

The Growth Journal Magazine



Growth Ministries Inc.

FEBRUARY 2021, VOLUME 5, ISSUE 6



Climate of the Times

What an interesting time to be alive! Wit

In all that's going on in the world it's easy to lose focus, get off track and take a detour in a completely different direction than originally intended. Emotions are high {understandably so} as most of us alive have never experienced such mayhem going on at the same time around the globe.

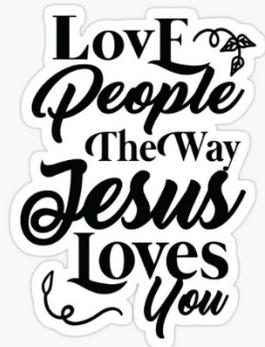
Personally, my emotions have been high and in good spirits at times, other times, fear has tried to grip me and take me out of the race. GOD, however, in HIS awesomeness, in HIS own way reminded me to stay focused on HIM. Not on circumstances, news reports, other people's opinions, just HIM, and HIS WORD. HIS WORD is alive, it's real, and we can trust it because GOD honors it!

Ephesians 6:10-18 gives us some insight on what we must do during difficult times. I encourage you to read each verse, but I'd like to highlight verses "11 - Put on all of GOD'S armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil" and "12 - For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places." Make no mistake the fight we're experiencing, though we're in the earth, is spiritual. Another human being is not your enemy!! I encourage you to absorb Ephesians 6:10-18. Get it in your spirit and fight the good fight of faith armored in GOD and HIS WORD. No matter what things look like, GOD will not fail you. Trust HIM to guide you, trust HIM to keep you, trust HIM to cover you, trust HIM to provide for you and trust HIM to protect you.

Stand in Faith
Mrs. G.

Inside This Issue

- Climate of the Times - 1
- 12 Disciples - James - 2
- Servants Prayer - 3
- Credibility Check - 4
- Adjusting to Reentry - 5
- You Can Minister - 6
- Women Empowering Women - 7
- Words to Grow By - 7
- Word Search - 8
- Just for Laughs - 9
- Closing Words - 10
- What Must I Do to be Saved - 11
- Write Us - 11
- SWAGG - 12



February is the month of love. We want to wish you a Happy Valentine's Day. As Christians we should understand and exercise "Agape Love", which is unconditional love. It is not based on how a person performs, but simply because we care about that person and want what is best for them. How are you loving people?

The 12 Disciples of Jesus Christ – James by Alywin Mitchell



We started last time looking at the 12 disciples or apostles. We began with Peter. The next disciple we will look at is James also called one of the “sons of Zebedee” which means the “Sons of thunder” because of his boldness and passion. (Mark 3:17; Luke 9:54) James became a prominent leader in the early church. James is described as one of the first disciples to join Jesus. Jesus called him to be a fisher of men. (Matthew 4:19)

James was a rather quiet part of the team of disciples in that we don’t read much about him in Scripture. John his younger brother was the other “son of Zebedee.” We will talk about John later.

Not only did James and John earn a special nickname from the Lord — "sons of thunder" — they were privileged with Peter to be at the front and center of three supernatural events in the life of Christ. As part of Jesus’ “inner three” he was permitted to be present when Jesus raised Jairus’ daughter from the dead (Mark 5:37), he witnessed Jesus’ transfiguration on the Mount of Olives (Matthew 17:1), and he was in the Garden of Gethsemane with Jesus. (Mark 14:33) In addition to these honors, James was the first disciple to be martyred for his faith in A.D. 44. The Acts of the Apostles records that "Herod the king" (traditionally identified with Herod Agrippa) had James executed by the sword. James was the only disciple to have his martyrdom recorded in Scripture. (Acts 12:1-3)

Jesus purposefully chose His inner circle. At the ascension of Christ, the eleven remaining apostles were given the same mission, to spread the gospel and make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:18–20). James was one of the three men in Jesus’ “inner circle,” they were instrumental in fulfilling that mission.

Peter, James, and John were among the earliest of Jesus’ disciples who had been with Him the longest (Luke 5:4–11). James was one of Jesus’ closet friends. Jesus’ teaching was rooted deeply in James.

James was known for being a man of boldness, intense passion and enthusiasm when he proclaimed the gospel after Jesus’ resurrection. James was committed to Jesus to the very end.

