

A
MESSAGE OF HOPE,
 comfort and freedom in Jesus Christ

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“God’s Perfect Timing” by Kyle Murphy

I was blessed to be able to attend a Christmas Eve service at Kensington Church a couple weeks ago and the pastor spoke about God’s timing – “God’s Perfect Timing.” He shared how even the exact time of Jesus’ birth was part of the plan. Paul makes mention of this in Galatians 4:4-5 when he writes, *“But when the set time had fully come, God sent his son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship.”* (emphasis mine)

God’s timing was perfect. We can look back at history and find numerous illustrations that bolster the fact that His timing was spot on. It was perfect. I fully accept and appreciate that truth. When it came to God determining the exact time of the birth of Jesus, I don’t find it hard at all to accept that His timing was perfect.

That is not always the case in my own life though. When I am battling with the storms and trials of this life and asking God to intervene – and waiting for Him to do so – I struggle with this truth that God’s timing is perfect.

In looking back on my life, and the storms and trials I have come through, it can be easy to see how God was at work but while I was going through it, it was often difficult – very difficult. Even today, when I am going through storms and trials, it is *still* difficult.

The same might be true for you. It might be difficult to find the good in

the storms and trials you have or are currently facing. It might be difficult to see any positive benefit that could come from them. It might also be difficult to accept God is in control and trust His timing when you are in the struggle.

In the midst of my storms all I want is for God to step in and save me; to make a definitive and timely demonstration of His power. I want Him to prove that He is in control (and quickly!) The problem is – God’s timing is much different than mine. And if I’m being honest, although I don’t like to admit it, the truth is God’s timing and my timing are rarely in line with each other.

Yes, I strive to know Him better. I study His Word and seek His will and His ways in my life, but I still get caught up – far too often – with viewing things according to my own timeline. The unfortunate truth is, I am not a patient person at times, especially when I am facing a storm or a trial in my life. The last thing I want is for my rescue, healing, or solution to the matter to be delayed.

God’s Word is very clear on this though. His timing is perfect. We read over and over about how we are to wait for the Lord and trust the plans He has for our lives.

Take a look at Psalm 27:14, “Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord.”

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Quarterly Scripture Focus:

Ecclesiastes 3:11

“He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end.”



We are excited to announce that monthly jail/prison ministry meetings will be taking place in the Macomb County area! Kensington Church is graciously allowing the use of their Clinton Township facility for these meetings. The first was held in December 2019 and volunteers from Celebrate Recovery, Celebrate Recovery Inside, Angel Tree, Prison Fellowship, Message of Hope Jail & Prison Ministry, Macomb Jail Ministry, and Welcome Home were in attendance.

Our goals with these monthly meetings are to: (1) connect individuals to volunteer opportunities that match their skills and talents; (2) reduce duplicity in ministry; (3) strengthen and encourage one another; and, (4) educate ourselves and each other about what is available to our friends inside and returning citizens as well as what is most needed.

We invite all who are actively involved in jail and prison ministry, looking for opportunities to get involved, returning citizens, and/or anyone with an incarcerated loved one who may be looking for information or support to come join us. The next meeting will be:

Wednesday, January 22nd from 7:00 – 8:30 p.m.

A guest speaker from Angel Tree will be sharing with us about the program and how God’s love was shared over the Christmas season. Join us at:

**Kensington Church Clinton Township
25000 Hall Rd
Clinton Township, MI 48038**

For more information about these meetings, please feel free to contact Message of Hope via phone or email (our contact information can be found on the back page of this newsletter) and we can refer you to the appropriate parties. We hope to see you at an upcoming meeting!



Next Step Christian Recovery:
Total Attendance = 2803
of Certificates Granted = 196

Correspondence Courses:
of Instructors = 17
of Students = 53
of Lessons Sent = 417
of Certificates Granted = 23

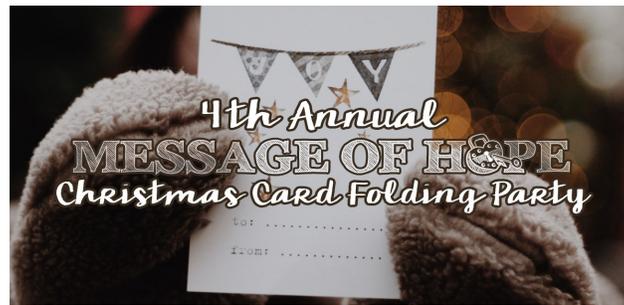
Card Ministry:
of birthday cards sent = 399
of Easter cards sent = 395
of Christmas cards sent = 456

Specific Expenses:
Bibles/Workbooks = \$2,633.78
Postage = \$2,245.15
Printing = \$662.63

