



MASTERLIFE NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 2017

MASTERING LIFE IN CHRIST

NO, we have not fallen off the map, it has been a busy year and time flies by. But know that you have been missed dearly, prayed for daily and loved tremendously. We hope everyone enjoys reading this issue of the ML newsletter. It is full of testimonies from several different groups that have been held in various prisons in NC. God has done amazing things through the lives of many faithful behind these fences. As well as volunteers and staff members. It is exciting to be a part of what He is doing.

The ministry has changed address since our last newsletter so write us at the new address. Share what the Lord is doing in your life and your location. The Lord has opened doors for 4 of the ML graduates to be a part of the Field Ministry program at Nash CI 😊 "congratulations". They have completed the first semester of a 4-year degree. All the men have worked hard at not only their studies but also in creating unity and positive atmosphere in the dorm. The plans for a Christmas party are already in the making. With the usual trivia game, food, talent show "smiley". Of course, there will be a ML study group going on during the Christmas season as well. After all it is all about learning about how to Master Life through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Take time out to reflect on what the Lord has brought us through, He is truly faithful even when we aren't. he not only brings us through tough times but He gives us good

brothers and sisters and fond memories as well. You guys have given me some really great memories that keep me encouraged as I journey through this life. I am grateful for you all and I hope you all have a merry Christmas. I will be listening to my Christmas music and give away some love. 😊

Brother Benoy, Nash Acts 20:24

Justification

by BRIAN "FISH", Caledonia

Romans 4:25-5:1 (Jesus our Lord) "was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification. Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ ". What is justification? What does this mean for the believer?

Justification is the act of God declaring men free of guilt and acceptable to Him by making a sinner righteous in His eyes. Through our saving faith in Christ, God declares the sinner "Not Guilty", the sin debt paid in full, the righteousness of Christ transferred to us. We now have peace with God, justified by our faith in the finished

work of Christ at Calvary. Why is this important?

God is holy, righteous and just. Therefore, He must judge sin. As God, His standard is complete perfection, perfect obedience to His commands. This presents a serious problem for us. We are not able to do this! The Bible tells us "no one is righteous, no not one", "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:10-12, 23). All includes every one of us. We are sinners since birth (Ps. 51:5) and by nature we are incapable of meeting God's righteous standards (Eph. 2:3). Our sinful state presents a debt before God that we cannot pay. No amount of time or human effort could make things right before Him and us. For this reason, Jesus came to pay a debt He did not owe, for us (2 Corth. 5:21). In doing so, He reconciled His church unto God, justifying us. Not because of anything we did, but by His perfect obedience, sinless life, redeeming sacrifice. As a Holy judge, God has ruled that our sin debt is paid in full, we are declared "not guilty" in His eyes. Therefore, we now have peace with Him.

In Luke 18:9-14, Jesus teaches the parable of "The Pharisee and the Tax Collector". This parable shows 1: the wrong and the right way to come to God, 2: who was justified and how, 3: God's amazing grace and mercy extended toward truly repentant people. The Bible often uses contrast (wheat/tares, sheep/goats, righteous/wicked, etc.). Here

we see a distinct contrast between a Pharisee and a tax collector. Pharisees were known for their arrogant self-righteousness and confidence that their good deeds would make them acceptable to God. In other words, they trusted in themselves (v. 9). We see this in his boastful prayer (Notice all the "I" statements in versus 11-12). Sadly, people still do this today; they trust in themselves. Many believe "I am a good person. I'm really not that bad. I've done this or that (good deed). God knows my heart. I'm sure He understands I've tried (to do or be good). After all, I'm not as bad as some people". Brothers, even what "good" a sinner may try to accomplish, the deed is still marred by our sinful nature, and none can love God at all times with entire heart, soul, and strength like He commands. Secondly, the Bible is quite clear about this matter of our heart (Mark 7:21-22, Job 14:4, Jeremiah 17:9, Isaiah 64:6). The Pharisee, like many today, do not acknowledge the full extent of their sinful nature or their true standing before God. Without Christ, we have no inherent "goodness or righteousness" (Romans 7:18, 8:7-8). There is no way a sinner can justify themselves before God on their own merit, nor will they stand before Him in judgement (Ps. 1:4-6, Mt. 3:12). Their debt still remains.

