

A MESSAGE OF HOPE, comfort and freedom in Jesus Christ

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Lesson 1
Quarterly Scripture Focus 1
Next Step Inside 2
From the Outside 3
V4C Submissions 4
V4C (continued) 5
Correspondence Courses 6
One Day With God 6
Lesson (continued) 7
Serve with MOH 7
Contact Information 8
Rewards Programs 8
Social Media Pages 8

“Existing in God” by Kyle Murphy

I recently heard the following phrase (or at least the same concept that is being conveyed in the phrase) a few times over a timespan of a couple weeks: “God created us as human beings, not as humans doing.”

For me, it sometimes takes God speaking to me a few times, and through a few different people, before spiritual truths like this take root in my heart and mind. I am learning to pay closer attention – especially the 2nd and 3rd time something is spoken into my life – but, honestly, it is a slow process.

The spiritual truth that we were not created as humans doing but as humans being is one that is especially fitting to me because I am a task-oriented individual. I enjoy staying busy and active and thrive in that type of environment. When it comes to serving God through Message of Hope the same is true. It is rare for me to have a day when I am not doing something related to the ministry.

As I write this, I have been inside a correctional facility 6 of the last 8 days. When not physically inside a facility, I am networking with other jail and prison ministries, grading correspondence courses, recruiting volunteers, writing newsletter articles, printing and copying materials, picking up supplies, running to the post office box, etc. While these are vital components of the ministry they do not necessarily bring me closer to God or help those I am serving grow closer to Him (at least not directly).

It is easy to get lost in the busyness of serving and shift my focus to the doing rather than the being. It usually doesn’t take long for me to recognize the shift because the “doing” becomes stressful and overwhelming. I sometimes even catch myself starting to think of it as an obligation rather than an opportunity. Serving, or doing, is great but it isn’t (or shouldn’t be) our top priority. Our top priority should be cultivating a relationship with God. Again, He created us as human beings, not humans doing.

Merriam-Webster defines the word “being” as: 1) the quality or state of having existence; and, 2) the qualities that constitute an existent thing. “Doing” is defined as: the act of performing or executing.

When looking at the difference between being and doing, I am reminded of the story of Mary and Martha found in Luke 10:38-42. While Jesus was speaking, Mary sat at His feet listening to Him. In contrast, Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. When she confronted Jesus about it and told Him to instruct Mary to help her, Jesus responded that Mary had chosen what was better!

We exist because God spoke us into existence and breathed life into us. When choosing between speaking to and learning from Him or doing things in His name, the better choice is the former Continued on page 7...

Quarterly Scripture Focus:

Acts 17:27-28

“God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us. For in him we live and move and have our being.”



We have launched a third new class for 2018 and are thrilled with the growth God is bringing about in our Next Step Christian Recovery program. We now have five classes running simultaneously! We would like to thank our newest volunteer, Merl, for his eagerness to serve. We are blessed by his faithfulness and willingness to share a message of hope, comfort and freedom found in Jesus Christ with the class members each week.

For those who may not be aware, Next Step Christian Recovery is a Christ-centered Twelve Step program devoted to helping its members break the cycle of addiction in their lives. The primary tools of Next Step include a Bible-based workbook as well as group meetings where sharing with others takes place. We work with anyone with any type of addiction and realize that anything that looks good, feels good, or tastes good can become an addiction if not kept in moderation. We have also heard addiction to be defined as “an unhealthy attachment to something.” Below is a list of some of the most common addictions.

- Alcohol or drugs
- Work, achievement, and success
- Money addictions, such as overspending, gambling, hoarding
- Control addictions
- Food addictions
- Sexual addictions
- Approval dependency (the need to please people)
- Rescuing patterns toward other persons
- Dependency on toxic relationships
- Physical illness (hypochondria)
- Exercise and physical conditioning
- Cosmetics, clothes, cosmetic surgery, trying to look good on the outside
- Academic pursuits and excessive intellectualizing
- Religiosity or religious legalism
- General perfectionism
- Cleaning and avoiding contamination and other obsessive-compulsive symptoms



For those struggling in any of the areas listed above, we encourage you to seek God and get involved with a recovery group like Next Step Christian Recovery. Through Jesus Christ, we can be set free from our addiction.



