



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

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### THE REAL ST. PATRICK

Saint Patrick is the patron saint of Ireland. He was a Christian missionary given credited with converting Ireland to Christianity in the AD 400s. So many legends surround his life that the truth is not easily found.

As a teen he was kidnapped by pirates and sold into slavery in Ireland to herd and tend sheep on Slemish Mountain, County Antrim.

During his six-year captivity, he became fluent in the Irish language, he turned to God in prayer. He escaped after having a dream sent from God in which he was told to leave Ireland by going to the coast where he would find a ship waiting to sail to Britain.

Patrick was sent another dream in which the people of Ireland were calling out to him to come and walk among them once more.

He was set the task of teaching Christianity to the Irish. He travelled throughout Ireland, preaching the Gospel and converting many. He and his disciples preached and converted thousands and began building churches all over the country.

Patrick preached and converted all over Ireland for 40 years

### EX-CONS WHO TURNED THEIR LIVES AROUND



**AJ Ware**

Served a four-year sentence for committing robbery with a dangerous weapon at age 25.

Ware was on food stamps when he started a house painting company with \$25. He grew it to 18 employees generating close to \$3 million in annual revenues and sold it. Now, he's the owner-operator of a racetrack in North Carolina with "a nice home, a car, a wife, kids, the whole nine yards," as described by him.

Also, AJ Ware is the Executive Director of Inmates Entrepreneurs, a nonprofit organization founded in 2008. Inmates to Entrepreneurs offers business seminars and one-to-one mentoring at state prisons. According to Ware, the program guides inmates, many of whom got caught running illegal businesses, how to run a legal one.

"We teach them about business acumen and P&Ls, insurance, workers' comp, the marketing side and the customer service side. We teach from beginning to end what to do and how to maintain their business," says Ware.



## Joseph BY PASTOR MIKE HERNANDEZ, CHURCH OF THE HARVEST

Every month this year we will look at a different man from the Bible. In March we will look at Joseph.

“One of the greatest stories of forgiveness is the story of Joseph. Joseph was Jacob’s favorite son and he had 11 brothers and he was the second youngest. When Joseph was 17, God gave him two dreams - the first was that as he and his brothers were binding sheaves, his sheaf arose and his brother’s sheaves bowed to it. Of course, this made his brothers hate him. In his second dream, the sun, moon and 11 stars bowed to him. This moved his brothers from hatred to envy.

Once when Joseph’s brothers were watching the sheep in a nearby village, Jacob sent Joseph to find out what they were doing (he had already snitched on them once before). When his brothers saw him coming, they communicated among each other about destroying his dreams. We need to understand that when God gives us dreams, even those closest to us may not understand and/or stop us from achieving our dreams.

It was at this time that Joseph’s brothers decided to take action. First they took his robe (a colorful robe given as a special gift from his father) and then they threw him in a pit. They talked about killing him but in the end, decided to sell him to some merchants going to Egypt. So, Joseph went from being the favored son in his wealthy family to being sold as a slave in a foreign country.

But God’s hand was upon him. Of all the people that could have purchased Joseph, Potiphar, the Captain of the Guard, purchased him.

*“The Lord was with Joseph, and he was a successful man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian. And his master saw that the Lord made all he did to prosper in his hand. So Joseph found favor in his sight, and served him. Then he made him overseer of his house, and all that he had he put under his authority.” - Genesis 39:2-4*

After Joseph was betrayed by his brothers, he could have given up on life, he could have had a pity party but instead, he made the best of a bad situation. He served Potiphar to the best of his ability and not only found favor, but was promoted. Joseph was put in charge of Potiphar’s entire house!

The Bible says that Joseph was handsome in form and appearance (I know some of you can relate). And his looks got him into a little trouble as he caught the attention of Potiphar’s wife. As Captain of the Guard, Potiphar was a wealthy and powerful man. Now I may be taking a little liberty in guessing that wealthy and powerful men in Egypt at that time had beautiful wives so the woman making advances on Joseph was probably good looking. But even when faced with temptation, he did not want to do this great wickedness and sin against God (Gen 39:9). Joseph’s reward for doing the right thing and saying no to Potiphar’s wife was to be falsely accused and thrown into prison.

We don’t know how long Joseph was in prison, but we know it was for at least several years. I wonder if he ever doubted God while in prison. I wonder if he forgot about his dreams. I wonder if he became discouraged or even forgotten. I wonder if he ever felt like quitting. We may never know the answers to these questions, but what we do know is that he continued to be faithful and was once again promoted. Joseph was given the responsibility to watch over Pharaoh’s prisoners.

## Joseph (pt. 2) BY PASTOR MIKE HERNANDEZ, CHURCH OF THE HARVEST

*“And the captain of the guard charged Joseph with them, and he served them; so they were in custody for a while.” - Genesis 40:4*

Did you catch that? Who put the prisoners in Joseph’s care? The Captain of the Guard. Who was Captain of the Guard? None other than Potiphar! So could it be that Potiphar kept Joseph under his command? Why would he do that? Maybe it was because he didn’t believe his wife’s accusation against Joseph but since the accusation was in front of the entire household, Potiphar couldn’t let Joseph live there anymore. Maybe it was because Potiphar was blessed when Joseph took care of his house. Maybe this was God’s plan all along.

