



MASTERLIFE MINISTRY, INC NEWSLETTER FEBRUARY 2020

MASTERING LIFE IN CHRIST

What is the purpose of the MasterLife Ministry Newsletter?

Everyone needs a voice, and everyone needs encouragement. Our goal with this newsletter is to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ by giving incarcerated persons a positive outlet in which they can minister and encourage one another through their talents and testimonies.

- Have you enjoyed reading the NL?
- Would you and your family like to be added to our mailing list?
- Would you like your testimonies, insight, shout out, poems, prayer requests or art printed in our upcoming issues?

You can send us your name, OPUS # and address along with your request. We reserve the right to edit anything that might shed a negative light on the ministry.

Explanation of MasterLife Ministry, Inc.

We have been asked, "What is MasterLife Ministry?" MasterLife is a discipleship program that teaches us to change our character into Christ-like character, change our values to kingdom values, and involve us in God's mission in the home,

church and the world. In short, we are learning to "MasterLife through the power of Jesus Christ." Avery Willis wrote and designed the original MasterLife study; however, in the material he continuously stressed teaching the material "in one's own words." The mission of the program is to teach and equip men and women within the prison system to effectively disciple others. This is done by discussing various ideological belief systems, by teaching Christians "What's next?" in the Christian walk, by witnessing through building relationships, and by exercising spiritual gifts within the body of Christ.

The next benefit that is gained from participating in MasterLife is learning how one can start their own version of MasterLife. By the time one finishes the program, they are able to go out and start their own program using the tools gained. The idea is not to duplicate or memorize the exact program, but to use the principles and teach it in your own words, according to your context and experiences. This material and information can be used to disciple others in the dorm, on the yard, in visitation or on the phone. Whether it is a one-to-one study, small scale class, or a large program, one will know how to organize and execute a successful discipleship program. Whatever area of Spiritual growth one might need help in, MasterLife Ministry offers help; help that

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will transform your character into Christ-like character, your values into kingdom values, and involve you in His mission in the home, church, and the world. Most of all, for the incarcerated, it gives a platform to get in the game and serve the Lord Jesus Christ behind these fences.

There are many men and women "on the yard" (general population) who will not come to church because of their ideological strongholds, belief systems, and perceptions of Christians within the system; and their incorrect view of "jailhouse religion." These men and women have been indoctrinated by gangs, convict-codes, creeds, and false religions. Satan has blocked them from even considering Jesus as the answer to their problems. These men and women are hurting, lonely, lost; some of them have grown mean, hostile, and bitter throughout the years; others are angry at God and have completely given up on ever having a life of love, joy and peace that Christians have through the Lord Jesus.

Many others are believers in Jesus yet have never been taught what to do after they become Christians, so they never really grow or gain victory over the sin in their lives. *MasterLife* teaches how to have a "quiet time"; how to pray, how to hear God speak to us through His Word what God says about our friendships and fellowshiping in the church, and how to effectively witness to others. *MasterLife* helps these believers get refocused on Christ and learn to gain victory in their daily lives.

MasterLife teaches Christians how to bridge the wide gap between the Church crowd and the regular population within the system. Many times, the church crowd doesn't get involved with these men or women because it might cost something; maybe they want to avoid the problems that can often come with dealing with some of them. Then there are some who honestly do not know how to reach out or witness. Maybe they lack the confidence needed. *MasterLife* creates a platform to build relationships with these men and women, and it teaches some very important skills for witnessing and bridging the gap between the church crowd and the men and women on the yard.

If you would like to know more about *MasterLife* and how you can get involved write to us and we will do our best to get you started with your own *MasterLife* group.

Jonah by Tom Eliff

- Chapter 1 - God cares whether you care
- Chapter 2 - God cares when you care
- Chapter 3 - God cares where you care
- Chapter 4 - God cares why you care

What is Adopt-A-Life?

While there are many valuable Prison Ministries that various Churches have organized, Adopt A Life, is actually going a step further by entering into the life of a Christian brother or sister who is serving a life sentence or a lengthy sentence. There are men and women incarcerated who have totally "sold out" to Jesus Christ, their lives have been transformed, and they are living, waiting on Christ's return. Most of these "lifers" have lost their parents; some have no family or support from the outside world. I do not want to paint a pitiful picture of these men and women, so allow me to say that these men and women are Spirit filled, joyous men and women. Bible scholars, prayer warriors, worship leaders, chapel clerks, Bible study organizers, witnesses, disciple makers, etc. They are serving the Lord with all their hearts behind the walls. If you know anyone who has ever gone in to do a Prison Ministry, they will testify that there are some strong Men and Women of God in prison.

What I want to point out to the Church Prison Ministries are:

1. These men and women are on the mission field – in a very hostile environment.
2. All Missionaries must be equipped with different things depending on the area they are commissioned to – Paul himself had financial help from the church, he had friends encouraging him and visit him and supply his needs. In fact, he had a great Ministry inside the prison. The Church supplied all he needed as he traveled and preached all over the region.

I think often of many people Paul made mention of – how important they were in strengthening him, encouraging him, supporting him. Everyone needs a Barnabas and Timothy in their life. Men and women incarcerated are greatly blessed and encouraged when Volunteers go into preach and teach them. You are the people who equips them with the WORD and strengthens them to go back into the prison dorm and stay focused and hopeful.

Adopt A Life is designed to help support a "lifer" (someone doing Life sentence or a long sentence) in his ministry, in prison. Basically, you can be a co-laborer to him and encouragement to them --- Be a Brother, Sister, Father, Mother to these men and women.

There is a lost and dying world of men and women behind the fences. Elderly prisoners, sick, handicapped, mentally ill, as well as hurting, broken men and women. And of course, you have the hard and mean crowd. These Men and Women of God in there want to help people; they want to do more than just pray for these men and women. They want to be able to buy them a cup of coffee, sit with them, talk about how their life is going. Give them a stamp and envelope to write their wife or child. Buy them a soup and cough drops when they are sick. These are the things that build relationships between them and the rest of the population. Then after we are able to build relationships, they can share the Gospel with them.

The problem is many prisoners who serve GOD don't have any family left to support them, so they can barely support themselves in these things. James would like to take time to share some of his story, then you will be able to understand why GOD has birthed this Adopt A Life Ministry:

In the first year of my walk with Christ, I met Travis Mileur, a man who was in Prison Ministry. He disciplined me through a program called MasterLife. He taught me the foundational tools to stay rooted in Christ. I learned so much from him and this program. But what impacted me the most is that after the program was over and we both moved on to other places. He kept in touch with me, encouraged me, and helped me get up when I was down. He never gave up on me. This man walked me from a Spiritual Child to a rooted and grounded Disciple of Jesus Christ. As our friendship continued and I matured in the WORD, Travis sent books to me to help me in my studies; he blessed me with a monthly allowance to help with canteen items. He became a Spiritual Father to me. I was like Timothy☺. Well, I was being blessed so much by all of this, that I would share coffee and oatmeal pies, etc. It felt good to help others. Not realizing that I was building relationships in the process. Then it happened!! Some of the guys I had been making friends with asked me if I would help them read the Bible (two of them could not read, I found out later). So, I brought some candy mints and coffee and we sat down and prayed and started in the Gospel of John. Later on, in my cell, I prayed and asked GOD to help me explain what being a Christian is all about in a simple way. The Holy Spirit began to remind me of the Disciple's Cross presentation from MasterLife class. I put it down on paper and began to write down

what these things mean in *my life*. The next day I began teaching, we memorized all the books of the Bible. **We have a trivia game at the end of the class and a completion party.** It was so amazing to watch GOD work in these men who couldn't read or write and to watch them change. **WOW!!** I praise GOD even as I write this down.

That first little class in 2006. Since then, this little Bible study has grown into a ministry, called MasterLife Ministry, Inc; a ministry that over 1000 men have been disciplined through. I have been transferred from one prison to another. GOD giving me favor with the Wardens and Superintendents to allow this to be taught in the Prison Chapels. Training up men inside this place.

Travis is my teacher, my Spiritual Father, my co-laborer in ministry, my encourager but most of all, he is my friend. My past man (before Christ) is a foggy haze that I barely remember. Buried!!! I do not wish to dig him up. Jesus told me, "Any man that puts his hand to the plow and looks back isn't fit for the kingdom of GOD" Luke 9:62. So, I don't look back. I have a New Future, a New Hope, a New Family – GOD gave it to me!

I am not in prison anymore; I am on the Mission Field. Would you be willing to Adopt A Life? Pray about this ministry and your part. Contact Travis with any further questions or concerns, he will be happy to hear from you.

By James Weston Benoy, May 2014

Please note: Eligibility includes attending MasterLife classes, once your name and number submitted you will be on our list and paired up with mentors as they become available.

NASH CHRISTMAS

The Night Before Christmas

by Thomas Wheeler

"Twas the night before Christmas, and all through the house", not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse". For very different reasons, the words of this Christmas classic epitomize the experience of a person within the prison system, as the eve of Christmas draws near. Anyone who has spent even one Christmas holiday

away from loved ones knows about the quiet time, contemplative, solitude that fills the hearts and minds of these separated from home. As the night before Christmas arrives, so often does the stillness of the creature come right down to the mouse. December 25, 2019, marked my 18th year. Christmas holiday within the prison system. For the past seventeen Christmas Eves, I have been at the facilities where "not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse". However, in August of 2019, I found myself at the new facility, Nash Correctional. I had been selected to attend the North Carolina Field Ministry Program (NCFMP) in pursuit of a bachelor's degree in pastoral ministry. As the first semester began, Christmas did not even register in my thoughts. Old Testament survey, philosophy, history of ideas, and English Composition danced in my head, not sugarplums. Then, in the blink of an eye, so it seemed, the first semester came to an end and the Christmas holiday had begun. Suddenly, Nash began a transformational process. It started to look a lot like Christmas. Christmas colors and shapes slowly emerged. Christmas trees popped up everywhere, even in the dorms. Never once, not in all of my years in the system, did I see so much as a string of garland in a prison dorm before, never mind a tree, but there it stood. That tree alone provided something that every other Christmas combined could not – Joy! But it did not stop there. Nash presented an amazing art show that filled the gymnasium. Then, they presented an unforgettable Christmas play called The Depot. Next, they set up the gym to look like a restaurant with fancy tables and tablecloths, where we were served a catered dinner. Then the camp hosted a fun-filled Christmas talent show. At this point, I am completely in awe of what I am experiencing. Each new day that arrived, I am literally waiting and watching for something to go wrong. I just knew the Grinch would somehow show up and steal Christmas. Well, much to my surprise, the Grinch did make a cameo appearance, but not to steal Christmas. The Nash facility held a Christmas decorating contest between all the units. Each of our dorms were transformed into winter wonderland. Imagine prison walls decorated with cardboard that looks like a living room wall with pictures and frames, blinking Christmas lights hanging everywhere, wreath, candles, a fireplace, a train set, presents, a sleigh, Snoopy and his doghouse, and so much more. But to top it all off, our unit had the Grinch and elves in full costume to greet the judges.