This section of our newsletter, “From the Outside,” is for highlighting the struggles and victories of our friends inside as they transition back into the community. It is reserved for the writings of Christian brothers and sisters who have been released and are eager to share with those who are still inside. Please contact us if you are interested in providing advice, encouragement and hope to those who are preparing to join us on this side of the walls.

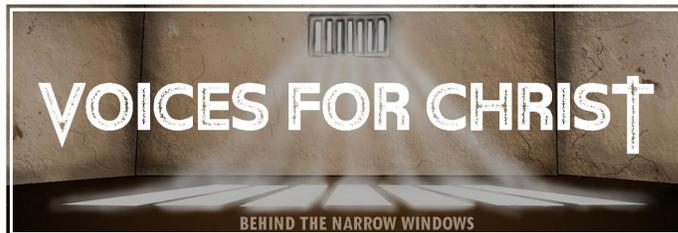
How can I begin to tell a story that has yet to be finished? I could start from the beginning but that would be a Leo Tolstoy-esque like comprehensive view. That “novel” is for another time. So I will start with this current few chapters of my story.

I was 31 and had all a man could want: a family, a business, a bright future. Then I lost it all. Not to anything else in the world except to selfishness. I went to prison for 17 years and didn’t know how it all began. During my time in prison I began to realize how I got lost along the way. I didn’t have any serious idea of religion or a way of life that made any sense. I dabbled in whatever any girl I was with dabbled in. But then in prison, which may sound cliché, I found God. No! Wait that’s not right. He found me!!

That was during the time I thought life was lost forever to me. Only to find that it was just starting. It took me to go to prison to look toward my Creator and say, “Alright God! I give up!!” with me on the ground in the middle of a prison cell. My bunkie was gone and I had a letter from my son that read, “Why did you leave me daddy?” At that moment I broke down. The weight of all I had done had come down on me so hard. I wanted to give up. As I sobbed there on the cold floor at night with the lights off I heard a noise. Someone walked by and slid a leaflet under the door that said Jesus saves – and as I read it the words spoke to me. They said that He died for a wretch like me. That no matter what my sins were, it didn’t matter at all. He still loved me. And if I would give my life over to him, I would find life. Then I met a person named Anthony. Everyone called him brother “Hallelujah” and he invited me to service. I reluctantly went but once there I heard more and more and then they said if anyone here needs saving today just close your eyes and say to Jesus, “Today I give my life over to you. I can’t do this on my own. I have sinned and need your help.”

So that day I did! With the belief that I had lost everything. I then realized I had found life by having turned my life over to God and actually finding life, love and mercy! But what I found that hit me most was that God had forgiven me of my sins. And if he can me forgive me - the wretched person that I was - then he can forgive you too. You only need to believe he really does love you and forgives you and that he truly died for you!! Because he did.

To me the most important scriptures are John 3:16 and 1 John 4:8-10. These words spoke to me most when I needed them most. And to me, on most days, I refer to those scriptures cause they are a constant reminder of how the character of God is – always true and always faithful...even for a wretch like me. D.H.



Excerpt from “Pastors and Preachers”
By Archie Porter
Parnall Correctional Facility, Jackson, MI

Eph. 4:11 says, “And He, Himself, gave some to be apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers...”

God called pastors, not preachers. What’s the difference you may be asking. A preacher is basically a “herald” designed to announce the gospel. One should not take this responsibility lightly. He should proclaim the “good news” proudly, accurately and in order. All pastors can preach but not all preachers can pastor. The pastor has a greater responsibility.

The word pastor in the Bible is the same as “shepherd,” which Jesus used to describe himself as the “Good Shepherd.” Not only does the shepherd feed the sheep (which is preach), he must also tend to the sheep. That means guide, protect and keep his fold together. He must also be an example worthy of being followed. In other words, he must resemble Christ Jesus.

If you proclaim to be a pastor and you’re not equipped with the fruit of the Spirit, then my question to you is “what do you feed your sheep?” (John 21:16-17). Jesus ask Peter three times “do you love me?” and if so then “feed my sheep.” Why did Jesus ask him so many times if he loved Him? Maybe because Jesus won’t put his sheep into the care of anyone who doesn’t love Him first.