Through amazing circumstances (interpretation of dreams) Joseph was promoted to second in command in all of Egypt. His responsibility was to oversee the storage of grain for a famine that was forthcoming. Once the famine hit, all the people, including those coming from foreign nations came to Egypt to buy food. Part of the procurement process was presenting themselves to Joseph.

One day, Joseph’s ten older brothers bowed before him so they could buy food. They did not recognize their brother as he was dressed as an Egyptian, but Joseph recognized them. At that moment, he also remembered his dreams...dreams he received over 20 years earlier. (Side note, whenever we get a dream from God, we need to recognize that the dream will take time, even many years to come to fulfillment.)

Joseph asked his brothers many questions and found out his dad was still alive as was his little brother. Through manipulating the food situation, Joseph created a scenario that allowed his little brother to stay with him so he could be protected from his older brothers. What Joseph didn’t plan on was the response from his older brothers (the same brothers who sold him into slavery); they were willing to take their little brother’s place as Joseph’s slave. At this moment, Joseph broke and revealed himself to his brothers.

*“And God sent me before you to preserve a posterity for you in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you who sent me here, but God.” - Genesis 45:7-8a*

One of the keys for Joseph to be able to forgive his brothers was that he realized that even though his brothers intended harm, God was able to use it for good. In fact, Joseph went so far as to say that it was God who sent him to Egypt, not his brothers. So seeing God’s perspective on a situation helps us move towards forgiveness.

Also (and this doesn’t happen in every situation), Joseph saw brokenness, remorse and repentance from his brothers. This also helped him realize that his brothers learned from their past indiscretions and changed. This made forgiveness easier for Joseph.

Forgiveness is never easy. We have been wounded. We have received pain. We have been rejected. We have been wronged. We have been violated. But what I have learned about forgiveness is that forgiveness is a choice. And it’s a choice that I can only make through the power of God. I don’t always want to forgive but I know God wants me to forgive.

I would like to end by sharing one line from the song titled Forgiveness by Matthew West - “The prisoner that it really frees is you...Forgiveness”.

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

## Answer Fear with Faith

When fear comes knocking at our door, which it often does,  
We must answer it with **Faith** because nothing else is effective against it.  
**Prayer** is the major vehicle that carries faith. *Matthew 21:22*

### **Faith**

It does not make things easy,  
It makes them possible. *Luke 1:37*

### **Faith**

It's all about believing,  
You don't know how it will happen  
But you believe it will. *Hebrews 11:1*

Pray, Trust, Believe and Shout Now for the VICTORY!!!

“[More Words to Grow By](#)” BY INMATE T. BALLARD, EL DORADO CORRECTION FACILITY

I want to mention to the Followers of the Growth Journal that as we **grow** in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus, it should not become an academic/scholastic relationship, where we just became “preachers” and “teachers”, but we should grow more in the LOVE and GRACE. By pouring out that same love and grace we've been given we will win others over for Christ.

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## 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.

## An Example of a Man BY EBONY HARRIS

As a child, I grew up with my grandfather in the home. He was an excellent example of what a man should look like. He gardened, took the trash to the curb, read the Bible, worked hard, protected us, provided for us, and showed us how to love each other.

My grandfather worked with his hands so he was able to teach me a few things that, to this day, I haven't forgotten. He would give me tools as gifts to keep in my car or home. He not only taught me how to save but showed me as well. He had this large glass bottle full of change and every now and then, he'd allow my sister and I to help him sort and count the coins then wrap them to deposit in his savings account.

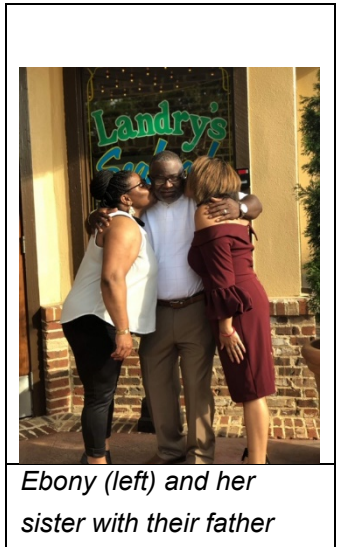
As I got older, I saw how he treated my grandmother. He was married to her for 53 years before he passed away. That taught me how to love someone in action through it ALL! It taught me how to argue with someone, they argued A LOT, without disrespecting them or hurting them.

As a teenager, I got to know my biological father better. He had been in my life from the beginning but I didn't know he was my dad. Prior to that knowledge, I knew him as a fun, loving, comical, hardworking, responsible, god-fearing man who I totally admired...sound familiar? When it was made known that he was my father, I was completely elated. I had THE GREATEST father and grandfather known to man! What a blessing!

Like my grandfather, my dad has been married to his wife nearly 30 years. He treats her like a queen, he laughs with her, he protects her, he genuinely loves her, and they consistently communicate. I mentioned to him just the other day that I admire their marriage and aspire to have a similar marriage one day.