Jesus sees and knows and understands the depths of our hearts and who we are, and He is patient to transform us into His image. So then, by James’ example we as believers in Jesus Christ can be bold in telling everyone about what he has done for us and what he can do for others. We can have intense passion and enthusiasm in our proclaiming Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross and His power of redemption. Every day, by being committed to Jesus we can boldly and passionately shout:

*“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ 38 This is the first and great commandment. 39 And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ 40 On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.” **Matthew 22:36-40***

A Faithful Servant's Prayer by Larry F., Lansing



*Upon waking up each morning I want to do Your will
So when I'm asked to do Your work keep me faithful still
Whatever You command me no matter how humble it may be
I need Your strength to do Your task that You ask of me
A faithful servant I must be when I view the past.
All those assured of their future faithfully held fast
They held fast to the task with a servant's attitude
I'm convicted much of mine in private solitude
When asked to do a servant's task I need a heart so pure
That when the task is finished, Your glory is for sure
A servant only does what His Master tells him to do
My attitude of servitude is always what is due
Lord, I desire to view myself with those that You have blessed
Although I boast of my good works, must be confessed
A faithful servant I must be honoring Your Word
So the world can visualize a servant of The Lord
Holding fast to the promise of my eternal life
Helps this faithful servant amid the daily strife
As days and nights pass quickly by I shall have no fear
Well done, good and faithful servant words I long to hear*

Scriptures

Matthew 20:27

Matthew 25:20, 23

Luke 17:10

Philippians 2:5-11

Larry F. - LCF
Prisoner in Christ

Four Rabbis use to argue Theology and three were always in accord against the fourth. One day, the odd Rabbi out, after losing three to one again, decided to appeal to a higher authority. "Oh God!" he cried, "I know in my heart that I am right and they were wrong. Please give me a sign to prove it to them."

It was a beautiful sunny day. As soon as the Rabbi finished his prayer, a storm cloud moved across the sky above the four Rabbis. It rumbled and dissolved. "A SIGN FROM GOD! SEE, I WAS RIGHT. I KNEW IT!" But still, the other three disagreed, pointing out that storm clouds form on hot, summer days.

So, the Rabbi prayed again. "Oh God, I need a bigger sign to show that I am right and they are wrong." This time, four storm clouds appeared and rushed each other. One big cloud and a bolt of lightning slammed into a tree on a nearby hill. "I TOLD YOU! I WAS RIGHT!" However, his friends insisted nothing happened that could not be explained by natural causes.

The Rabbi was getting ready to ask for a very big sign, but just as he said, "Oh God!" the sky turned pitch black. The earth shook and a deep booming voice intoned, "HE WAS RIGHT!" The Rabbi put his hands on his hips and then turned to the other three and said, "Well?" "So", shrugged one of the other Rabbis, "Now its three to two".

Have you ever felt like him? Would you like me to walk you through a blueprint to reestablishing your credibility?

Unlike the Rabbi in the joke, most of us are unable to rely on divine intervention to reestablish our credibility. If you are like me, then perhaps you have suffered from a "credibility gap". That is a disparity between what is said and the facts or the inability to have one's truthfulness or honesty accepted. If that is the case, then I would like to not only provide you with a blueprint designed to increase your credibility, but I, also, will accompany you upon this journey.

Being viewed as being credible is to be seen as someone who is trustworthy, dependable and reliable. There are two major factors which produce credibility and they are Character and Competence. I'd like to focus the attention on these two building blocks of credibility by beginning with defining what they are and how they work hand in hand with determining how trustworthy others perceive us to be. Once we become confident in our understanding of what is necessary to be considered as being credible, we can consider concrete steps that may be taken to establish both our Character and Competence.

Character is usually the most widely accepted measure of credibility, but what is character? Character is seen as moral strength or a distinctive quality or trait. When we speak of someone's character, we usually are stating what stands out most about their personality. What we do leaves a deep impression on the minds and hearts of those around us. Almost everyone agrees that actions speak louder than words. What we say, never carries as much weight as what we do, our actions.

While we may judge ourselves by what we intend, others, almost always, invariably judge us by what we do. A credible person is someone whose actions and words fall in line. Following through on our words increases our credibility in the eyes of others because it establishes our reliability.



Before I start this article, I want to give a warm thanks to the people that have helped, taught, mentored and coached me along the way, At times I find myself thinking about what I learned from all of you. The lessons continue to guide me. I find the things I've learned insightful when helping others.

This month marks my fourth month of being released. I want to address some of the myths about having a criminal record and living in society.