Our unit (2B), won first place. As a reward, unit 2B was personally escorted to the dining facility where we ate a button popping plate of roast beef and fixings, phew! Just when I thought it could not get any better than it had been so far, it did. Under the leadership of brother James Benoy, and through the support of the MasterLife Ministry. Christmas Eve in unit 2B became the site of a Christmas miracle. To give you a picture of what unit 2B looked like, imagine Santa's workshop the week before Christmas. Picture 80 men and moving to and fro diligently working together for one common goal - to provide joy through the gift of giving. Eighty men from all sorts of diverse backgrounds, operating in one accord to achieve the goal of unity and fellowship. This may be as rare as seeing a polar bear sitting in a lawn chair on South Beach sipping a Coca-Cola with a straw. It just does not happen, but the night before Christmas, and all through the Nash house, EVERY CREATURE WAS STIRRING, EVEN THE MOUSE! Brother Benoy carefully planned and organized every intricate detail weeks in advance to ensure a successful Christmas Eve celebration. The festivities began at 5:45 am, as the roosters crow – COUNT CLEARED! Slowly emerging from the rooms, the men of unit 2B went to work like a fine-tuned machine. Suddenly, the dorm transformed into a small Christmas Town. Tables were brought in, and one by one they were adorned with Christmas shapes and colors. Each table personally decorated by small teams with handcrafted accessories that Macy's department store would have been proud to display. Another small area became transformed into a quaint coffee shop where complimentary coffee and snacks were provided all throughout the day and into the night. Another section of the dorm morphed into a makeshift Kitchen, where the representative cooks prepared the extensive meal that would bless all 80 residents of unit 2B. Out of sight from everyone, another group of men patiently wrapped Christmas presents in preparation of the Christmas Eve festivities. Every 30 minutes throughout the day and night a room number would be randomly drawn in that person received a gift. A Christmas sermon graced the eventful day followed by community prayer. We sang Christmas carols together and told stories. We held a team trivia contest for prizes. We conducted a bingo contest for more prizes. Then, to conclude the Christmas celebration, we held a talent show for even more prizes. By the end of the night, every single person in Unit 2B

had received one or more gifts, came together in unity, and ended Christmas Eve, a better person than they started. What I witnessed on the night before Christmas at Nash and 2019 is nothing short of a miracle. The love of God manifested itself in the hearts of all men, without respect of person. The reason for the season - the coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ - filled with unit to be with peace, love, and a joy that truly surpasses all understanding. On this one night before Christmas, every creature was stirring, even the mouse. All glory to God! I want to wish everyone a blessed New Year. I encourage you and your friends to subscribe to *MasterLife Ministry*. Get involved! A miracle could be waiting for you too. In closing, I would like to dedicate this article to my dear brother Joe Germaine who lost his "pops" in October 2019. Much Love! God bless you all come into all the good night, day.

Brother Thomas Wheeler, Nash

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Patches Seamed Together

I write to express appreciation of the *MasterLife*-sponsored activities witnessed during the past several months in Unit Two at Nash correctional. For me, there is no greater beauty to behold than the sight of men (whose lives have been destroyed by wayward thinking and actions) gathered to revere the God who loves them. How pleased God must be to receive reverent attention from souls created specifically for communion with Him.

MasterLife Bible study brings together diverse personalities and certain bonds are created that foster a gentle interaction between them, like patches seamed together on a quilt, the different personalities create the fabric of genuine unity within our housing unit. As a result of the cohesiveness developed via the various, simultaneously held Bible study groups, an army of servers was available to bring about a really nice Christmas Eve event for the entire block.

As a loner, I had planned to not participate. Rather, I would remain in my cell, but witnessing the eager effort put into the logistics of such an event and acknowledging the financial contributions made by "outsiders", I later changed my mind and attended the evening's event. And I am proud that I did, while the entire event was Christ-focused, **non-believers participated also** - contributing to the

success of it all. There were games, contests, singing, and displays of hidden talent. Normal tension, intrinsic to prison communal existence, was absent throughout the entire day. What a "shot in the arm"!

Thank you, *MasterLife Ministry*, for tunneling in and creating the timely outlet for so many arrested smiles. How pleased God must be.

David "Seaweed" Pinell, Nash

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A Christmas to Remember

By Chip

I have currently been incarcerated for only eight years. Compared to many individuals within the system, that is not a notable number by any means. However, it is a lengthy time to go without celebrating Christmas. It has been that long since I was able to experience the joy of that holiday season. Like many others, this time only serves to stir up sad memories of good times had in another life. Thoughts of loved ones and family traditions fade each year as I look back on this time of year that once brought us all together. All that changed this year when I got to experience the NCI Christmas party sponsored by *MasterLife*. For a brief period of time I was no longer an inmate haunted by painful memories, but a family member surrounded in love by a multitude of brothers. Events included coffee and snacks, door prizes, bingo, trivia, and even a talent show. The party was truly amazing, but the fellowship and unity among inmates was something I have yet to see anywhere else while behind these walls. Now instead of dreading this holiday, I'm actually looking forward to next year. *MasterLife* provided a Christmas I will not soon forget.

Thank you, Chip, Nash

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It Never Gets Old

By Anthony Smith

Those were the words I said as I observed men from different walks of life, races, cultures, and even different religious backgrounds, come together for a day filled with fellowship. As always, it started off with landscaping what we have traditionally referred to as the dayroom into being something much more, something that would serve as reminders of times past with also the potential for

creating new memories. Like a colony of ants, I observed groups of determined men working together in decorating their respective tables with Christmas décor. One group made what appeared to me as a gingerbread barn, another group outlined their table with pieces from an old Christmas tree. On the other hand, brothers Tim and Tony Johnson (house of Ann), constructed a tower using old Christmas cards. See, Tim and Tony are actual blood brothers. Tony was here during our holiday break to visit Tim and what was so unique in watching them construct their tower was seeing them use old cards to build new memories. If I might add a little humor, Tim was the best hostess ever, I mean, steward.

As the day evolved, more people got involved with lending a hand wherever needed. To draw further from the ant concept, when cookies were placed on the table at the top of every hour, like ants, most people turned their attention to crunching down some cookies. Man! I really outdid myself this year at the cookie hut. Shout out to Ralph Gettys, AKA Biggie Smiles. Like clockwork, when the time arrived (6:00 pm) for everybody to be sorted into teams for the Christmas party, it got jokingly serious. If you've ever had the pleasure to be a part of this wonderful experience, you know precisely what I mean. Ten teams determined to win in the arena of having holiday fun. Although the winning team may have took away the nightly top prize from the trivia game, hosted by Monte, the real winners were those who immersed themselves in the fullness of what this experience was all about - sharing the love of Christ. This was my third Christmas party sponsored by *MasterLife*, and "it never gets old" watching people partake in the great escape it provides during Christmas.

To cap the night off, nine acts took the stage for the Christmas café talent show. Well, that's the name I ascribed to it two years ago when Benoy presented me the opportunity to orchestrate it. Anyhow, acts ranged from singing, rapping and one skit for the ages (Joy is a Choice). All-in-all, it was a night to remember as unit residents and staff alike showed support for everyone involved in the talent show. Moved by the courage and vulnerability displayed by others, I ended with a spoken word dedicated to my life experiences (mother, love, daughter). In closing: the agape of Christ was on full display from beginning to end. There wasn't a moment short on the love of Christ and all that He

sacrificed so that we could celebrate the true meaning of Christ-mas. To all those who made this a success and possible, we are thankful beyond measure. To MasterLife and the best two unit managers here at Nash, Mr. Salmon and Ms. Webb, thanks a thousand.

Anthony Smith, Nash
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Our Christmas Miracle

By Timothy, Tony Johnson

Do you believe in miracles? If any single miracle is possible, then miracles, in general are possible. Please permit us – two brothers – to tell you about our Christmas miracle.

In September of 2019, we tallied fifteen years of laboring in this strange world of prison. **While in county jail in Wake County, we were told we would never be together in prison.** Many around us at that time feared prison – we feared being apart forever. However, God had a different plan. In fact, we spent most of the first decade together at multiple prisons along the way. We resided in side by side cells at Bertie, were bunkmates at Caledonia, and slept on adjacent top bunks at Pender. On the days hardest for others – Christmas, Thanksgiving, birthdays, bad news from home – our being together gave us joy and strength.

Contrasting the extraordinary fortune of those days, we approached Christmas 2019 not having spent time together in six years, facing the prospect of our seventh consecutive Christmas apart. Although the six years apart presented immense challenges for our family and us, we felt called to different paths (Timothy to dog training at Pamlico and then to the NC Field Minister Program at Nash; Tony to dog training at Pender). With the approach of Christmas, we decided to request a special Christmas visit, asking to have Tony transfer to Nash for an extended weekend, (Thursday evening to Tuesday morning). It actually happening seemed doubtful, because family visits occur with the rarity of the Hope Diamond – we needed a miracle, a Christmas miracle.

We prayed, our family prayed, our friends prayed, our mother prayed with the fervency of an expectant mother. God answered that collective prayer; oh, He answered that prayer in a mighty way. Furthermore, God answered prayers we dared not to pray, thinking the requests to

be greedy. When we requested the special visit, we hoped for just a few days together. We rejoiced when a prison administrator with an astoundingly compassionate heart not only agreed to our request but assured us, she would handle the details. Then we hoped timing of arrival would put us together for Christmas, providing us a week and a half together. Well, we did not get precisely a week and a half together – we spent three miraculous weeks together.

How many individuals get a vacation from prison? The simple answer: Nobody gets a vacation from prison; the idea is ridiculous. Well, we did – our Christmas miracle. We relished being together for three weeks. We celebrated Christmas, the birth of Jesus. We marked the turning of the calendar, the culmination of one decade and dawn of another. We cooked and ate nearly nonstop; a variety of cakes, peanut butter fudge, so many cookies, pizzas, nachos, meatball subs, calzones, pizzaritos, pasta salad, and more, much more. We welcomed three visits with our parents. **The radiance of our mother's smile, generated by having her boys together again, could have lit up the planet during a solar eclipse.** Her smile certainly brightened our hearts, setting them aglow. At one of the three visits, four other family members joined us for a mini Johnson family reunion.

One of the greatest blessings encompassed in our Christmas miracle was Tony experiencing the Christmas party in the block on Christmas eve. For a few years, Tony had heard stories of the marvelousness of the soiree. The shindig proved to be a highlight of our time together, a miracle in itself. How many times have you observed nearly the entire population of a prison dorm, almost eighty guys, come together to decorate, associate, and celebrate? Have you ever witnessed the disappearance of the little hang-ups that divide and the emergence of a spirit of unity? Without question, the formation of widespread unity in an environment that often breeds division represents a miracle.

We began the day by decorating one of the ten tables, using scenic stationary to cover the table and making a six-tier Christmas card ---- Christmas tree. A cheery atmosphere arose as a large contingent transformed a gloomy prison dorm into a festive, colorful Christmas showroom. Even a few of the curmudgeons, the sourest of grouches, got caught up in the

joy of the Christmas spirit – another Christmas miracle.

To commence the Christmas party, Benoy (James) read a piece he wrote for the December 2019 MasterLife Newsletter. Benoy's story detailed how he and his brother (Michael – my fellow Wolfpack fanatic) got to spend last Christmas together and described how Christmas became so special to him, a legacy from his mother. We also had the legacy of love for Christmas passed down to us. Benoy's story and love for his brother moved us tremendously, especially the part conveying how Michael "always gave me the biggest half of whatever we had to split between us". We – two brothers and best friends – related to that level of love. We looked at each other, beaming with joy. No, we did not cry, and the moisture in our eyes was caused by the gust of wind inside the dorm.

