But Brother Lonnie, it is hard to do 20 years with all that built up sexual frustration.” I have not gone many years and abstained from sex. That is why I got married. So, I can't sit here and say, “You can do it”...from personal experience. But what I do know is that the Word of God says that you can do all things through Christ that strengthens you. (Philippians 4:13). What I also know is that you can work harder at not giving in, than you work at looking for ways to give in. I do know I overcame some very strong addictions with the help of the Holy Spirit that most people never overcome.

Don't act like those that do not know God. Don't act like those that do not have a power greater than any other power on earth. Start today practicing holiness. Start today asking God to forgive you of your past offenses, to cleanse you of any unrighteous thoughts, and to keep you strong going forward. If you do slip, get right back up.

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