I believe a good pastor has the ability to identify with the failures and struggles that his sheep are going through at that moment. He understands it wasn’t that long ago that he was lost and without Jesus. A pastor understands the value of the sheep that God has placed in his care. So what’s the difference between a pastor and a preacher? A preacher is measured by the amount of scripture he knows, while a pastor is measured by the amount of love he shows.

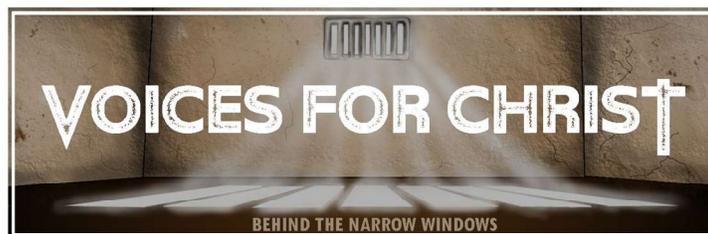
“Chinook”
By Tracy Leigh
Huron Valley Correctional Facility, Ypsilanti, MI

a nonchalant stroll amidst
color smears with framed musical
flags this hardy vine marked
cryptically, supports a single
ruddy grape, wounded side nailed
to a wooden needle that scratched
the album, weeping willow's crown
of roses, casting inspiration from
a dory, singed sacrifice,
requested parch quench, proxy
sealed in humble confessions

“I Am Reborn”
By Trina Peake
Huron Valley Correctional Facility, Ypsilanti, MI

Father God,

Let not my emotions toss me to and fro
drowning my faith and dimming my glow
sapping my strength
I need You to revive me again
I ask You to leave me where you begin
on the cross where the veil was torn.
I believe, Yes I'm reborn
unto us a son is given
I walk by faith knowen?
You are with me
So I pick up my cross and follow thee
o death where is thou sting?
Satan you are a defeated enemy
for I am an overcoming daughter who serves her
heavenly Father.



“Speaking to God While at Work”

By Roy Anklam

Newberry Correctional Facility, Newberry, MI

I sit at work at night
and talk with God to get my mind right.
My heart tells me how much I miss my wife,
but then I thank God that I am not doing life.
I ask God all the time to transform me,
so I will become the man I was meant to be.
I am glad every night that I study His Word,
I hope that tomorrow I will see one of His beautiful
birds.

We have dogs here we get to see,
it makes me feel like I am almost free.
I like to watch the breathtaking sunsets,
it reminds me that all my needs were met.
I thank you Lord for the chaplain here,
when He teaches I hope all will hear.
Sometimes I wonder when this will end,
and if my family will ever mend.
Then I remember to trust in you,
because I know you can make all things new.
I promise to follow you all of my days,
and along the way try to pick up some of the strays.
Thank you for always lighting the way,
even on my darkest days.
Father I have never written you a poem before,
but I hope to write a whole bunch more.

“God’s Grace”

By George Walker

Muskegon Correctional Facility, Muskegon, MI

“He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor
rewarded us according to our iniquities” Psalm
103:10.

Grace – undeserved acceptance and love received
from another, especially the characteristic attitude of
God in providing salvation for sinners. God's grace is
all over our lives because if He would have dealt with
us according to our sins, we would not be here.

Ezra 9:13, in part, says, “seeing that thou our God
hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve, and
hast given us such deliverance as this.” God loves us
so much that even when we deserve death He still
loves us and gives us the opportunity to come to
Him.

That is grace. Jesus Christ died on the cross so that
the world could live. All we – believers – have to do
is walk in the grace that He has given us when we
accepted Jesus as Lord and Savior of our lives.

So please be encouraged and thankful for the grace
that our Father has given to us through His Son Jesus
Christ.

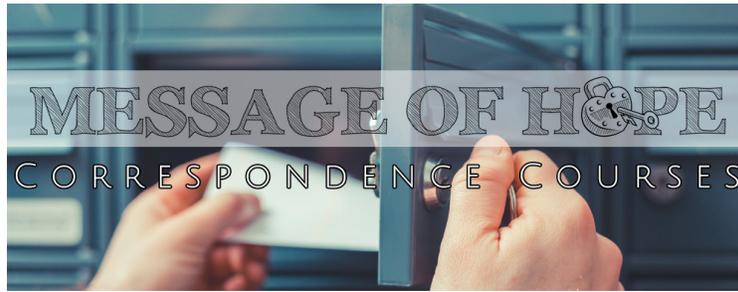
V4C accepts and publishes works (such as testimonies, lessons, words of encouragement, and poems) from individuals currently behind the narrow windows of prison. Works may be submitted by mail or through Jpay. A completed Consent to Publish must be submitted before any works can be published.