A key component of the Christmas party is the talent show. We collaborated with three others to perform a skit. Our drama team had two goals: make everyone laugh uproariously and deliver an essential message. The title of the skit conveyed the message: "Joy Is a Choice". The skit was a spin-off of "The Gospel of Christmas Blues", written by Anthony Smith (Ant). Timothy reprised his role of Darla. Darla, in a hairnet and skirt (sheet), and her husband Earl (Steven Barbour) visit their son, Bubba (Jose Rodriguez-Basquez II), in prison. Bubba is discouraged by the numerous frustrations of prison, including the ludicrous yet hilarious oppression from Officer Piglet – played by Tony. Darla and Earl, when he is awake, remind Bubba, "joy is a choice". The joy spreads to Bubba, then to his wild-looking friend Jennings (Joaquin Melendez), and finally to Officer Piglet. The skit ends with all five characters dancing. The audience howled with laughter and gladly received the message.

When we were children, our mother repeatedly emphasized, "Laughter is the medicine of the soul". We wanted to nourish the souls of our audience; yet none were more fed than us. We had fun writing the skit with our five-man drama team, practicing with both seriousness and silliness, and spreading joy to a packed house.

Wherever you are, whatever you are going through, know that miracles are possible and remember joy is a choice. From the two of us, thank you to Benoy for all you do to organize the world's best Christmas

party, and thank you to all who contribute to make it a spectacle so grand it is talked about at other prisons.

Thank you for allowing us to share the story of our Christmas miracle. We pray you will be encouraged to believe in and pray for a miracle – at Christmas and always.

Timothy Johnson, Nash, Tony Johnson, Pender

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An Easy Day

By Ernest Nichols

Dear *MasterLife* community, this past **December 24**, I was fortunate enough to participate in the holiday activities sponsored by the *MasterLife* community. This day was a true blessing, as it allowed me to focus on things other than prison. As I was part of one of the cooking teams, the entire day was filled with activity. **In my entire time incarcerated, I have not experienced such a day filled with festivities.** I recall my first Christmas incarcerated. I suggested a Christmas Day Bible study. But one of the prayer group leaders warned me against the idea, telling me that the days around Christmas are the hardest on people and tensions are high. Sure enough, during the line to get breakfast trays on Christmas Day two men went into the bathroom area and fought. So, I have always been mindful of how that time of year affects those incarcerated.

Because of the *MasterLife* sponsored activities, I found this year to be the exact opposite. Men were laughing, talkative, and busy with various tasks, such as table decorating cooking, cleaning, etc. Regardless of a person's religious beliefs, the activities were open to all. All of the food and the prizes were provided at no cost, and with no expectations by the *MasterLife* community. So, I want to thank everyone involved from the people that provided the funding, to the organizers, to even the participants that helped make this time of year, a little easier on all of us.

Shalom, Ernest Nichols, Nash

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Best Christmas Ever!

My name is Wesley Mikeal. I want to say, I hope this letter finds you in good spirits and you are blessed. This Christmas has been the best Christmas I've seen since a

little boy on Christmas morning. It was not about presents; it was all about Christ. This Christmas was a CHRIST MAS and it was all possible because of *MasterLife* and their willingness to help us through donations. This one will be a Christmas to remember. *MasterLife* had the whole day planned from 6 am till 11 pm. It started with table decorations, room decorations, food preparation, and trivia. A message being spoken by Benoy and Charles Young to a talent show and eating. I've never seen in my 18 years a prison block that decorated for a Christ centered, joyful day where a block came together and fellowshiped as I have seen this Christmas. I hope I can see next year the same thing. I wish more prisons could have had a chance to go through such a wonderful program as *MasterLife* and have such a blessed, joyful and great peace over this Christmas season as I have had. I am normally depressed, mad, wanting to do stupid things because I have not had any peace in my life until I came to this *MasterLife* program. **Let me change that, it is more of a family than a program.** My whole outlook on things has changed. I got saved and study, but I am still having troubles in my life. But I am getting stronger thanks to *MasterLife*, Benoy, Travis, Hambone, Charles, Ricco, Rusty, Ker, Keys, Larry, Kyle, all the guys helping me. This *MasterLife* gives me a chance to read other's stories and see their joy. I saw what it does, **MasterLife gave me a reason to be thankful** when I felt unthankful. It has given me the courage to share when I have never thought of sharing. I always hated being in groups and sharing, but Travis in *MasterLife* made a way through a special person, Benoy, to help me to get back my peace of mind, but all due to Jesus. But these two guys have made this an awesome year. I can realize now that life behind these walls are pretty decent compared to my past. First because of Jesus, second to Travis and *MasterLife* family putting in work to make this happen and James Benoy for taking me there. I finally stopped letting others dictate my life and let Jesus dictate it. Give thanks to Travis, JP, Ms. Rebecca, Ken, Rachel, First Baptist and anyone left out. I am sorry, but you know who you are. We thank you for your service and thanks for letting me in the *MasterLife* family.

Here is some advice to all:

1. Never give up
2. Stay true to God
3. Love others as your self

4. Hold your head high as you are looking to heaven and stay strong
5. Talk to God when problems occur

3 Rules

1. If you do not go after what you want, you will never have it
2. If you do not ask, the answer will always be NO
3. If you do not step forward, you will always be in the same place.

Thanks, and Merry Christmas!
Wesley Mikeal, Nash

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My Testimony

By George Clowers Jr.

First and foremost, I want to thank my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for the peace and joy I have in my life today. I have been a Christian for five years now; though I gave my life to Jesus in 2013, my every day walk never gave the people around me any idea that I was a Christian. I read my Bible every day and prayed in secret when I was alone in my cell. I was afraid of what people would think of me. However, as years passed and my confidence grew, my Lord gave me the courage to step out in faith and pronounce His glory. As my relationship with Jesus grew, He began to take away all the external negative things that I had done for the last twenty years. God showed me who He was, and I knew beyond a shadow of a doubt, He was real. But I was still rough around the edges. Of course, I was looking like a Christian on the outside; but, inside I was still allowing Satan to control my mind through my thought process. It took me three years walking with the Lord to finally lay my addictions down. It took me forever it seemed, to finally submit to the Word of God and allow the Holy Spirit to have control. In January 2017, I rededicated my life to Jesus Christ and He took every desire to gamble or do drugs again. Instead of allowing my addictions to consume my entire being, **I submitted to the will of God, and He blessed me for it daily.** Showing me His light in the darkness of a very long sentence of prison. I now had a life sentence to Christ; it did not matter anymore. However, internally I struggled and warred with my flesh daily not realizing I had to give everything to God to overcome the powers of darkness. As God began to renew my mind, doors and opportunities opened for me, only by His grace and His will. January 2017, I was

accepted into a five-month intense program called S.T.O.P. at Albemarle Correctional. As I asked God to help me with the way I thought, He gave me answers through this program. I still kept Jesus first, but worked really hard at rehabilitating myself through the skills and tools they taught in the class. The things that did not line up with the Word of God, I threw out. When I had finished the program, God opened the door for me to be a S.T.O.P. peer counselor. I've never taught anyone any good habits, but God put this innate desire to stop hurting people and begin helping them. The awesomeness of God continued in my life; therefore, after spending a year as a S.T.O.P. counselor, God opened the door to the Seminary program at Nash Correctional. The only four-year Bachelor Arts degree program offered in the state of N.C. Correctional systems that has hands on professors who come in four days a week from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary College to teach inmates. I have so much to say about this program, but I have another agenda that involves the glory of God. When I came to Nash for seminary, I was greeted by a few people I did time with before I became a Christian, people such as: Kirston Angell, Kyle Triplett, Charles Young, and Aaron Estes; all who were in the first class of the program. The first consistent group of people I saw fellowshiping, were groups called *MasterLife*. Being introduced to *MasterLife* by Kenneth Nichols and Kyle Triplett. I was so intrigued by their unity that I wanted to be a part of it. Then I met James Benoy who had a real zeal for *MasterLife*, and never stopped promoting what *MasterLife* had done for him. Although James had a *MasterLife* group also, I wanted to do *MasterLife* with people I knew. So, I joined a morning session of *MasterLife* led by my brother John Brant, whose *MasterLife* group consisted of myself, Robert Adolph, Christopher Burk, Dodi McNair, and Johnathan Simpkins. Moreover, I joined a night session of *MasterLife* led by Kyle Triplett, whose group was myself, Barry Mintz, Richard Dowless, Victor Velasquez, and Joaquin Melendez.

Though I read my Bible, prayed, and meditated on God's Word the past couple years, I never really knew how to be a disciple or what the Great Commission was. (Matt. 28:18-20) *MasterLife* equips the believer with an in-depth look at how Christians can apply skills and tools to their everyday walk that represents Christlikeness. Each book teaches

Christians how to live life according to Jesus' commandments. I have personally learned so much from the four *MasterLife* books; however, I am like the apostle Paul when he insists that he has not arrived yet. Now that I have a full understanding of the Great Commission, like Paul, I must not just be a sayer, but a doer. I need prayer in this area of my Christian walk, that I be a doer and not just a sayer; thus, preaching the gospel to every person I come in contact with, and living a life that represents Christ. *MasterLife* is changing prisons by fulfilling the Great Commission. Ask God to give you the strength, courage, and boldness to tell someone about Jesus and how much we need Him. I want to thank all the Christian men and women who work hard in the *MasterLife* family, such as; J Daud family, Pat at First Baptist church, Travis and Bequita, Ken and Rachel, and Ms. Rebecca Keeter-Lee, with a special thanks to the *MasterLife* \$ donors that make our Christmas party possible. I know that God will richly bless you, may your cup keep running over with the love you share. I want to personally thank James Benoy for being the same every day and not giving up when persecution rears its ugly head. James is a light and a blessing to *MasterLife*, his heart is for the Lord Jesus Christ to be represented through *MasterLife*.

George Clowers Jr., Nash

Working on the Root

As I start this new diet for my first time, I know I was lost, I really want to change. I've read all the information. I've set my sights on Jesus, I am all psyched up with a positive mental attitude. And I tell myself I can do this. I don't want to be like others who fizzle out after weeks before this, I was not sure myself what was really important to me. I've had to ask myself how can I be worthy. I want to take course after course, I want to be trained. I want to be independent and responsible. I want that inner hunger, a deep need for that relationship with Jesus. I have a lot of deep problems, painful problems, problems that a quick fix approach can't solve. **But when I accept Christ, suddenly, things are different.** I feel different. I think differently, but I am still quick to flip, I try to change my attitude and behavior. I want to make changes in my life. I am tired of hacking at the leaves of evil. I want to strike the root of evil. I want to achieve, quality improvement in my life. Quit

hacking at the leaves of attitude and behavior and get to work on the root, it is impossible for us to break the law, we can break ourselves against the law. I want fairness, integrity, honesty, human dignity, quality of excellence. I want potential. I want to be of service to my Lord God demands. We have faith, when it is impossible for us to have faith. God told us, without faith it is impossible to please Him, faith, gives that assurance that you will have all that you pray for you will never receive until you start to have faith in Christ. If you believe first, then you will receive. You will never really know until you act on it and reap its results.

Wesley Mikeal, Nash

Hi, *MasterLife*, I wanna thank you for the recent Christmas party we celebrated here at Nash Correctional Facility due to your generous commitment to Jesus and His mercy upon us. I was stunned. I've never seen anything like it during my 9 years of incarceration, nor anywhere else on the free streets. I am not a Christian, I turned away from God, His Son and His promise in search of my own truth about 5 years ago. It has been a very difficult road of transition, a lonely path, with much negative resistance and problems I would have never expected to face on my own, but I still maintain the course not knowing why.