2019 Total Expenses:
Total = \$12,529.47

2020 Budget:
Total = \$13,900.00

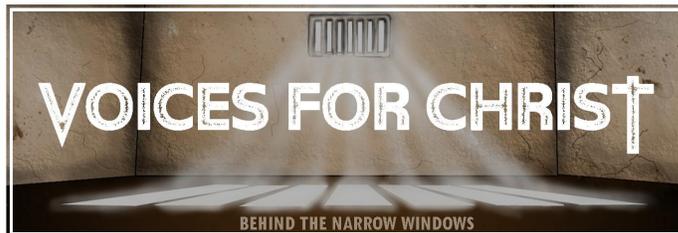
Message of Hope Jail and Prison Ministry



We would like to express our sincere gratitude to Evident Church for once again opening their doors and partnering with us this Christmas. A number of volunteers from Message of Hope and Evident Church gathered together to fill out, address, sign and seal over 450 Christmas cards to our friends inside throughout the United States! Thank you to all who came out to serve!

To those of you who received one of these Christmas cards, we want you to know how much you are loved and remind you that God is with you. He promises to never leave or forsake you! You are in His thoughts as well as ours!!





“You Are Not Alone”

By Loren Slough
Chippewa Valley CF, Kincheloe, MI

You Are not alone,
Jesus’ Blood will bring you back home,
One that keeps his Oath to the End,
Yes it’s my savior, and he will heal the mend,
Word after word, yes he has kept,
Saving every tear, that we all have wept,
The glass can be full, if all we do is seek,
Climb the Mountain, and see the Peak,
For the time will come, when you need a Friend,
You are not alone, from beginning to End.

“God”

By Julius Evans
Bill Clements Correctional Facility, Amarillo, Texas

My heart yearns
For that special someone like the Lord above.
To show my caring and compassion,
And to bring much love and joy into my heart.
And kick Satan away,
Sooth the loneliness.
To share the hidden love that’s been buried so deep
Within my heart,
That’s aching to break free.
For only the Lord and me
To see, see, see.

Romans 8:28 – it will be worth it.

“Right Heart”

By Jonathan Southwell
Cooper Street Correctional Facility, Jackson, MI

Papa, put a right heart in me. Take away the anger that burns like a fiery sun, threatening to consume all of us. Replace it with compassion so abounding it eclipses everything else. Take away the feeling of inconvenience that bubbles up like a geyser shooting to the heights and depths.

Replace it with a joy to serve, filling me until I can do nothing but laugh. Take away the dark things that my mind obsesses upon like a drug, needing, wanting, again and again. Replace it with brilliant love that radiates like a bright supernova across dark skies.

Take away the overwhelming sadness that pulses like a ripple on a lake, never ending. Replace it with abounding peace, the likes which can only be found in the quiet places.

Take away the unforgiving that eats at me like an ulcer, never satisfied. Replace it with understanding, as if I have walked a thousand miles in their shoes.

Take away the root of bitterness that festers its twisted seed like cancer buried deep with no cure. Replace it with unwavering patience to seek out and stand strong in the face of the advancing storm.

Papa, replace the strong heart in me with a right heart.



“Indescribable”

By Matthew Nawrocki

Newberry Correctional Facility, Newberry, MI

Unfair is not quite the word to describe
What happened on the cross as You bled and died
My sin drove the nails and then pierced Your side
And yet in exchange, You still gave me life

Unjust seems more likely the word to describe
How an innocent man died for my crimes
While I deserved death and to pay the last dime
You chose to pay for something all mine

Unworthy is a word that seems to describe
Just what these truths make me feel inside
My ugly and vile, versus Your Holy and Divine
Yet Holy has chosen in me to reside

Unbelievable, unimaginable, unthinkable to describe
How in spite of my choices You’ve kept me alive
Nothing could I do, other than to decide
To live for You with every single breath You provide

You’re indescribable

“Hope”

By Melessa Curtis

Huron Valley Correctional Facility, Ypsilanti, MI

It has taken me a while to figure out what to write.
The other day I was reading Zechariah and the Lord
spoke to me. He told me if I come back to him He
will come back to me. All praise be to the most High.
Today I woke up feeling like I should write to you
about hope.

What really stood out to me was: Job 5:16, “and so at
last the poor have hope, and the snapping jaws of the
wicked are shut.” Psalm 9:18, “but the needy will not
be ignored forever the hopes of the poor will not
always be crushed.”

Lord you are the hope of everyone on earth, even
those who sail the most distant seas.

Thank you V4C for your time and the opportunity to
say what was on my mind heavy today. May the good
Lord bless whoever reads this in this life and the next.