Therefore, we need to praise God for His grace toward those who come to Him in faith and repentance. Those who call out for His mercy shall receive it! Here we see the tax collector under conviction for his sin, in humility before God (vs. 13), aware that he stood sinful and empty handed before Him. He recognized that he was in fact a sinner deserving God's justice, guilty as charged. He cried out for mercy (Ps. 51:1-5), he expressed godly sorrow (2 Corth. 7:9-10), clearly placing his faith in God, and Jesus said THIS man went away justified; and not the other. Genuine humility is the proper posture of man before a holy God. We bow in confession that our sin is rebellion against Him, and in repentance we wave the flag of surrender. You must be brought low before you can get up (vs 14).

It is by faith we are justified. He takes our sinful rags and He clothes us in His righteousness (2 Corth. 5:21). Believers receive mercy and forgiveness from God (Ps. 103:8-12, Col. 1:14), made spiritually alive, "born again" (Eph. 2:4-10), taken out of darkness and into the light (Col.1:13), justified – declared not guilty, redeemed and forgiven through His blood (Eph. 1:7), sealed with the Holy Spirit as a guarantee that we are His and belong to Him (Eph. 1:13-14, 2 Corth. 1:20-22, 5:5), kept by the will of God through the power of Christ's intercession for His people (John 6:37-39, Heb. 7:25). This IS

amazing grace. The only right response to such divine gifts is to give Him wholehearted submission and discipleship, loving obedience, passionate worship, and desire for growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18). Praise God for His grace and mercy! Thank you, Jesus, for justifying us and reconciling sinful people to a holy God. Thank you for paying our debt on the cross

Purpose

by ASHLEY SIMONS

"delivered up for trespasses and raised for our justification". Amen. In Christ.

My story does not begin in the manner in which most would think of the stereo-typical inmate's childhood. I grew up with loving, Christian parents and grandparents. I have one brother with several cousins who were as close as siblings. Family closeness was emphasized. Sunday afternoons after church were spent alternately between maternal and paternal grandparents' homes where everyone would gather for food and fellowship.

Church was an ever-present part of our lives. My church attendance goes back before my earliest memories. Missing service was not an option. As a kid, I was awarded a pin for 9 consecutive years without missing a Sunday. The Sunday school teachers that taught me were true Bible warriors. They made sure to get the Word in us. They taught us to memorize scriptures and the order of the books of the Bible. The message of the gospel was presented foremost, and I accepted it and was born again unto salvation at the age of nine. I continued to learn and apply God's Word to my life. By the age of 22, I was asked to teach a Sunday school class for college age students. A couple of years after that I was elected and ordained a deacon. It was one of the most meaningful times in my life.

So how does this kind of beginning lead to doing time at Caledonia Correctional Institute? By small degrees over a period of years. Satan has an abundance of something most of us lack – patience. He watches us to know our vulnerabilities. In my case he started sowing seeds of pride. God gave me the ability to understand and learn things very easily. I never studied, never did homework, slept or talked through class but still aced every test. Teachers and other students would go on and on about how

smart I was and how much potential I had. When it came to morals, parents would tell their teen kids and young adults to look to me as an example. My peers would tell me that when they were tempted by sin they would think of me and how I would always do what was right no matter who was around or how uncool it might be.

None of those things were an accomplishment of mine. At first, I did not let the way people saw me go to my head. I understood that any good they were seeing in me was God in me. I was only trying to live out the Word that was in my heart. If I felt God was leading me to do something, I did it, if not, I didn't, things were that simple. I walked with Him and doors were opened, paths were aligned.

From the outside looking in apparently it seemed as though I was just floating through my life lackadaisically. When my Dad, who I look to be one of the greatest men I've ever known, thinks I needed to take a more proactive role in my future. I did not want to disappoint. Fast forward a few years where I am building a career under a mentor/father figure with the same philosophy of creating your own destiny. I have begun to believe that I am making things happen, that I am the master of my own domain. I start to believe people's praise and exaltation. In the process of building my future, I have committed so many hours to the cause I have no time for church. There is a reason the Bible tells us not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together. I have now separated myself from the body of believers. Scripture also tells us that Satan is going to and from on the earth like a lion, seeking whom he may devour. We've all seen enough nature videos to know that lions love to pick off prey that has been separated from the rest of the herd. The stage is now set for the takedown.

Remember that this transformation was subtle and gradual over a period of 10-12 years. Never was there a time when I thought I was going against God. Satan had cultivated a sense of pride in me that led me to believe that my plans were on plane with God's, as long as I could justify my ways by reaching a godly end, I was okay. Multiple circumstances converged to put me in a situation that needed to be handled delicately. Again, thinking I could find the right solution without consulting God. I figured I could make everyone happy while teaching lessons. Instead everything got twisted, exaggerated, lied about. Here I am.