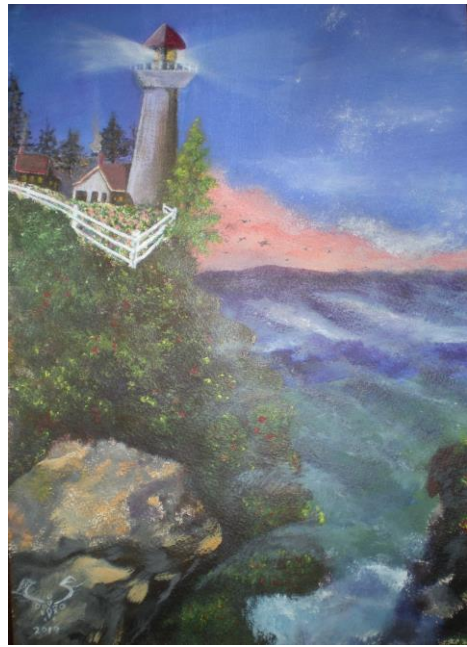
It was a welcome relief to be a part of the process your ministry offers to inmates, a brief escape from the realities of prison, if only for a night, an important night (I might add), my mother's birth. I enjoyed the festivities, the fellowship, the congregation, the praise of a higher cause than maybe just my own (for a change), and undoubtedly the hospitality the ministry provided.

Just because I have veered away doesn't mean I don't still appreciate Jesus (to a personally religious and quite astounding degree), so I'm giving back to Him, and you, for providing His care to us this last Christmas Eve by donating my 5th finished acrylic piece – a modification of Jerry Yarnell's "Above the Waves". I hope you like it and it can somehow benefit you in some way. I pray I get better as an artist so I (too) can begin to "effectively" effect the lives of inmates, victims of abuse and oppression, and open the eyes, minds, and hearts of the masses suffering the damages of many damaged individuals on earth. Let art, music, love and peace be

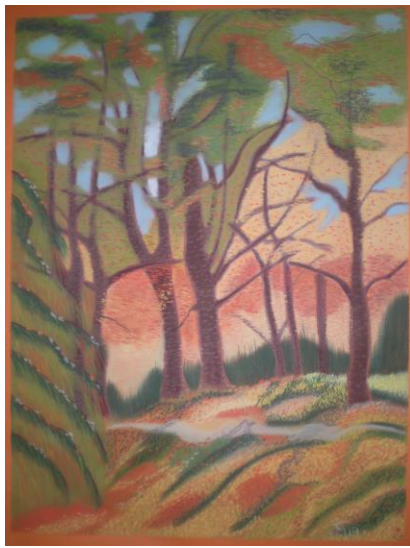
the 4 corners of my new church for now and may Jesus forgive me for being such an inquisitive human being. God bless, be well, keep up the good work and your Holy Spirit – wherever you get it from.

**Sincerely,
Michael James Mozykowski, Nash
An observer of modern times**

I've been "behind bars" for only 3 years, and even though I'm here, I feel more free than ever. The only reason I feel like that is because Jesus saved me. I have this amazing gift (which came from Him) and all I want to do is capture His Greatness



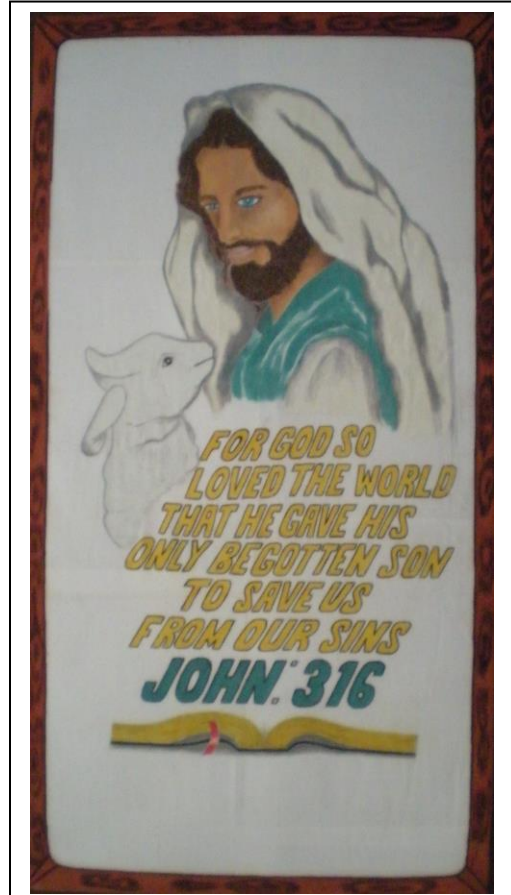
"ABOVE THE WAVES"
DONATED BY MICHAEL MOZYKOWSKI
(Just like God, Light in the storm, I love the colors)



"GODS CREATION"
DONATED BY JOAQUIN MELENDEZ

(which is in everything we see), to bring Him Honor & Glory. I pray that God keep blessing all of you and that this Christmas and New Year brings Joy, Peace, Love and many, many blessings. God Bless You All!

**Respectfully, Joaquin Melendez,
Nash**



DONATED BY ROBERT BYRD
(The best scripture ever!)

Dear Travis, Hello and, how are you? I pray that you are well blessed and in God's great health. My name is Michael Watlington and I am writing to thank you all at *MasterLife* for all that you've done for us. I want to donate my art and pray that I may win or if not, I'm still a winner in Christ. Before I go, let me thank you again for the Christmas party, this really means at the upmost a lot to us all. Please stay strong and be blessed.

**Your friend, Michael Watlington,
Nash**

It is a blessing to be here at Nash and participate in the *MasterLife Ministry* discipleship program ----- Praise God! The Christmas program this year impressed all, I counted it a high honor to donate several pieces of art to MLM. If any of the art I donated wins, I will share it with all who donated a picture ---- God Bless! Jesus is Master of my life!

Richard Dowless, Nash

Greetings, Hello, my name is Joaquin Melendez. First of all, I would like to thank all of you for everything that you all do for us through the *MasterLife Ministries*. As a token of appreciation, I send you a drawing titled "God's Creation" showing the beautiful things He created for us.

[Grab your reader's attention with a great quote from the document or use this space to emphasize a key point. To place this text box anywhere on the page, just drag it.]



DONATED BY RICHARD DOWLESS
(Contentment in prayer)

TESTIMONIES

A Call Answered

By Joseph Bromfield, Nash

Greetings to all who are reading the first *MasterLife* Newsletter of 2020. Another year has passed by since I've shared with you what my Lord has done with this vessel of His. I'll start with a quick introduction about me and *MasterLife*. In 1990, I entered Central Prison with a fresh Life plus Life sentence which I'm still serving today as a disciple of Christ. Upon entering Central Prison, I heard about the *MasterLife Disciple* Course being offered by the Chaplaincy which I enrolled into. It wasn't a month or a little after enrolling into the *MasterLife* that I was transferred from Central Prison to the farm, which back then had nothing to offer except working the fields which I did while being housed there. As for the *MasterLife* course, that was now history being at the farm and so was my walk with the Lord. That's right, I walked away from the Lord (He'll never leave of forsake you, it's always us who leave which is usually due to pleasures of the flesh better known as sin) and fell hard into a backsliding condition which lasted for a long time. As for my time in prison during my backsliding I've done everything you can imagine as a disobedient child of God which I'm not proud of by no means. What I've learned about life itself is everything has a way of coming back around at some point and time and it's your choice to do what you want with it when it comes (choice, for only 6 letters, that's a mighty big word). I say that to say in 2006 my life with Christ was renewed by me rededicating it back to Christ (did get that my life is no longer mine, it belongs to Christ) and not looking back since then (there's nothing to look back at before 2006 cause it's been washed away). The prodigal son had returned home after years of wandering in the muck and mire of life.

Since 2006 my Lord has opened doors for me which I'm grateful for and continues opening doors for me so I'm writing this brief testimony. Fast forward, I left Nash in 2013 and was transferred back to Nash in 2018 after being blessed at Lanesboro for those 5 years with several God moments happening to me while there (those 5 years are another testimony in itself). Upon returning to Nash I run into *MasterLife Disciple* which I never heard of since 1990 at Central Prison, twenty-eight

years. I joined a *MasterLife* group in Unit 4-C with the group leader being brother John who himself has continued with holding *MasterLife* groups in Unit 4-C. The entire *MasterLife* group hosted a Christmas block party in 2018 which was a great success in sharing the love of Christ to everyone housed in Unit 4-C. It's now 2020 and I've shared all this to say that Unit 4-C was blessed with another Christmas block party by the disciples of Christ housed there for 2019 with the same love of Christ being expressed. Why? Cause that's what Christ commands of His disciples. Go out and share the love of Christ to all those around you. We, as disciples of Christ are called to serve not be served. Since going through the *MasterLife* group in 2018 the Lord has opened several doors for me to serve and share the love of Christ in my actions and testimony, Revelation 12:11. To God be the Glory!

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How Christ Transforms Me

By Victor Velasquez, Nash

We prohibit that you come back ... you're Catholic never forget that. Those were the words, the strong words expressed from my parents when they knew I decided to serve the Lord, I will never forget these words, because that prohibition don't let me get close and grow in the love of Jesus Christ. Even though I was just a kid of 11 years old, and I don't really know what it was to be a Christian, the devotion and the love that show for each other was what make me feel curiosity. My name is Victor Velasquez. I'm 30 years old. I'm from Mexico, and I'm doing a sentence of 19 to 25 years, and I already did 12. I would like to tell my story of how I live a dissolute life of perdition with violence in the gangs and false loyalty. But more important, the impact Jesus Christ had in my life, and how he transformed me. Well, I want to start by telling you how my childhood was in the circumstance that carried me to be a solitary kid and how I suffer from depression. I still remember the domestic violence that I was subjected when I was a kid. Since, is something traumatic is hard to forget, my father was an alcoholic and almost every day he beat my mom for no reason. At eight years old, my brother started beating me almost every day. I realized that my brother learned that from my father. And that's when I start falling

apart. I start feeling that nobody loved me, or care for me. And that made me hate myself. After years of depression. I never tell nobody how I feel, because of my depression, my thinking was that nobody care what I feel, or what I said. In 2002, we come to the states. In 2003, my father and mother separated. In 2004, my mother get married again. She was happy and I was happy for her. But then I noticed that whenever my stepfather get drunk, he disrespect my mother verbally. One day they were having a big discussion. My brother did not care how he treated my mom, but I was really tired of all this and I stepped into the discussion. The guy getting so mad that he brings out his 22 pistol. I was 15 years old, and I remember myself crying and telling him to shoot me to kill me. But God was there to protect me, because the guy pointed his gun at me. But God stopped him. After the incident, I decided to stay less time at home, so I can avoid problems with him. Since my mom forgive him and they look at me like I was the problem. That's when I start passing more time in the streets and that's what helped me find my new family. I met people with the same problems I had, I start using drugs and alcohol. I started falling in a hole without knowing, at the age of 16 years old, I become a gang member of Al Capone Diablotrec. I was doing drugs and alcohol, almost every day. I was wasting my time that I know now. In 2007, I come to prison. In 2008, My father died of cirrhosis for a time, I live feeling guilty and for years, I live with sadness and depression. But now I know, I'm not guilty for his death, the time I received in prison did not change me. Just some of my thoughts change a little. I keep doing drugs and alcohol while in here, but in 2013, I went to the hole to do I-Con, that time helped me a lot. I started looking, my mistakes, and I started feeling the desire to change for good, but it was so hard to leave the bad habits. It was hard, but not impossible since God can make everything possible. In that time, I pray to God, every night. And also, stay, listen to the preacher in the radio, one night a pastor said something that inspired me to write my first rhyme for God. In 2017, I met a Mexican, who was new in prison, but was serving the Lord. Every time he has an opportunity, he told me about the Bible, and the love Jesus Christ showed us in the cross. There were times I get bored listen to him and other times, I was really hungry for the Word. He always tell me to come to God and accept Jesus in