Food: The worst experience I had upon my release is food. It's very true that your body has to readjust to food. After I had breakfast with BIB, my mentor and my family, that evening I ate my mom and my sister's food. A home cooked meal from your family will make you appreciate freedom. After that I could only eat one meal a day for the next week. After that week, I could not eat more than once a day. I had to remember to eat. I don't have the chow call or anything to remind me to eat. I'm well settled in now.

People don't hate ex-prisoners: This is absolutely true. I've been very fortunate to have and keep great people in my life. I've been to churches, jobsites, colleges and the police department. I haven't had a negative encounter with anyone. Police included. They have been very friendly and helpful.

Jobs everywhere! Even with Covid-19 you can still find a job. Every block I travel on has a help wanted sign. Gas stations, restaurants and construction companies. Name a place and I've probably seen a "We're hiring" sign in front of it. I have had no trouble finding a job. There is always work to do. You won't have space on your schedule if you don't want to. Plenty of overtime as well.

I would have liked to get on at Amazon's warehouse. It had been so long since I used my Social Security card that the company Amazon had doing background checks thought I was an immigrant. The first job I took, I was working at a place that recycled food to make animal food. When you think about a dump, that is what this place looked like. Regardless of that, I woke up every morning at 4:30am just to get myself ready and ride my bike to work. It was raining, it was cold, and it was better than being incarcerated. I wanted to start working somewhere and fast.

Sticking to the plan: I encourage everyone to have a plan before and after they release. This includes employment and leisure time. Not too much has distracted me from my plan. At least 80% of the plans I had before I was released, I have accomplished. I'm currently making new plans for the next quarter of the year. BIB helped me out tremendously with this.

Leisure time: Being on parole and its restrictions doesn't stop your life from happening. Yes, you must stay away from alcohol and drugs. This keeps me out of situations I don't want to be in anyway. It doesn't stop me from having a good time with the people in my life.

In conclusion, stay optimistic. It's important to your health and outlook on your future. Life is what you make it. No one hates you in society and you can find a job almost anywhere.

If you have any questions for me, please send them to Growth Ministries.

I can't say it enough. Thank you everyone who has helped me along the way.



Have you ever thought of how you can minister—right where you are?

There are many ways you can minister. Here are two simple, impactful ways.

Proverbs 25:11 says, “A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver. NKJV”

A word spoken at the right time in the right way is worth much. Your words are mighty. They can minister in ways you may never know.

Can you think of a time when you have been down and someone said something that lifted your spirit?

Or you might have been feeling bad about yourself and a person gave you a compliment at just the right time.

Their words were like apples of gold. Because they were spoken at the right time, they were presented to you in a setting of silver.

The person who said the things to lift you up ministered to you. To them, it probably did not seem like that big of a deal. However, to you it meant the world.

The next way to minister might be something you never thought of. Or if you did, you did not think of it as being a ministry.

In the Bible, Job was a righteous, very wealthy man. He had thousands of sheep and camels, hundreds of teams of oxen and hundreds of donkeys. He had seven sons and three daughters and many servants. He was a godly man.

In a matter of hours, he lost everything. Then to top it all off, he got boils all over his body. His wife told him he should just curse God and die. He told his wife she talked like a foolish woman.

As you can imagine, in all this he was grieving and distraught. Yet he did not sin by saying anything wrong.

Three of his friends heard of his tragedy and came to offer words of comfort. When they saw him from afar, they hardly recognized him. They joined him in his grief. Then they sat with him for one week saying nothing to him. They recognized his suffering was too great for words.

This story is found in Job 1-2.

My father who lived several states away had been very sick for several weeks. I got the phone call from my sister. The doctor told her to call the family in to say goodbye. I was in a state of shock. I was in my 20's and had never experienced the death of someone so close to me.

I felt numb. I knew I had to get things packed for my husband, three small children and myself to make the long road trip.

Right about then my precious mother-in-law called. I told her about the call from my sister for us to come say goodbye to Daddy.

Next thing I knew, there was a knock at the front door. It was my sweet mother-in-law. She came in and sat at the table. She did not offer words of comfort or advice. She just sat with me during this time. Her mere presence was such a comfort and helped me get my head together.

Sometimes the best way you can minister to someone is to just be there with them without saying a word. Sometimes the hurt is too deep to be ministered to by talking.

Whether it is a word fitly spoken at the right time or saying nothing while sitting with someone who is hurting, you are ministering. The Lord will show you the way in which to minister to someone.

-Annie

Wake Up!

One morning she woke up different.