Voices for Christ accepts and publishes works (such as testimonies, lessons, words of encouragement, and poems) from individuals currently incarcerated. 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 all submissions, consents, and/or requests to be added to our Jpay account to:

Voices for Christ, PO Box 221, Washington, Michigan, 48094



Message of Hope Jail and Prison Ministry



Next Step Christian Recovery is a Christ-centered Twelve Step program devoted to helping its members break the cycle of addiction in their lives. We work with anyone with any type of addiction. There is a section at the end of each lesson in our workbook, *Twelve Steps to a Closer Walk with God*, for class members to write down insights they have gained. Below are some insights shared by Mike Berlanga, a longtime member of the NSCR program at Carson City. Our hope is that others can learn more about God, as well as the program, through the insights he is willing to share.

Step Three “We made a decision to turn our wills and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.”

The main thing that I see from doing the work in Step Three is that EVERY time I try to do things my way and on my own, I ALWAYS end up in a bad situation, disappointed, and most of all alone and empty. Now that I have chosen to follow our Heavenly Father things may not go the way that I want them too but there is always hope that things will get better even when it doesn't feel or look like it. Following God will lead to good places, NOT places like prison or to the wrong side of town fighting for my life or to make it home only to go back the next time I get paid. The best thing about all of this is that I don't have to do this alone anymore. I can cast all my cares on God because He actually cares for me!! God can and wants to help me through any of the problems that I'm having and gives me the strength to make the right choice and go through with that choice. I finally have someone who does fill that void in my heart. It is as though I am back from the dead and excited to wake up and see what God has for me today. All of this is possible as I break this step down and follow it.

First, “**Made a decision to turn our wills and our lives over to the care of God...**” MAKE the decision to and DO IT. When you realize that you have taken your will back GIVE IT BACK TO HIM!! Our Heavenly Father, His Son Jesus and the Holy Spirit have a better way, choose it and them. It is obvious from the wreckage of my past that my way DOES NOT WORK!!! Second, “**...to the care of God as we understood Him.**” How can I understand Him if I don't spend any time with Him and learn about Him and HIS WILL for my life? I can do this by spending time with Him in His Word and fellowshiping with other believers at church, bible studies and meetings. As I learn more about Him and His will for my life I can give up my self-centered ways which lead to death and choose His God-centered way which leads to life and peace. I CHOOSE HIM AND HIS WILL FOR MY LIFE!!!

Step Four “We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.”

Holding onto all of this garbage is not hurting anyone but myself. Whether it is things that have been done to me or all the horrible things that I have done to others, I HAVE TO LET IT GO AND GET IT OUT!! I have to dump this garbage out, making it easier for me to walk, breathe and live the way that God the Father wants me to. As I realize that God has already forgiven me for ALL of this, it makes it easier for me to take inventory of my past and deal with all the wreckage of my past so I can forgive myself and others the way I am supposed to. Then I can keep cleaning house, getting all the garbage out and making more room for God in my life so I can walk, breathe and live the way that God the Father has always wanted me to. I don't want to hold onto this pain any more so I'll write it down so I can get rid of it.

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Another example can be found in Lamentations 3:25-26, “The Lord is good to those whose hope is in him, to the one who seeks him; it is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord.”

Yet another is in Jeremiah 29:11-12, “‘For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the Lord, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you.’” The New Testament writers don’t shy away from reminding of this truth either. Peter writes in 1 Peter 5:6-7, “Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in *due time*. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.” (*emphasis mine*)

In all things, God has a plan and His plan is carried out with perfect timing. While that may not always be an easy truth to accept – it is truth nonetheless. Here is another truth – and this is one that helps me to keep things in perspective and learn to trust God and His timing even more. It is found in our quarterly scripture verse.

Ecclesiastes 3:11 states, “He has made everything beautiful in its time.”

How awesome is that! All the storms and trials I have faced throughout my life – those ugly situations and happenings that were out of my control (and even those that came about due to my own selfish and sinful choices) God can, and will, make beautiful!

If God can take a messed up, broken life like mine and make it beautiful then He can, and will, do the same for you!

Whatever you are facing, whatever storm or trial you are battling with, whatever prayer you are waiting patiently for God to answer – remember God’s timing is perfect. Keep seeking Him, calling on Him and waiting on Him. Keep trusting the plan God has for your life. And most importantly, stand strong in the truth that God will make everything beautiful in its time!

SERVE

WITH MESSAGE OF HOPE



If you desire to answer God’s calling in your life as we step into 2020, below are some of the ways in which you can partner with us and #ServeWithMOH:

- 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 Easter cards
- Prayer Team – praying for our friends inside for specific requests they submit
- Encouragement – writing words of encouragement for use with our Social Media pages

Message of Hope Facebook Page:

facebook.com/messageofhopejailandprisonministry

Message of Hope Website:

messageofhope.org

Voices for Christ Website:

voices4christ.org

Office Phone:

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Email:

info@messageofhope.org