my life. But my answer always was that I was not ready. Always making excuses. When the truth was that I was scared to change. When I was at Maury CI. I have many problems people trying to hurt me. And with the fear to hurt someone. I really look forward to go home one day, there was a day that I asked God to help me change my ways. I asked for wisdom, so I can have a better understanding to protect me from evil, because I used to pray to la Santa Muerte, and to send me to another prison where I can easily give my life to him, because I was two years and a half infraction free. I get approved for medium custody. And for the mental health medication I take I get sent to Nash. When I get here, God reminded me that He do his part now was my turn. God is always loyal. We humans always fail. In April 26, 2018, working in the kitchen washing pots and pans, I started feeling really anxious. Then, in the side of one of the pans I was about to wash was writing THE DAY OF THE LORD, I get scared and did not tell anyone about this after they may take me for liar, or crazy, but when I do tell some people they believe me, and understand the message. God was sending me that motivated me to come to God, and the desire to give my life to Jesus gets stronger and the anxiety grow weak, I feel like that people are praying for me. Then one day, the chaplain call me to this office, because I send a request to him asking for somebody to pray for my uncle, that was dying and my mother who was in pain, but he send for Jonathan Ramirez, a seminary man who I can speak better in my own language, the chaplain let us have some time alone two times. He told me his story and I told him part of mine, because for some reason, I feel I can trust him. It helped me speak to him. See how God transform his heart, and it made me think that if God forgive him. He will forgive me too. From there I decided to stop resisting and give my life to Jesus Christ. I was tired of running from Him. But when I receive Him, I feel like freedom and happiness never felt before. And a love for God never felt, either. I feel loved really loved. I feel a peace full with no worries because in that moment God helped me to see that every time my life was in danger, **He was there**. Every time I have suicidal thoughts, **He was there**, but now thanks to Him, I feel different. Since May 28, 2018, I become a follower of Christ, and leave the gangs. Now when I read the Bible, I can understand better the message, and only receiving Him, we can be able to change, because without Him,

we are nothing, and there's nothing we can do now. I know that God never let me alone. He always tried to get my attention. But I was blind and thanks to Him now I can see. And thanks to *MasterLife Ministries*. I learned how to be a disciple of Christ and how to carry fruit, with that I can glorify God. God is good. I learned that He never separated from us. We are the ones who separate from Him, that He chose us first, and love us first before we do, that's why I said that God is good. **Victor Velasquez, Nash**



A New Mindset

Greetings MasterLife Family, I've been through so much in my life that sometimes it seems that it's all just a waste. I thank God that being saved has changed me from the inside out. The *MasterLife* program has put a new meaning to acting and being more Christlike, things that were in me but never seemed to bloom. I have a new mind set on dealing with everyday situations that occur or arise at a moment's notice, thinking before I react and sizing the situation up to make a decision that will affect me in the moment or consequences that have a long term effect. I put myself on the mercy seat of God and let Him make decisions for me instead of trying to do things through my own strength. Looking at other people's situations and problems are a reminder of how I used to be and how I used to act and it opens up something inside of me to want to help them because I know where the road will lead. No one person can do anything alone, if he or she thinks they can, they are truly mistaken and blind to the ways of the submission to the lusts of the flesh, **with the help of the Holy Spirit there is victory**. I will continue to serve, obey, and believe without a shadow of doubt that the Lord will bring me through, and I will one day see Him as He truly is, my creator, my love, my all!!!

Douglas Spearman, Tabor



He Was There All Along

Greetings Fellow Believers. It has been quite a journey discovery and understanding the truth about my life. The choices I've made, how they shaped my belief system and what motivated me to live a certain way. Without lingering in detail, I'd say my upbringing was tragic,

sad and it was from this harsh reality I viewed the world, myself and ultimately God. I've always had loads of potential and a few focused talents, but the dreams and ambitions I fantasized about were just that... dreams. Feelings of inadequacy, inferiority and feeling invisible. I adopted a facade, all the while hiding how lonely and hurt, I really was inside.

I was raised in a Christian setting and I learned what people taught about God, Jesus and how important it was to make my election sure, (because you could end up in hell). Time and time again I professed my faith in Christ but never truly understanding what it took to live for and in Christ. As I became an adult, I took my childish notions of a relationship with Christ with me, but merely treating Him like my personal genie or fix-it man. I indulged in things that felt good and looking back on those times, I can see the strongholds the enemy was forging in my life. I soon learned that my choices had severe consequences. In and out of jail, still telling people, "yeah, I'm a Christian man!" I didn't know how the enemy was manipulating my ignorance about being a follower of Christ. He really exploited my lack of knowledge and I realized how shameful my life was to the Gospel.

It was in prison that I "thought" I forged a true relationship with Christ. Using my gifts in music, communication and charity, I was zealous for the Lord and determined to walk upright. Yet as soon as I was released from prison, I would return to a life of sin. While my conditions of release from prison were extreme, i.e. (homeless, jobless, lack of support system), I ultimately made the choices that landed me back in prison. In and out, the cycle has continued over a span of 15 years and I've gotten older, grayer and more desperate to get it right. I see now the mistakes I made. Trusting in man rather than trusting in God. Leaning on my ability to create opportunities instead of seeking guidance from God. Focusing on my circumstances instead of keeping my eyes on Christ. Living in the past, being closed off from the "body", not allowing myself to experience true friendship, living in constant fear and doubt all while reaping the blessings of God and being a part-time Christian.

I've come to a place where desperation has forced me to consider what has been there all the time... **Christ. He must be the answer because I've tried it every way but His way.** I'm so desperate to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of

the living that I can't afford to let doubt or fear or shame hinder me from stepping out on faith. Somehow, I get the feeling that this is what God knew it had to be; in order to bring me to Him saying, "Here I am Father, I have sinned against you and gone my own way. I realize now that I need you and I'm helpless and even hopeless without you; you can have all of me". I know that God placed greatness within me, but it means nothing if He doesn't get the glory from my life. Jesus used Lazarus's death to give the Father the glory, so I will give Him my life. Please pray for us here at Tabor Correctional, we could use your support and prayers. My prayer is that for those who are now free and those who are yet still locked away, that we all have the courage to step out on faith, trust God and let our light so shine!

**Your Brother in Christ,
Demetrius Crumby, Tabor**

What exactly is the experimental program at Nash CI like? Well, during my experience of completing the first semester as a member of Cohort III. I've come to understand Southeastern Baptist Seminary within prison walls is nothing less than a spectacular program. Renowned professors work diligently to encourage spiritual growth, mental strength, as well as physical exercise for the participants. Their objective is to equip convicts with the proper tools to improve their quality of life, and those around them. As a man who has been "down" for too many years, I have never encountered anything quite like this seminary for the reasons of occasional blessings, generally good people, and the reminders of what things were like before, a time of concrete and steel. I am truly appreciative of this opportunity to show DPS GPIL and SEBTS, that I can be an asset, in turn, making my family proud.

Anthony Nguyen aka "Saint", Nash

Still Moving Forward

Dear *MasterLife*, greetings to all my brothers and sisters in Christ. It has been a blessed year and God has been so good to me. I have learned so much and continue to learn what the Lord has for me. It has not been easy. There have been many tough roads to go down, but I learn from that too.

I am still content to be where the Lord has me. I'll move if He says move or stay if that is what He wants. Life is so much easier

when I'm not fighting God. *MasterLife* is still moving forward here at New Hanover but not as much since Michael left. (I never knew Weston had a brother in here). Thank you for all you have done for us and I wish you a merry Christmas.

Kenneth "Ray" Lawson, New Hanover

Brothers on a Journey

Greetings my brethren. First, I give thanks to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for allowing such a program (*MasterLife Ministry*) to keep Bro's connected not only with Christ but each other as well.

I never met Mr. Travis Mileur (personally) but I truly thank God for him, because no matter I go He care enough to track me down and make sure I receive a *MasterLife Ministry* Newsletter, which I look forward to reading, knowing I'll hear from brothers that's been on this journey either side by side with me or ones I've met in passing while on a medical run at CP or at Nash for physical therapy. Nevertheless, each time I read one I'm filled with glee. I always look forward to what my friend, Minister Tim Jones, has to say because it seems in every newsletter, he's talking directly to me in one way or another, "for that I'm grateful". During my discipleship class under Minister Tim, I was taught ways to breakdown the Bible for studying and how not just put time aside for God but to make (devote) time to Him regularly (methodically).

Shout out to Bro's, Craig W., Jesse B., Isaac "Zeke", Kirston A., James & Michael B., I enjoyed the opportunity to fellowship with personally for the advancement of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

I'm currently at Bertie Medium (due to Hyde conversion) but looking to leave speedily. Bro's, I'm enduring hardness, as a good soldier, keep me lifted up in prayer as I cease not praying for you all. Peace be with you all that are in Christ Jesus. I love you guys. What manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called Sons of God.

Kenneth Lacy Sr, Bertie

Jesus died for people not programs, *MasterLife Ministry* embraces broken people.

MasterLife Ministry, I recently read one of your newsletters and I was wondering if I could get some information on your ministry. I am going to be applying this year to the North Carolina Field Ministry Program. I have a heart for the people in prison, and Lord willing, would like to serve in this program. However, where the Lord leads me is where I will go.

Herbert Kidwell, Marion

A Word From The Original "Jive" Turkey

To all my brothers and sisters in Christ, both inside and outside these walls. I pray that this short missive reaches everyone in a renewing of the Spirit that only sweet Jesus provides! I've just experienced the **holiday festivities** furnished through *MasterLife Ministries*. I thank God for the providers of these holiday events that resonate throughout this North Carolina prison system. The Lord has used J.D. and Scott Heibeck, formally incarcerated brothers I was blessed to know and fellowship with at Avery-Mitchell. In obedience and faith, the Lord is blessing these brothers outside these walls, and Benoy for his attention to detail, and for being a "Jive Turkey" like us all. I constantly keep my brothers in prayer in this season of life because we need it! To Mr. Jolly, Saint B. Green and the "Jive Turkey" himself – Donald Barkley, I miss you brothers, and "many" more The Field Ministry Program is great, there are many changes that need to be made within the body of Christ; because if there is to be change, **we must change in order to bring change!** Where the Holy Spirit truly dwells, there is peace and unity, not envying's and strife! To receive compassion, we must give compassion, if we really follow the WORD OF GOD, we will see that Jesus looked on everyone with compassion. It gets hard, but realize it's not done in our own strength! My GOD is a GOD of "Uncommon Blessings", we must believe in things "unfamiliar" to receive the true nature of the Lord. **REMEMBER**, in the dregs of society lies the greatest power – the outcast, the prisoner, the drug addict, etc. Their testimony carries a power we can't understand! So, let's not forget where God brought us from, and His grace and mercy is keeping us from the madness of our past!

The greatest words I was blessed to hear is, "No one can know the truth of their

sinful nature until they have stepped into the presence of the Living God"! To the believer, "Is the presence of the Living God walking with you to the point that when He sends you to speak to someone – do they feel Him? The Lord offers eternal life, with love and compassion! Sweet Jesus!