Done with trying to figure out who was with her, against her, or walking down the middle because they didn't have the guts to pick a side. She was done with anything that didn't bring her peace. She realized that opinions are a dime a dozen, validation was for parking, and loyalty wasn't a word but a lifestyle. It was this day that her life changed. And not because of a man or a job but because she realized that life is way too short to leave the key to your happiness in someone else's pocket.

You are worth far more than Rubies! *Proverbs 31:10*



Words to Grow By - by Linda Lewis

It's Your Season!

It's fair to say that 2020 was a year like none other for all of us no matter what our position in life was. And as we kicked out the old year and welcomed in this new one, if we're perfectly honest, things have not quite been what we'd hoped for, but...we yet have hope.

We must embrace the season of life we're in whether it's a season of rain or a season of sunshine. God is using it to shape us for the future. We have to stop thinking we'll be stuck in our situations forever. We feel like our hurt will never heal or we'll never get out of this impossible struggle...but don't confuse a season for a lifetime. Even our trials and tribulations have an expiration date. We will grow, life will change, and things will work out.

To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven". *Ecclesiastes 3:1*

It's Your Season!

GMI Love Word Search

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

WORD LIST:

ADMIRE
ADORE
AGAPE
APPRECIATION
BROTHERLY
CHERISH
DEAR
DELIGHT

DEVOTION
EROS
FOND
FRIEND
GENTLE
HUGS
INFATUATION
LOVE

PASSION
PATIENT
PHILIA
PRAGMA
PRAISE
PRIZE
RESPECT
SENTIMENT

TENDERNESS
TOLERANCE
TREASURE
WORSHIP
YEARNING

How to Get to Heaven?

A teacher asked the children in her Sunday school class, "If I sold my house and my car, had a big garage sale and gave all my money to the church, would I get into heaven?"

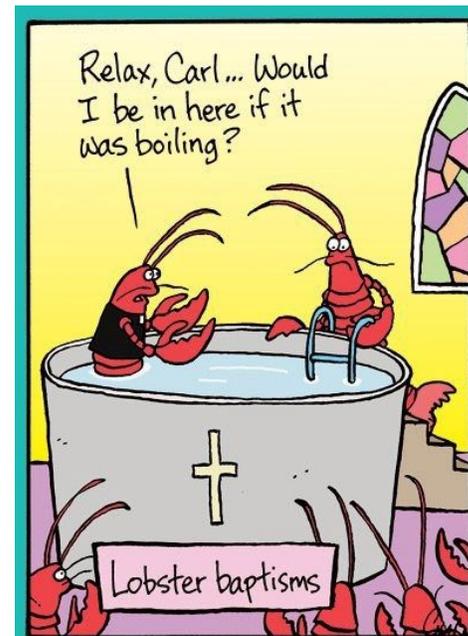
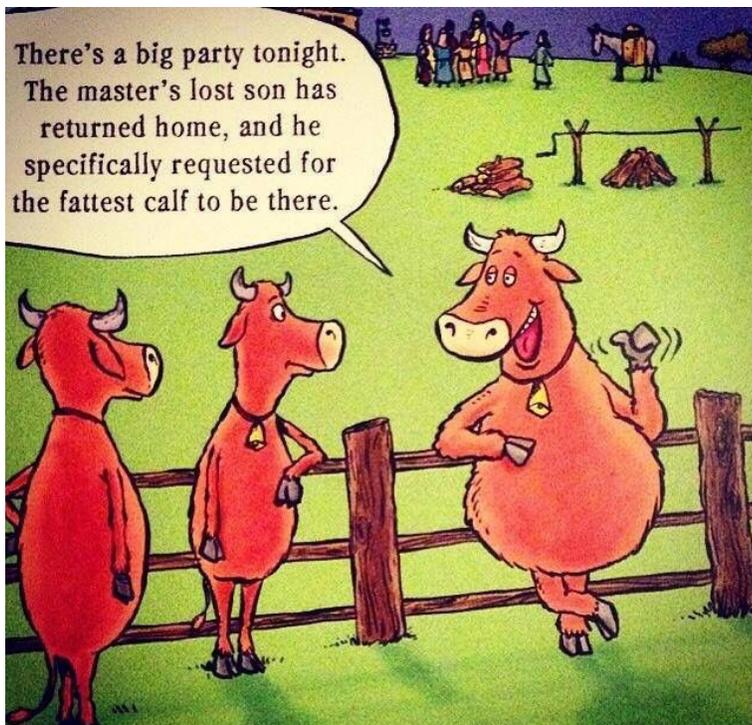
"NO!" the children all answered.

