

A MESSAGE OF HOPE, comfort and freedom in Jesus Christ

“A Healthy Root” by Kyle Murphy

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Next to bringing others to Jesus, the main goal of the Message of Hope jail and prison ministry is to meet the spiritual needs of our friends inside as well as help them to break the cycle of addiction.

At the start of each of our James Group twelve step studies I give each class member a handout that lists types of addictions, destructive behaviors and thought patterns. An illustration of a tree is utilized to demonstrate how these things manifest in our lives. The leaves represent our addictions (or symptoms/coping mechanisms). The branches represent the behavior and/or thought patterns that lead to these addictions. The root of the tree represents the cause – and that is, a lack of relationship with God through Jesus Christ His Son.

If we are to break the cycle of addiction (and sin) in our lives we must have a healthy root. As Paul said in the 2nd part of Romans 11:16, “...if the root is holy, so are the branches.”

A great example of the affect of a root can be seen in the pruning of a forsythia. You can remove the leaves and branches as often as you want, but they will always grow back (and quickly with this particular plant!). You can cut the plant all the way to the ground but, even then, it will grow

back. The new leaves and branches might come in differently than what they originally were but they will grow back nonetheless. The only way to effectively get rid of the leaves and branches is to address the root.

The same concept applies to our addictions or sin. We can address the addiction (ex. alcohol) but unless we deal with the underlying issue – let’s say, guilt – we are likely to return to drinking in order to cope with our guilt. In addition, even if these underlying feelings and thought patterns are resolved, without a healthy root, we will not break the cycle of addiction – it will just manifest in a different way. We must establish, or re-establish, a relationship with Jesus Christ or we will eventually be consumed by other negative thoughts and feelings causing us to return to our former addiction or some other way of coping (maybe religious legalism or exercise and physical conditioning).

Paul continues in his letter to the church in Rome by explaining what this relationship with Jesus Christ looks like (see Romans 12). He discusses how we are to present our bodies to God as living sacrifices, to no longer be conformed to the

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Quarterly Scripture Focus:

Romans 11:16

“If the part of the dough offered as firstfruits is holy, then the whole batch is holy, if the root is holy, so are the branches.”

Staff Appreciation Dinner at Macomb Correctional Facility



Special thanks go out to Mark at the New Baltimore Hungry Howie's (37595 Green Street, New Baltimore, Michigan) for his generous donations of delicious pizzas for our Macomb Correctional Facility (MRF) Staff Appreciation dinner. Not only did he sponsor the first appreciation dinner back in June, but he came alongside of us again for another successful event. We would like to encourage you to frequent his store and let him know how much he is appreciated!

We are excited for this opportunity to express our thanks and gratitude to the officers, coordinators and other personnel at MRF. They take care of us week after week and get us through the necessary trainings, protocols and processes required by the Michigan Department of Corrections so that we can carry out God's work at their facility. We couldn't do what we do without their help and assistance.

For all you prayer warriors out there, please keep the staff of MRF in your daily prayers.



Pictured, from left to right, volunteer Ralph New, Corrections Program Coordinator Miss Andrzejewski, volunteer Kyle Murphy



The correspondence courses we have been using, published by NewLife Behavior Ministries, continue to be requested by our friends inside. While not all who sign up follow through in completing the lessons, we're doing our part by sending them. It is our hope and prayer that, if nothing else, seeds are being planted.

We are pleased to share that one of our sisters at Macomb Christian Church, Jen, has recently volunteered to be an instructor. We are always grateful for those who answer God's call in their lives and put their faith into action.

We would still like to ask others to get involved as we could really use more help with grading and mailing the lessons as new students are added. We have a few instructors so far but a couple of us currently have close to 10 students each so more instructors would be a huge blessing. (As we stated in the last newsletter, we are especially in need of male instructors).

How it works:

The instructor grades the quizzes as they are returned to the ministry from the students (a grading sheet is provided). The instructor then sends the graded quiz along with the next lesson to the student and waits for it to be returned!

[All mail is routed through the ministry's PO Box and all materials and envelopes are provided to the instructors. The names and addresses of the instructors are kept anonymous.]

For a few moments of your time every week or so, you can make a huge impact in the life of someone who is seeking and help them build a closer relationship with God.

Please consider becoming an instructor...

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pattern of the world, to be transformed by the renewing of our minds, and to put our faith into action. All this should occur as part of our relationship with Jesus Christ. When we live holy lives we will find out that what Paul wrote to the Romans is still true today...“if the root is holy, so are the branches.”

We all need a healthy root. Whether or not we struggle with addiction, we are all sinners and we all fall short of the glory of God. We must stay rooted in Jesus Christ and help others to do the same. By doing so, we can break the cycle of addiction (and sin) in our lives and in the lives of those we love and care about.



The James Group class at Macomb County Jail is currently underway. Our first class was on Friday, September 4th. I must admit, even though I've been facilitating a class at the prison for the last few years, I was still a bit nervous preparing for the first class at the jail.

As I walked into the classroom, accompanied by a stomach full of butterflies, I prayed and asked God to take over – to allow His Holy Spirit to speak through me and to touch the hearts and minds of the men who signed up for the class. I also asked that He bless our time together in the James Group and to allow it to be a place where we can be open, honest and trusting of each other. [Trust is not necessarily an easy thing to come by in a jail or prison setting] As the guys entered the room, my nervousness quickly subsided and was replaced with the same excitement and enthusiasm they were exhibiting. Their openness with me and the rest of the class was encouraging as was hearing them share about their desire for God to work in their lives and help them in overcoming their addictions.

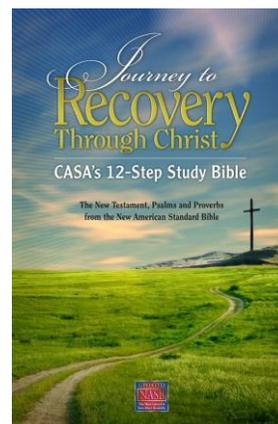
The first class went great. We had 12 men in attendance and several shared what had brought them to James Group and what they hoped to get out of the class. As of the second class, all the class members were participating in the class. God has definitely taken over! Please keep these men in your prayers as they, like each of us, work on establishing a healthy root!



Don Umphrey, the author of “12 Steps to a Closer Walk with God” (the workbook we use in the James Group) has been involved in addiction/recovery ministry for many years.

Recently, he was involved with publishing a new 12-step recovery Bible (NASB New Testament with Psalms & Proverbs). It is called, “Journey to Recovery Through Christ” and is a 530-page Bible specifically designed for people who are seeking recovery or currently in recovery for any type of addiction, or for those wishing to minister to them. It includes more than 600 questions for self-examination and/or group study. In addition to this recovery bible, and the James Group workbook, he has published several other addiction/recovery based books. We would encourage you to check them out at:

www.nextstepchristianrecovery.com or
www.quarrypressbooks.com



MESSAGE OF HOPE

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Website address:

www.messageofhope.org

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

Send your request to:

murphy_k@live.com

Message of Hope weekly schedule

The James Group: Wednesday evenings from 6:45 – 8:30 p.m.

@ Macomb Correctional Facility, New Haven, Michigan

The James Group: Friday evenings from 6:30 – 8:30 p.m.

@ Macomb County Jail, Mount Clemens, Michigan

Job Descriptions

We now have job descriptions posted on the ministry's website for those interested in getting involved. Feel free to visit us at www.messageofhope.org to find out specific details on ways to serve!

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