Much Love, Brother Keys – Nash

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Great Hope

Greetings to all my Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus. I have been receiving the *MasterLife* newsletter and its awesome! There was one story that made me shed a couple of tears. That story is from John Brant in the December 2019 newsletter. It starts on page 13 and ends on page 15. The only thing I can say about his story is **Praise God!** The story in the December 2019 newsletter from Jon Daniel on page 15 gives me great hope for when I get out! The *MasterLife Ministry* newsletter is a blessing. I am writing to you guys and I am requesting that I can be a part of "Adopt-A-Life" My name is Jonathan Leigh Henslee and I am 39 years old. I've been in prison since September 27,2003 and my release date is July 2031. I should qualify to be a part of "Adopt-A-Life", in real life I am actually an orphan. My Mom and Dad gave me up when I was 18 months old, and I was never adopted. I am asking *MasterLife Ministries* to please allow a great and loving someone to write me, you guys have no idea how big of a blessing this would be!!!

In this process, I am asking if it is possible that when you guys assign me someone to write, that it can be a woman. There is a reason why I am specifically asking that a woman write me, that is two reasons!

- 1) As a man I need to honestly learn how to build any relationship with a woman, I've never been taught, etc....
- 2) I was molested by two men when I was a little kid and I have tried two pen pals since being in prison and both pen pals were men. It was really hard for me because once I started to get to know them, I started to have emotional stress. My depression started coming back and it was I guess because they were men. They did nothing wrong, but I was just really stressing for some reason. I honestly do not know if the two men

wrote something that triggered a bad emotion or not.

So, you guys can pray over this, I encourage you to pray and ask for guidance if you want. I can say this, whoever writes me and becomes part of my life, I will treat with 110% RESPECT! I will be looking forward to someone answering this letter and I hope and pray that it's good news!

Allow me to tell you a little about myself. I am originally from Clayton, GA. As I pointed out already, my Mom and Dad gave me up when I was just 18 months old. The first foster family was Dudley and Norma Shirley. I stayed with them from 18 months old until I was 8 years old. I was not adopted and all the way until today I do not know why I was not adopted! It left a scar! When I was 8, I was placed in like a children's group home of sorts. I stayed there in Atlanta, GA until I was 12 years old and I met friends, etc.... When I was 12, I was placed in what you call a temporary foster home, they were Malinda and Tommy Cooper. They were great parents; however, Malinda was accused of child molestation and I was taken away of course. Well, about a year later, Malinda was cleared of any wrongdoing, so they let me back with Malinda and Tommy and life was so good until I turned 16. I was staying with a friend of the family while Malinda and Tommy went to Alabama to visit family. Well, I remember like it was yesterday when the phone rang at the friend's house and Jena answered the phone, (Malinda and Tommy's friend). I remember clearly Jena's face looked like it went ghost white, like the blood was not circulating in the face area. She started crying, and about 2 minutes later she hung up the phone. I knew something bad happened because every 10 seconds or so Jena would look over at me in a very concerning way. I started crying before Jena told me that Malinda and Tommy died in a car wreck.

At this time in my life, my life just spiraled out of control, drugs, alcohol, you name it. My depression turned out to be 10 times worse than what it was before. Christ was watching out for me, because I never, not one time thought of or tried suicide! This pastor later on showed me a verse, (look up Psalm 27:10, when your mother and father forsake you, the Lord will take you up). Amen!! I have a strong faith in that verse. Christ saved me through that verse because it clearly felt that Christ was speaking to me when that verse was being read to me. I have great faith that as part of His promise to me through Psalm 27:10, He will fulfill by sending me an Angel to write and be a part

of my life. I have great joy this will work out! So, I want to extend my thank you to *MasterLife Ministries*, Inc. I will keep in touch with you guys no matter what.

Also, can you guys please let me know how I can become part of *MasterLife* and Mastering Life. Are there courses I do or something? I would really enjoy learning anything you guys put in front of me. Well, I really hope I can hear from someone soon. I am starting to feel like when I was a kid and the night before Christmas. I feel joy is going to expand. *MasterLife* is in my prayers, if there are any special prayers, please let me know. I will be their prayer warrior.

**Sincerely in Christ, Jonathan Henslee,
 Avery Mitchell**

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ARTICLES

One Real Chance

By Demetrius Crumby, Tabor

Greetings, my name is Demetrius Crumby, and I've had the great fortune of being introduced to the Discipleship course "*MasterLife*". I have been saved for quite a while, but like so many Christians, I'd learned the art of acting church without ever knowing the joy nor the freedom of becoming a true follower (disciple) of Jesus Christ. So much of my Christian identity I adopted from those who themselves lacked a clear understanding of what it meant to be truly sold out for Christ. But God has seen fit to pair me with a seasoned soldier of the faith. Bro. Tim Jones has truly given me a living example of being totally submitted to the will of God. His commitment shows me that though he hasn't mastered life, he has however completely given his life over to the Master (Jesus).

Like so many others who find themselves in the grip of the legal system, much of the foundational structure is either lost or unfortunately never even realized. I've been in and out of prison since 2000 and the greatest challenge I've faced is reintegration. Being that I'm a transplant by way of Florida, I don't have the support system nor the resources that others may have. I've completed two prison sentences that have spanned the last decade, with maybe, 120 days out in society. There are many variables as to why I can't seem to stay out of prison, but ultimately, I take responsibility for my circumstances. It is true I've made really poor choices, yet I sincerely believe that if

I had “one real chance”, I’d become the success story I know I could become. Time and time again I am released with nowhere to live, no job, no support system and honestly no time to adjust to the free world. I have literally had back to back situations where I have been released from prison that evening, only to be homeless and on the street by night fall. The harsh reality is that there are more people who need help re-entering society than there are people/organizations who truly desire to help. There are houses that fall under the umbrella of transitional houses, but they usually aren’t capable or set-up to meet the many needs of someone who has spent any length of time behind bars. They may offer basic needs, yet gravely missing some of the more crucial cues that play a major role in the high recidivism rate. Plus, many of these transitional residences saddle the newly released individual with debt on top of the financial responsibilities post-release supervision expects them to pay. With concerns of how one will cloth, feed and obtain transportation, any more added pressure could send an individual into a spiral, seeking relief in familiar avenues that may very well have been the cause of their incarceration to start with.

Personally speaking, I have tried to live a life that honors God and reflects Christ even though I’m in prison. I’m usually a part of any institutional praise team/choir. I’m a key board player, singer and song writer and anything else Christ needs me to be while doing my sentence. I try my best to allow Christ’s love to be what people encounter no matter who they may be. I have met some amazing individuals on this journey, and they all tell me how my ministry has blessed their lives. I think it’s sad that individuals who have accepted responsibility for their decisions, yet instead of “wild-n-out” because they’re in prison, they give themselves over to Christ only to find themselves alone in their efforts to get out and stay out of prison. I’ve often said, “if I had one real chance, I know I’d never come back to prison”. That’s when the question was poised, “what would one real chance look like to you”?

This is the vision I have: “One Real Chance”. Anyone could take advantage of the services available, (provided they understood that it would be a faith-based organization that they would be taking part in). Individuals who have graduated the *MasterLife Discipleship* Program who are about to be released from prison would get

first priority to any resources. (Only because they wouldn’t need as much foundational structure having gone through the *MasterLife Discipleship* course successfully)

- Upon release, participants will be placed in a house with two *MasterLife* group leaders who will act as in-house mentors. During a 30-day period, “intakes” would take this time to get re-adjusted to their freedom, job search, and active fellowship in a local church. Each house would be in a drug free environment, equipped with the necessities, i.e. washer/dryer, internet access, land line phone, 1 house van (for transportation), beds, dressers, 2 full bathrooms, dining room, living room/entertainment room and lawn equipment.
- After 30 days, residents should have secured employment/temp agency/part time. All funds would be placed in a savings account that could only be accessed after 180 days. Six months of working, saving, getting reacclimated to freedom, fellowshipping with Christian brothers and sisters, giving back to your church and your community. Living a life that is pleasing unto Christ and witnessing to others of what Christ has done for you should be a good foundation.
- The “One Real Chance” organization would be linked to a network that would be filled with every resource in the community: health care, mental health, housing, higher education, food banks, clothing, family counseling, DPS (only for referrals) and of course a limitless faith based community.

Like I’ve shared previously, I’ve had “opportunities”, but they all seemed to take more than they gave, and it left me feeling used and dispensable. “One Real Chance” would take nothing from its residents, we would function by donations (by God’s provision). But there is one thing different about “O.R.C.”, you get only “one chance” at receiving our services: hence the name “One Real Chance”. It would be for men and women (separate houses). Participants would have the chance to hear success stories from all walks of life, pursue their God given talents and passions as well as share their story. The idea is to give each resident the opportunity they feel life has cheated them out of, i.e. no rent, no bills, just help in a

drug free, Christ centered environment with loving guidance from people just like them. The hope is that each participant would take this opportunity and allow God to show them the life He has always intended for them. (Jeremiah 29:11)

I realized recently that I’ve lived my life from a rebellious state of mind. Refusing to listen to anyone out of fear of being misled. I ultimately mis-led myself. Failure seemed to be all I could ever succeed in, but God has preserved my life and He has gifted me with abilities that scream purpose, great purpose. Maybe this idea isn’t the one, but I have hope that however God intends to lead us, He will finish what He started. Please pray for me, for my situation hasn’t been finalized, but whatever the future holds, pray that the “Future Holder” would give me the strength I need to be counted faithful in His eyes. (Philippians 3:13, Hebrew 12:2)

Irrevocably Yours, Brother Demetrius Crumby, Tabor Correctional Institution

Through the River

By Greg Ross, Piedmont

One night as I was fast asleep, I had an extraordinary dream. In this dream, I was walking down a long hill that was covered with bright green grass. Looking further ahead, I could see that I was gradually approaching a river. I began to slow down until I came to a complete stop. There in front of me was a very powerful freshwater river. Looking to my left, and to my right, it stretched as far as I could see both ways. The mighty white water rushed past me with such a force, I felt like it was lightly pulling me into it. With an overwhelming sense of danger, I braced myself as I stood there.

The situation began to seem hopeless to me because I knew that I had to cross this river. Right then, someone walked up from behind, put their arms around me and firmly held me. I was even more surprised when this individual began to move forward, closer and closer to the edge of the river. Just as I was going over the edge, I stiffened my whole body as tightly as I could. My only thought was ‘when we hit this water, we’re gone’.

Instantly, I felt the cold water powerfully rush around me. Amazingly, I was not moved! We were in this mighty current, but we had not even moved one inch downstream. I wondered, ‘how can this

Beatitudes

by Michael Benoy
Matt 5:4

Blessed are **they** that **mourn**
for **they shall be comforted**.

The world has become a place
that readily rejects **God's truth**.

Hardening the hearts of **men**,
to the point that **we** become numb
to things that should break **our** hearts.

Accepting **Christ** as **Lord** of **our** lives
turns **our** body into **temples**
and dwelling places for
God Christ and the **Holy Sprit**
creating in **us** a **new man**
with a heart of flesh, not stone.

The **Holy Spirit** **cleanses** and
gives **us** the ability to **feel** again.

We then **yearn** for **God's truth** and
mourn for injustice
while remaining in the **comfort** of the
Spirit.

**I AM A NEW CREATION IN CHRIST.
I AM REBORN WITH A HEART OF
FLESH.**

**I AM A LOVER IN TRUTH.
I AM THE TEMPLE OF GOD.**

**I AM CLEANSED
AND COMFORTED
BY THE HOLY SPIRIT.**

I AM BLESSED.

