

A
MESSAGE OF HOPE,
comfort and freedom in Jesus Christ

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Article from Brother Stokes	1
Quarterly Scripture Focus	1
James Group	2
Card Ministry	2
Article (continued)	3
Voices for Christ	3
SPECIAL THANKS	3
Contact Us	4
Ministry Schedule	4

“What the James Group means to me...” by Deshon Stokes

I am currently serving a life sentence in prison and have had many regrets in life but the only regret I carry around today is not giving my life to God before now. Throughout my incarceration I felt no need to get involved with any programs until these last two years or so. I decided to join the James Group and I must say this is one of the best decisions I ever made in my life! Working the 12 Steps and being able to get more in depth with God and myself has allowed me to go through a transformation that I didn't know was possible. I thank God every day for the James Group and for the brothers that attend alongside of me because as a family we grow together. Not only does the James Group help me grow and deal with a lot of hurts from the past it also allows me to help others grow including brothers and sisters that are not able to attend. It has helped me step outside my comfort zone to talk with others about things that would normally make me feel uncomfortable. Being able to actually identify my character defects and admitting when and where I am wrong is a very big step for me. The knowledge I obtained in the James Group allowed me to do this without saying “but” or pointing the finger at some-

one else saying their actions made me react in certain fashions. In the world I once lived in, a lot of people blamed the victims and played the victim role instead of taking responsibility for our actions, but in the world I try to live in now that's nothing more than an excuse. The James Group has helped lay the foundation to the temple that I need God to dwell in on a constant basis. I needed to move out and let him move in! Some people who know me (if not all my life than the greater portion of my life) still don't know who I am and probably wouldn't recognize the man that I am today. Before the James Group I didn't even know who I was and I definitely don't recognize me sometimes thanks to the Glory of God! Some believe that people only turn to God in bad situations, especially in prison, and this may be true for some but what is also true is that even if people only turn to God when they want something when God wants something from you he doesn't turn to you he turns you around to face him. The James Group has made me realize that God wants me to face him and keep my eye on him and not on the world or any of its problems because there is nothing he can't do or

Continued on page 3...

Quarterly Scripture Focus:

2 Corinthians 5:17

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!”



We are nearing the end of another 12 step study in the James Group class at Macomb Correctional. A few members of our class have been transferred or gone home since we began the study back in May and several new members have joined us! It is inspiring to have heard the testimonies, struggles, and victories that our brothers share each week in the James Group. These men are truly a blessing to me and I praise God for each one of them. We are looking forward to starting another course offered through NewLife Behavior Ministry at the conclusion of our 12 step study. Please continue to pray for these men while they work on overcoming their addictions and/or negative behaviors and are reconciled to God through Jesus Christ His Son.

In other news...this summer, we enjoyed the addition of a new volunteer, Eddie. He was only able to fellowship with us for a few months but he was a wonderful blessing to us all. We are all praying that God will continue to pour blessings into his life. We have also been blessed to have a brother in Christ from Macomb Christian Church, Ralph New, join us on Wednesday nights over the past few weeks.

Since the James Group began at MRF, I've been reaching out to those around me as well as praying and asking God to touch the hearts of other brothers and sisters in Christ so that they would join Roger and I in answering the call to "visit those in prison." What a blessing to have that prayer answered!

"The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'"
Matthew 25:40

Message of Hope Card Ministry



With the help of a close friend, Stephanie, and her grandmother, Marilyn, we have added another component to Message of Hope prison ministry. We have started a card ministry in which we send Birthday and Christmas cards as well cards of Encouragement to our friends inside. Many of them do not receive cards from family or friends so this is one more way we are able to share the love of Jesus with them and remind them they are valued and cared for!



...continued from page 1

fix! One of the most important things that the James Group has taught me is how to have a relationship with God and others. I can now re-visit old relationships with a heart of repentance and forgiveness to try and mend and salvage some of the carnage I left behind. Now, instead of being mad at the world, I ask the world to forgive me for all the damage that I have done. My story may be common to some people but trust me there is nothing common about what God is doing through the James Group program. It is my prayer that everyone that attends gets the same experience I have had. I have a very long way to go in my recovery but every week I'm able to go to the James Group I know I walked through the right door with the right people at the right time to do the right thing and through God I will continue to do the work of our Father as much as he allows me to do. To sum it all up, the James Group has allowed me to meet the man I am to become, the man God has ordained me to be. I would like to thank God and the amazing brothers that God has placed in my life to make this transformation possible. May peace and love always be with you all! God bless



Many of you are already aware that Keith Andersen, co-founder of Voices for Christ, was involved in a roll over accident earlier this year where he suffered a broken neck. Over the last few months our brother has made amazing progress (Thank God!) but still has a long road ahead of him. As of this writing, he is continuing in his outpatient therapy. We ask that you please continue to hold him up in prayer.

In the meantime, the process of uploading the submissions received from our friends inside to the website is on hold. In an effort to continue to share

their inspired works with you we have been posting them on the ministry's Facebook page. You can check the powerful testimonies, wonderful words of encouragement, lessons, poems, etc. at:

www.facebook.com/behindthenarrowwindows

While you are there please remember to...



Special Thanks!!

With this being the last newsletter for 2014 and also nearing the time of year when we give thanks, we wanted to take a moment to thank some of the wonderful people who make this ministry possible. Whether through their hard work and dedication, financial support, or other acts of love (or all of the above!) these individuals truly are the "aroma of Christ":

Roger Distler (who invited me to get involved in prison ministry with him), Roseville Church of Christ, NorthRidge Church prison ministry (Ken, Jessica, Tim, Don, Rick, Dawn, Gerry, Todd & countless others!), Karen & Dennis S, Matt M, Deborah M, Amy N, Tracy M, Stephanie H, Marilyn K, Dale A, George W, Keith A, Jack M, Brian W, Geoff A, Rick D, Doug A, Guy A, Ralph & Pam N, Eddie Y, Shana & Jeremy P, Becca W, Susie D, Laurie N, Steve S, and Don Umphrey.

Without your help we would not be able to share the hope, comfort and freedom found in Jesus Christ with our friends inside. Thank you so much and may God bless each of you!

MESSAGE OF HOPE

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Interested in receiving our
quarterly newsletter by mail
or electronically by email?

Send your request to:
murphy_k@live.com

Contact Us...

Please feel free to contact Kyle Murphy via email at murphy_k@live.com or visit the website at www.messageofhopeprisonministry.org if you are interested in finding out more about Message of Hope prison ministry or to get involved.



MESSAGE OF HOPE Ministry Schedule
@ Macomb Correctional Facility

1st Sunday of the month:

Level II church services (9:30 – 10:30 a.m.)

Level IV church services (1:30 – 2:30 p.m.)

Every Wednesday evening:

Level II James Group (6:45 – 8:30 p.m.)

Every Friday evening:

Level II Celebrate Recovery (6:45 – 8:30 p.m.)