"If I cleaned the church every day, mowed the yard, and kept everything neat and tidy, would I get into heaven?"

Again, the answer was "NO!"

"Well," she continued, "then how can I get to heaven?"

In the back of the room, a five-year-old boy shouted out, "You gotta be dead!"



A new pastor was visiting the homes of his parishioners.

At one house it seemed obvious that someone was at home, but no answer came to his repeated knocks at the door. Therefore, he took out a card and wrote "Revelation 3:20" on the back of it and stuck it in the door.

When the offering was processed the following Sunday, he found that his card had been returned. Added to it was this cryptic message, Genesis 3:10." Reaching for his Bible to check out the citation, he broke up in gales of laughter. Revelation 3:20 begins "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." Genesis 3:10 reads, "I heard your voice in the garden and I was afraid, for I was naked."



Grown Up Love!

1 Corinthians 13:4-8 NIV ⁴ Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵ It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶ Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷ It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

The more we mature in our walk with Christ, the more we understand these verses. They sound good the first time we hear them but that may not adequately describe us when we first become citizens of the kingdom. The love described above is very selfless, mature and puts other people's needs above our own.

If you were to read the entire chapter of 1 Corinthians 13 you will see where Paul mentions in verse 11 that when he was a child he talked like a child and he thought like a child, but when he became a man, he had to put away childish things. He is letting us know that to love someone with this kind of love we have to think more maturely. Most children are only concerned with what they want and what they like. It's me, me, me. They can't take care of themselves so they don't even know what it is to take care of someone else. But when we grow up, we become parents ourselves and understand what it is to sacrifice what we want for the sake of those within our sphere of influence.

As mature saints we don't **brag** about what we have and what we can do, instead we make sure others have what they need and see that they can do what they want to do. Instead of **envying** our neighbors, relatives and friends, we are happy for them when they do well, prosper and become blessed. As mature saints we are not overly sensitive and easily **angered**, but instead we seek to understand why people say and do the things they do. **We protect and provide without keeping score.**

How grown up is your love?



What must I do to be saved?



If you've never accepted Christ as your Lord and Savior, or if you've turned away from Him for a life of unrighteousness, then take a moment and say this prayer:

“Lord, I confess that I am a sinner and ask 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



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 you more artistic sisters and brothers.

We also ask that you be mindful of what you send to us as there are some things that are prohibited for print:

Inappropriate Verbiage/Profanity

Sexually Explicit Verbiage/Images

Political opinions

Opinions regarding social/systemic injustices

Demeaning or Offensive Views

Special Resources and Success Story of a Kansas Inmate



This month Growth Ministries would like to highlight a special resource for individuals seeking employment upon reentry.

SWAGG Inc.

RE-ENTRY SERVICES



SWAGG INC OFFERS RE-ENTRY SERVICES TO CLIENTS OF PROBATION & PAROLE OF KC, MO. WEEKLY RE-ENTRY WORKSHOPS HELD AT EQUAL MINDED CAFE AND EVENT CENTER 4327 TROOST AVE KCMO

SWAGG INC WORKS WITH A NETWORK OF HUMAN RESOURCE PROFESSIONALS TO PROVIDE ACCESS TO EMPLOYMENT, HOUSING AND TRANSPORTATION SERVICES



Na'im Al-Amin is the CEO and Founder of SWAGG INC (Serve Witness And Give Guidance) Inspiration Never Ceases. SWAGG INC is a 501 (c) (3) Non-Profit that advocates for criminal justice reform, ending mass incarceration and successful reintegration of formerly incarcerated citizens. SWAGG INC has created a Re-Entry network with employment opportunities from a network of human resource professionals and Probation and Parole of KC, MO.

SWAGG INC has a Career Mentor partnership with KCPS through the Mentors For Success program. Professionally, Al-Amin is a human resources supervisor with United Parcel Services, a Graduate student at Webster University pursuing a master's degree in Human Resources Management. Al-Amin is also formerly incarcerated and was recently released from prison in 2018 after serving 5 years. He was released from prison homeless, geographically displaced and had been disenfranchised his whole incarceration. Upon release he applied at UPS for a package handler position and was promoted to Human Resources within six months and also simultaneously worked as a Career Development Executive for the Full Employment Council Inc.

SWAGG Inc. 7033 Prospect, Kansas City, MO 64118