I've written all of these things about these two great men because they have impacted my life in a very positive way. Because of the men they were and are, I am loyal, responsible, caring, a giver, a good communicator, loving, kind, stern when necessary, a hard worker, business minded, intelligent, handy, and I expect more from a man than just a compliment. My values are higher because they showed me a higher value system. They were not perfect but they both weren't afraid to admit it; and so it is with me.

You, men, are vitally important in the home. Your value and worth has been understated and underrated for far too long but I am writing to you to let you know that this woman knows and understands your importance! Please don't ever take your place in the home for granted or allow yourself to ever believe that your presence is not missed. You ARE needed there! Take your place in every way...physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually, and financially. No single woman can parent on her own, no matter how loud she shouts it. Your children see you as all the things I saw in my grandfather and see in my dad. It is imperative that they see your pros outweigh your cons. You are much more than society lets on. Your parents need you, your children need you, your wife needs you, your siblings need you, and your community needs you. I can't wait to see all the great things your children, your wife, your family and friends write about YOUR existence in their world...be tremendously blessed!



*Ebony (left) and her sister with their father*

## A Little Humor

A child asked his father, "How were people born?" So his father said, "Adam and Eve made babies, then their babies became adults and made babies, and so on." The child then went to his mother, asked her the same question and she told him, "We were monkeys then we evolved to become like we are now." The child ran back to his father and said, "You lied to me!" His father replied, "No, your mom was talking about her side of the family."



There was a preacher who fell in the ocean and he couldn't swim. When a boat came by, the captain yelled, "Do you need help, sir?" The preacher calmly said "No, God will save me." A little later, another boat came by and a fisherman asked, "Hey, do you need help?" The preacher replied again, "No God will save me." Eventually the preacher drowned & went to heaven. The preacher asked God, "Why didn't you save me?" God replied, "I sent you two boats!"

A drunk staggers into a Catholic Church, enters a confessional booth, sits down, but says nothing. The Priest coughs a few times to get his attention, but the drunk continues to sit there. Finally, the Priest pounds three times on the wall. The drunk mumbles, "Ain't no use knockin'! There's no paper on this side either!"

Q: What kind of car does Jesus drive?

A: A Christler.

A husband and wife are in church. The preacher notices that the husband has fallen asleep and says to the wife, "Wake your husband up!" The wife answers, "You're the one who made him fall asleep, you wake him up!"

The Lord said unto John, "Come forth and receive eternal life," but John came fifth and won a toaster.

Why don't blind people skydive? Because it scares the crap out of their Seeing Eye dogs.

Who is the greatest babysitter mentioned in the Bible? David — he rocked Goliath to a very deep sleep.



GMI WORD SEARCH BY LONNIE JOHNSON  
GOD'S LOVE

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

AGAPE  
EROS  
LUDUS  
GOD  
KIND  
HUMBLE  
SELFLESS  
REJOICEFUL  
HONEST

TRUST  
PROTECTS  
PRESERVES  
SACRIFICES  
DEPENDABLE  
PERSISTENT  
TOLERABLE  
NOBLE  
FATHERLY

COMFORTING  
JOYFUL  
HOLY  
PEACEFUL  
FAITHFUL  
CHARITABLE  
CERTAIN  
COMPASSIONATE  
MERCY



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

### Would you take a bath and put your old dirty smelly clothes back on if you didn't have to?

I am willing to guess that is a hard **NO** for about 99% of us. Many accept Christ, get baptized and delivered from their sins only to continue wearing old habits and behaviors for weeks, months and even years after our new relationship with Christ. I am aware of and do consider that part of it has to do with us maturing spiritually and discovering what the Word of God says about us. But even after sitting under biblical teaching many find it hard to walk away from a love affair with their old ways.

When we step into our relationship with God we may feel like nothing has changed or that there is "a period" we have to go through before we can claim that we are "new". But God's Word says that once we get connected to Jesus we **are** "new creatures" and all that old mess passes away from us. We have a **new identity**. (**2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 5:17**). We should start claiming that as soon as we learn it. **Like right now if you are reading this.**

Somewhere down the road we may slip or fall in our walk with the Lord. Then we may feel like we will never be rid of that thing and just lay there because Satan may lie to us and tell us we have not changed. But God's Word tells us that we don't have to feel the condemnation of his lies anymore once we connect to Christ (**Romans 8:1**).

As a matter of fact, it is a command by God that we live holy (**Please read Ephesians 4:17-32**). In this passage of scripture God's Word explicitly tells us to no longer live as the **unsaved** do. They live for lustful pleasure and that they eagerly practice all kinds of sin. This passage really breaks it down with the actions you should take, the things you need to stop doing and the things to start doing. The great thing about this is that God would not ask you to function in this way if it was not possible. Therefore, we no longer have an excuse for living like the devil from day to day.

When we have been washed by the blood of Jesus our sins have been forgiven and we have been cleansed of all unrighteousness (**1 John 1:9**). We do not have to wear those old filthy smelly habits and behaviors anymore. If you slip you can get right back on your feet. We should no longer live as those that are unsaved selfishly partaking in ungodliness. What are you going to start wearing?

#### ***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**