I WILL MOURN IN COMFORT.

be?' My thoughts were interrupted as I felt myself moving forward again. I was being taken out toward the middle of this river. The person behind me was never thrown off balance by the mighty water, and not once did I sense any struggle as I was effortlessly carried. 'Who was this?' I thought.

My back was against the person's chest, so I couldn't turn my whole body around to see them. My curiosity had overwhelmed me. I just had to know who this was! Turning my head to the right as far as I could, I saw a man with brown hair out of the corner of my eye. He had such a gentle, yet confident expression on his face. Instantly, I know who he was. Jesus was carrying me!

Realizing this awesome truth, I completely rested in his embrace. I was filled with assurance that I could trust in the one who was holding me. All of the anxiety that I had felt up until now quickly left me.

Reaching the middle of this river, he turned left and took me upstream. I could feel the pressure of the oncoming water as it swiftly ran against me, but I continued to move steadily forward. After going upstream for a little while, he turned right and took me to the other side. I was where I had so longed to be now.

Then ... I awoke.

Thinking on this remarkable dream and the profound spiritual truths it held, this wonderful verse from the Holy Bible was brought to my remembrance: "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you, and through the rivers, they will not overwhelm you..." Isaiah 43:2b

Greg Ross, Piedmont

TIME WITH TIM

To God Be the Glory

By Tim Jones, Tabor

There is not a week goes by that I am asked the question, "**Tim, how have you been able to do over 40 years in this place and not completely lose your mind?**", or "**Tim, how have you been able to maintain such a positive attitude in what seems like a hopeless place for so long?**". Most often when I am asked these questions it comes months after people have been around me, not being aware that my incarceration began in 1978 (42 years), and they seemed shock that my personality defies the stereotypical harden criminal that they have come to expect upon hearing that someone had been locked up so long. Don't get me wrong, I have both known and actually been this "hard no nonsense" convict that would fit that description that most people expect "long timers" to be, but the man people see today in me does not reflect anything close to the stereotypical "long timer". There are times that I am viewed as a serious man and suggest that I am old and set in my ways (like most old men are)



but no one that has been around me for any extended period of time has ever had a clue that I had been locked up for over four decades, without someone telling them my circumstances. I know this may sound a bit confusing to some when I say this, but this is a testimony from me, but the story truly is not about me. I have written articles in the past proclaiming that Jesus makes all the difference and that just one encounter with Him will change your life forever, so it's no wonder that when

asked the question of how I've been able to keep my sanity and be at peace in this place for so long, my answer is always, ***It's Only by the Grace of God.*** My survival has nothing to do with me, but it has everything to do with Jesus. He truly is the sustainer that makes possible for me to go from year to year maintain hope that my latter will be greater than my beginnings. For if it had been my dependency upon my own efforts, thoughts, feelings, and personal abilities I would have self-destructed a long time ago. Prison life is so unforgiving and it does not favor anyone regardless of age, race, gender, or religion, because at the end of the day everyone in this place must deal with the same basic problems that confronts us all, and dealing with these problems can only be done in two ways, "the right way or the wrong way". Now there is always someone that asks the question "who determines what is right or what is wrong"? Even to those that have not accepted the gift of salvation, there has been given them the ability to know the right from the wrong, however without the power of the Spirit of God, they are unable to do right in their own strength. Paul confirms this in Romans chapters 6-7, and he lets us know that all of us are without excuse. I have not always been saved so I can identify with intentionally knowing right from wrong before I gave my life to the Lord. Yes, I knew right but was unable to do right until I surrendered my life to the Lordship of Jesus, and He created a new man with a clean heart, so I no longer am a slave to sin. So how am I able to go from year to year with a confident smile on my face, peace in my heart, and abundant joy and hope that leads my way? His name is Jesus! Though many would like to credit other things and give reasons that sound more self-willed for my life being so full of hope in spite of being compassed about with so many negatives and troubles for so long. But the truth is, **all the Glory goes to God, for without Him I could do nothing.** Once, I chose to do things my way which meant sin ruled in my life and I lived on a crash course headed for destruction, but when I made Jesus the Lord of my life, life became so full and purpose driven that I can't help seeing Jesus in everything! The fruit that is manifested in me now are not my own but it is the fruit of the Spirit and can only be produced by God, I am just a vessel used by Him, so "To God Be the Glory", for He has kept me by His mighty power and filled me with His Spirit so that today I am able to praise Him through all my circumstances and walk in newness of life.

I encourage those that find themselves carrying the load of a long prison sentence to seek the peace of God because it's in His peace that you will finally be free to live and enjoy life no matter what your circumstances may be. It's all about Jesus and to God only be the Glory. **From brother Tim at Tabor City**, I say much love to everyone and keep us in your prayers as we keep you in all ours.

MASTERING LIFE IN PRISON by James Benoy

Mastering Life In Prison is a discipleship handbook written *MasterLife Ministry, Inc* Co-Founder James Benoy. He has 25 years in personal experience in the prison culture. And 14 years as an inmate disciple-maker. His systematic lesson plans along with his point-em-to-Jesus attitude, has proven successful for 100's of inmates to find the change they have so desperately desired. We will begin to use our newsletter to share the basic insights from his book, insights that bring one to the cross of Jesus Christ. Please give us feedback as you read through each lesson. The best ways of reaching people in this environment is emphasizing that **"the game ain't real."** Yeah, okay, so you personally might be real to the game, but the game ain't been real to you—has it? Nine out of ten responses have been "NO!" What this means is, my way of doing things ain't working out so well. In fact, I've got a big road sign on my back that reads: **I'm going nowhere!** Most guys who come to this realization are ready for a change. We have the road map that will lead them to the change they desire.

Lesson 1: Change!

"REPENT! For the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" (Matt. 3:2) This is the first message recorded that was preached by Jesus Christ. This is equivalent to Him yelling to the crowds, **"you are going the wrong way, change your minds!"** Another way to think of repentance is, I was travelling one direction and I realized that I was going the wrong way, so, I turned around and went the opposite direction. Repentance is not only being sorry for one's sins, but simultaneously renouncing sin. Therefore, repentance is a change of mind that results in change of behavior.

This leads us into the question of change. **How many people desire change in their lives?** How many of us have tried to change something about our lives?

Whether it was by the means of AA, NA, Thinking for a Change, D.A.R.T, or some other self-help program. How often do we say, *I wish things were different?* There are countless numbers of people living without peace of mind, knowing that something is not right, desiring to change the direction their lives are going. These people cannot get any satisfaction, they are sick and tired of being sick and tired. Jesus announces that He alone is the solution to all of life's problems. He knows how to attain the change that is most needed. Jesus says if we follow Him, not only will He teach us how to change, He will give us the power to change.

There is not a day that goes by that we do not wish for some kind of change. In little ways, we wish that things were different—Why? The reason we are in this daily state of dissatisfaction, is because our sinful nature desires to gratify our fleshly passions. In fulfilling our passions, we get a sense of satisfaction, a sense of love, happiness, and peace. However, this satisfaction is temporary and eventually fades, leaving us empty inside; thus, we are left desiring more change. In our search for satisfaction, we spend lots of time frustrated, complaining, or dreaming about 'what could be.' For some it is a different job, a different dorm, or a different bunkmate. For others, they cry, if I could get out of this prison then things would be different, if someone would send me a few dollars I'd be happy, if my family would write me my life would be different "if" - If something or someone would **change**. Yet, when the change occurs what happens? Are we satisfied? Do we finally have a lasting peace of mind? Or is there something else we need to **change**?

Allow me to illustrate with a true story. There was a prisoner with a 46-year sentence, housed in a crowded roach infested dorm, a dorm that was stifling hot due to the absence of air-conditioning. The dorm had a fan, which only circulated the heat. There were no shower curtains, nor privacy for the toilet area. The prisoner was assigned to a top bunk with a loud, obnoxious, and disrespectful bunkmate. Do you get the picture? The conditions in which that prisoner lived were some of the worst conditions that an inmate could be housed in. The man exclaimed, "if I could just get moved to one of the dorms with air-conditioning and my own room, then I would be happy, then I would be at peace." Eventually, he was moved to a single-celled air-conditioned dorm and given the highest paying job on the unit, a

job envied by fellow inmates. He no longer had to deal with a bunkmate, a top bunk, roaches, or hot dusty air being circulated by fans. He even had privacy while taking a shower and using the toilet—everything had changed for him. The prisoner soon began getting visits from family members, mail from friends, and money on his account for canteen each week—guess what—he even got 30-years cut off of his prison sentence. He was living every prisoner's dream. This man was so happy—for a little while. Then, one day he was sitting in the dayroom fussing with another prisoner because he wanted to watch his favorite ball team on the television. Without going into the details, this man was badly beaten and almost lost his life due to this confrontation all he wanted was the T.V. *changed!*

If he could have watched the game, he would have been happy, right? He would have had satisfaction, right? He would have stopped being sick and tired, right? He would have had a peace of mind, right? Wrong, wrong, and wrong!!! The fact is, if he would have been miraculously released from prison, he would still want something else to change in order to be happy. He would need a pack of cigarettes, or a girlfriend, or some brand-named shoes, or something. Jesus' message confronts us with a profound truth. He insists the change we need most is in us, in our thinking, we need to change our minds. What we want, is for God to change **"it"**. And it's sad to say, but even some Christians are sitting around waiting on God to change "it". Some call this "waiting on God." Well, God already did all that needs to be done to give us the change we desire, the satisfaction we seek—He sent His son to the cross. Now what God wants, is to change **"us"** in the middle of **"it."** We want God to fix all of this mess around us, but God wants to fix us in the middle of the mess—the way we perceive the mess around us. He wants to transform the way we think, thus, changing us into Christlikeness, having the mind of Christ. If our thinking changes, then our behavior will follow suit. We cannot make the kind of changes that our souls desire on our own, however, Jesus can and will change us. The first step to having this kind of dramatic change in one's life is to repent and believe on Jesus.

You are one decision from real change, change that will release you from prison *today*. How can I say that? I'm glad you asked. When you receive Christ as Lord and Savior, your perception begins to

change, the way you view life and the world around you changes. Have you ever heard of Christians who give away all they own, leave the luxuries of America, and to go to serve in poverty-stricken, third-world countries? Before I became a Christian, I remember thinking to myself, these people are crazy. However, they are not crazy, their perception changed, God has transformed the way they view life and the world around them. Likewise, when you make a decision to follow Christ, He will change your perception of your current situation. For example, your prison will become a Bible school or a mission field. You may not be physically free, but you will be free to do what you now love the most—serve your Lord Jesus Christ.

Are *you* in prison or Bible college? Are *you* in prison or are you on the mission field? If you are still in prison, I plead with you to repent; change your mind and call on Jesus, He will deliver you today.

By James Benoy, Nash
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PRAYER REQUESTS
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1. I currently have nerve damage in both eyes. I'm approved for surgery, just waiting for the date. It is difficult to read small print even with glasses. I should be seen by Jan. 4, 2020. You don't know how frustrating it is to see the book daily and cannot read it. Please be patient with me as I move from surgery and recovery. Your prayers are needed and appreciated. I will keep you posted during my recovery. I am really excited about joining the MasterLife Ministry team. Be blessed and always keep your head up. **Rodney Scott**
2. *MasterLife* group leaders, groups
3. Daily walk in the bible
4. Joe Gibb's Game Plan for Life
5. College at Southeastern and Field Minister program
6. DPS Administration
7. Caledonia's upcoming MasterLife program
8. All chaplains and volunteers in prison ministry
9. Families of the incarcerated
10. Sentencing reform
11. Unity in the body
12. Carroll Penland – health issues
13. Jesse Jones – health issues

Choices by George Jones

(James Benoy version)

I've had choices, since the day that I was born,
there were voices, that taught me right from wrong,
If I had listened, you know I wouldn't be here today,
Living and dying with the choices I've made.