For more information or to become a part of V4C, please mail (or email) all submissions, consents, and/or requests to be added to our Jpay account to:

Voices for Christ, PO Box 381054, Clinton Township, Michigan, 48038



Message of Hope Jail and Prison Ministry



We are excited to announce the second correspondence course published by Message of Hope is now available! It was written by M. L. Terry and is entitled, **“God’s in Jail: Biblical Principles for Handling Money God’s Way.”** The course is designed to help the student gain a better understanding of what God teaches in His Word about handling money and realize that God owns everything. It is already receiving great reviews from those students who have enrolled! For anyone interested in enrolling in the course (or in receiving a full list of courses offered through Message of Hope) please write to us at:

Message of Hope
Attn: Correspondence Course
PO Box 221
Washington, MI 48094



The “1 Day with God” camps began with a vision of one day inside prison walls where parent and child could reconcile with one another and spend time together with God-anointed mentors working beside them. The day includes games, crafts, lunch, music, entertainment, face painting, and parent and child quiet time. It is a divinely appointed time for both child and parent where both can experience the love of God and find forgiveness and reconciliation.

The program was started by Forgiven Ministry, and while it is not directly affiliated with Message of Hope, we are strong supporters of Forgiven Ministry and their mission and volunteer at a few Michigan camps each year.

We were blessed to attend a recent camp which was held at Carson City Correctional. It was extra special due to the fact that two of our brothers in Christ from Next Step Continued Recovery were in attendance with their kids. We are so proud of you, Dan and Matt, for the godly dads you are to your boys. Keep it up!

Forgiven Ministry is hosting a camp at Macomb Correctional in New Haven, Michigan in December. We encourage our volunteers, especially those of you in the area, to consider volunteering. This is a great opportunity to share the love of God with our friends inside (and their families) in a safe and fun environment. The “1 Day With God” camps are different from any other in-prison volunteer opportunity you will ever experience and are truly life-changing for all involved!

...continued from page 1

– that is how we strengthen our bond with Him and get to know His will for us. This is a must if we are to live for Jesus and be a reflection of Him to the world around us.

Paul writes in Galatians 2:20, “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” When reading this verse in conjunction with the definition of “being” we see that, for those of us who have accepted Jesus as our Lord and Savior, the quality or state of our existence is Christ. It is He who is living in us.

We are reminded of this again in Acts 17:26-28. Luke records Paul’s words to the people of Athens. He writes, “From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us. ‘For in him we live and move and have our being.’”

Let’s read that last part one more time: “For in him we live and move and have our being.”

We live in God; Christ lives in us. However you best understand it or convey it, the point is we exist to be in relationship with God. God created us as human beings. He created us in His image (Genesis 1:27). Paul reminds us that, “We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works...” (Ephesians 2:10).

God calls all of us to serve (and Message of Hope has plenty of opportunities available – just see below!!) but we must be careful to not allow the *doing* to become more important than the *being*.



SERVE

WITH MESSAGE OF HOPE

Areas of service include:

- Regular Volunteer – volunteering in a classroom setting with our Next Step Christian Recovery program
- Outreach Volunteer – visiting inside in a one-on-one setting
- Correspondence Course Instructor – providing lessons through the mail to our friends inside
- Card Ministry – sending out birthday, Christmas and cards of encouragement
- Prayer Team – praying for our friends inside for specific requests they submit

Website:
messageofhope.org

Phone:
(586) 270-6226

Email:
info@messageofhope.org

Message of Hope Instagram Page:
[instagram.com/mohjailandprisonministry](https://www.instagram.com/mohjailandprisonministry)

Message of Hope Facebook Page:
[facebook.com/messageofhopejailandprisonministry](https://www.facebook.com/messageofhopejailandprisonministry)

Voices for Christ Facebook Page:
[facebook.com/voices4christ.org](https://www.facebook.com/voices4christ.org)

Voices for Christ website:
voices4christ.org



Follow us on
Instagram



Like us on
Facebook