I was tempted, at an early age I've found,
Drugging and drinking, Oh and I never turned it down,
There were loved ones, but I turned them all away,
Now I'm living and dying with the choices I've made,

I've had choices, since the day that I was born,
there were voices, that taught me right from wrong,
If I had listened, you know I wouldn't be here today,
Living and dying with the choices I've made.

I spent life paying, for the things that I have done,
If I could go back, Oh Lord knows I'd run,
I've been losing this game of life I play,
Living and dying with the choices I've made,

I've had choices, since the day that I was born,
there were voices, that taught me right from wrong,
If I had listened, you know I wouldn't be here today,
Living and dying with the choices I've made.

The Bible tells me, there's only one choice to make,
Turn to Jesus, all my sins He has paid,
I have a new life, and I live it in His name
(by his grace, giving praise, etc.)

Living eternal life by the one choice I've made,

I've had choices, since the day that I was born,
there were voices, that taught me right from wrong,
Now I listen, that's why I'm standing here today,
Living forever, for the one choice I've made.

14. The North Carolina Field Minister graduates will be received well at the assigned prisons

ART INCREDIBLE

We know there are some really good artists in the different facilities. We know that sometimes it is hard to show your talents. We know that we want to show others what can happen when men and women give their hearts to the Lord. So, we started an art contest. The rules of the Art Contest are:

1. All art is donated to *MasterLife Ministry (MLM)*

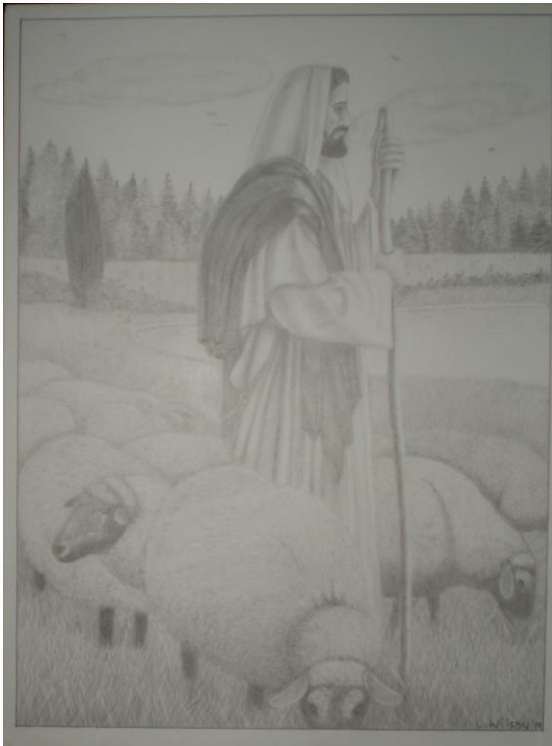
2. All art submitted will be judged by *MLM* supporters
3. The top three selected by the judges will receive a complementary gift from *MLM* (fall packages - \$50, \$40, \$30)
4. *MLM* will send a photo back to each artist
5. *MLM* will post these pictures on the web site, for gift/donations to interested people, wanting to support *MLM*
6. We just finished the Spring art and they are in this issue, the Fall art submissions are due by August 1

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All the drawings received rave reviews. Many of the people judging the art had difficulty in picking just their top three pictures. I heard over and over how much they liked the pictures and they were impressed with the detail and the context of each picture.

The Top three are **First**, "Jesus and the Lambs" donated by Richard Dowless, **Second**, the "Birds and Butterflies" donated by George Clowers, and **Third**, "Crucifixion" donated by Michael Watlington.

Thank you to each person that entered the contest and thanks for donating your art to MasterLife Ministry. We will use it wisely to further God's Kingdom.



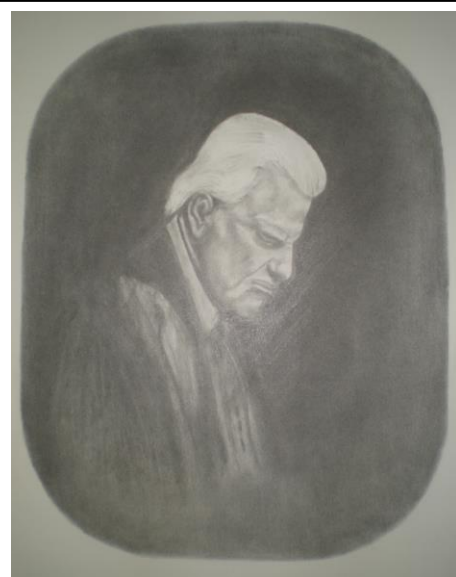
"VOTED #1", DONATED BY RICHARD DOWLESS
(Rachel said it really made me long for Heaven)



VOTED #2, DONATED BY GEORGE CLOWERS
(This will be a great day, harmony for all)



"VOTED #3", DONATED BY MICHAEL
WATLINGTON



"BILLY GRAHAM - PSALM 1"
DONATED BY RICHARD DOWLESS
(Great portrait, such a praying man)

HAPPY NEW YEAR 2020!!!

The BIG Picture

By Mrs. Rebecca Keeter-Lee, BA, MAT

Providing instruction is my daily job. I instruct and assist students between the ages of 12 to 18 in English Language Arts and Literature. I go through the elements of literature; I go through the structure of English Language Arts and I go through a lot of written texts. Teaching my students English and Literature are beneficial to my students on a personal level and it can be beneficial to society as a whole. However.... I am not a traditional master teacher. and my students are not traditional students. Our Creator has placed me where I am with a purpose, because I instruct students who come from horrible conditions: human trafficking, severe abuse and/or neglect and many other issues. So, when I am instructing my students, they can be quite difficult and at times, they are a danger to me. When I am in fear in my position, I pray, and I ask my Creator, is this where I am supposed to be?



I find that when I am alone and I am reflecting on my position in this life, I think on things like: the positions that others are in, what other people know, what they think, how they feel, where do they go that I don't go, what do they see that I don't see, and many other questions that come to my mind.

I continue on in my thoughts, and then I find myself in a thought-field that is high above myself: I am looking down from the heavens of the earth and I envision a BIG world. As I concentrate on this BIG world and my position in it, I realize that I may be a small part of it. I realize that when I affect one human.... that human is connected to many others and those others are connected to many others, and so on. It is at that moment in my thoughts, that our Creator helps me to visualize the BIG picture of my position in this world. We are all a part of the BIG picture, each and every one of us, wherever we are: in prison, in a school for students who are not traditional, in a coffee house, in a church,

or any other place that you can fill in this blank with. Our Creator, then answers my question: Is this where I am supposed to be? Yes, I am where I am meant to be. Please read and reflect on the following Biblical perspective.

Biblical Worldview Perspective

There will always be times in our lives when we question where we are and what position we feel that God has us in. He provides guidance in His word for these thoughts and questions. Faith.... faith is giving God our all, and allowing Him to be in control, and trusting in Him. It is realizing that the BIG picture shows that we individually effect the entire world, and we need to be in God's will and put our trust in Him.

Proverbs 3:5-6 (KJV21)

"5. Trust in the Lord with all thine heart and lean not unto thine own understanding. 6. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths."

So, no matter the position you are in, prison, jail, residential treatment, a stressful job, etc., our Creator instructs us to trust in Him. Take this time to reflect and envision the BIG picture and place your faith in our Creator. Make 2020 the year for you to place faith in God's plan and to affect others, so that they can affect others and that effect can continue.

Much Change

By Jon Daniel

A big hello to all the guys reading this currently sequestered for a period of time. In my last submission here I shared with you that God is blessing my family in many ways. So, here is the update. **On December 31st Connie and I bought our first home here in Bradenton Florida.** Life changed in big ways with this move. It's hard to even imagine living in this home, having the best wife in the world and just being at peace with all things around me. God has shown me a part of life that to be honest feels like my father's life. Connie and I reference the house as "Jacks House" because we are in a place we would have never planned to be. Living amongst people who would never in a million years guess not two **years ago I sat where you currently are.** More important than that we make sure people know who gets the

credit. God. How else could you explain the events? It's not because I'm some great person, or we won the lottery, or luck. God planted us here.

The morning the former owners moved out Connie and I took the opportunity to go thank them for selling us the house. We stood in the kitchen as they told us they had planned on staying here forever. When I shared with them that two years prior, **I was homeless and paying \$12.00 a night to sleep on the floor of the Salvation Army.** They were stunned. Connie and I both gave God His correct praise for the sequence of events that led us to where we are.

I want you to understand God puts things in motion we have no knowledge of prior to us needing them. It's called a plan. His plan for each of us is to be able to better serve Him and lead others to Him by the attraction of our lives. Not talking about money or stuff attraction I'm speaking about people seeing something in you that indicates a spiritual change being shown in your actions. It's the love we show others and the grace we give them that was given us that people see most.

So, who today sees God in you? Is there something you need to correct? God wants all of us to handle the small stuff. It's a proving ground for bigger things. Each of you have an opportunity to have a life testimony. Even if you are not ever planning on leaving there. Gods got a plan for your life no matter how jacked up your choices were. Just make better ones today. It's an outcome God wants. So, I want each of you to know today you are thought of, loved for who you are, by God and others watching this ministry. I will be praying for God to put a plan in motion for you moving you from where you are to where He wants you. Just give Him the glory for where you are headed because we are all going somewhere. I love you guys and look forward to hearing how God has touched your lives.



Kenneth Whitley donated his drawings to *MasterLife Ministry, Inc.* and not part of the art contest. Thank you for your wonderful drawings!



DONATED BY KENNETH WHITLEY
(Christine loved the firelight effect, incredible!)



"WALKING IN THE LIGHT"
DONATED BY KENNETH WHITLEY
(Rachel says this girl looks like my little Emery – Awesome!)

SPECIAL NOTICES

Please get your testimonies, articles, and art in by August 1 for the next newsletter.

SPECIAL THANKS

Bequita Mileur for typing the testimonies and articles, **Pat Phillips** for the copying of the newsletters. **Becky** for the web design. Nash Administration for allowing us to continue supporting dorm Christmas parties. **Scott, JD, Walt** for Christmas contributions.

Would you like to take part in our Newsletter? If you have interest in MasterLife and want to be part of our staff, we are seeking persons to provide us with:

1. Christian sports articles or page
2. Prayer needs and information and news concerning Christian issues inside prisons and outside nationally and internationally
3. A few good clean Christian jokes for each issue
4. Comments from family and friends on the outside
5. Any other Christ honoring ideas you may have

How Can YOU Help? We have many needs, you can help.

1. **Adopt-A-Life:** Christians adopt and mentor inmates
2. Prayer for the inmates, their families, their salvation, and their spiritual growth
3. Financial support either directly or through focused fund raising, to develop and support **MasterLife** groups in prisons
4. Office support in developing the Newsletter, website, etc.
5. Interact with the inmates, keep track of **MasterLife** groups, collect and distribute prayer requests

Various scripture passages from KJV, NKJV, ESV, NASB, LIVING BIBLE, and others

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