The fall certainly hurt, a lot. For something like this to happen to someone like me was unthinkable to those around me. but it had

to happen for God to get my attention and humble me to the point that He could use me again. I was finally listening to Him so He could show me my faults and short comings. He led me here to the MasterLife program to get me spending time with Him like I once was. It is true that we are not here by coincidence. This group was exactly what I needed at exactly the time I needed it. The only thing Satan has accomplished is to show my weakness. We are all weak. Only when we acknowledge that, will God work His strength through us to bring glory to Himself where it belongs.

This experience is something I never would have planned or wanted. However, I knew that He would be with me through it all. He has said that He will never leave us or forsake us. I am confident also that He can bring about something great from the mess I've created. One of my favorite verses Romans 8:28 "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose". All I have to do is deny myself, take up my cross daily and follow Him.

TESTIMONY

Aaron A Wilkes, Caledonia

Yes, my testimony is that I have known Jesus for a long time and thank my mother, grandmother and aunts for helping me to find Jesus. Being raised around them was very beneficial, because from a youth, they taught me the fear of the Lord. I've walked with the Lord all my life, although, as with anyone, my journey has been marked by many mistakes, failure, and poor decision. But these were by God's design, as He used these experiences to build my Christian character. And, to the program; (thanks to them) that I got a chance to hear other's testimony and fellowship with other brothers that striving to get closer Jesus. Hoping God continues to bless you!

Jason Parker, Caledonia

The Lord Jesus Christ has been shepherd, father, and a friend in my life. I grew up without the presence of my biological father. When I was 18, I was diagnosed with Chron's disease. I was subjected to pain killers which opened the door to addiction. I felt helpless and wanted to escape reality. The higher I could get, the better. Drugs aren't cheap and it wasn't long before I was in jail, on my way

to prison, for illegally supporting my habit. Between breaking the law, trying to kill myself with drugs, and surrounding myself with unsavory characters, I can now look back and see where God had a hand in keeping me safe from eternal damnation. Don't ever think because God is all knowing, all fearing, omnipresent, wrathful God when you're disobedient; you have to remember God's love for you even when we are undeserving, unworthy, and fleshly creatures, God sent His Son so that I might have hope, freedom, love, truth, light, peace, purpose, and comfort from the Holy Spirit. I am blessed with this in mind to think, but can never fully comprehend, the magnitude of His undying love for a wretched sinner like me. I still slip and fall but with the grace of God I am able to get up and try again. Praise God for His patience with a hard head like me. I'm sure you all have heard how hard my head really is. Just remember that God made this head. It may not be the prettiest but it gets the job done. Thank you, Jesus Christ, for the opportunity to share my testimony. May Christ shower me with the Holy Spirit, increase my faith, and guide my steps to a closer, more intimate, walk with Him.

Andrew Beck, Caledonia

I have always been kind of a loner always messing and never caring who I hurt. Since I found God I really try to get along with people and I care if I hurt someone or not. Because of God I am trying mend some of the bridges I broke in my past life. I still am not a good talker but I like to listen which is something I couldn't do before. Because of God I am a work in progress. And that is a lot better for me than the route I was going. MasterLife has made the studying sure helps me remember and learn stuff better. Every day I work to better my relationship with God.

Dewayne Hunter, Caledonia

One day I was on the unit and was talking to a barber about some barber supplies and the conversation jumped to "MasterLife" for some reason. I had heard about MasterLife but never experienced it. He told me to show up and bring a friend. Well I told him I would and came back to the dorm to talk to a close friend of mine and I already knew that he doesn't do the church thing. Well after me and my friend talked, I added that a nice meal was planned at the end and he said he would go just one time because I asked him to. Well to make a long story short, we are both still in MasterLife and we are completing it. His story is total but like mine to let everyone know, MasterLife has taught me how to do things better, me as a person and a son and

father. I went to MasterLife to see how it works. I grew up in a Christian church and family. So, everything I was learning the first day, brought me back to when I was younger

Jeffery Reddick, Caledonia

My testimony is the Biblical knowledge which I acquired and the fellowship of sharing with people who read and study the Bible. Yet it is insurmountable knowledge to be acquired from the Holy Bible. Somehow, I am still a baby in Christ which I am still learning and growing in what I've acquiring from the Holy scriptures. For I've discovered to read the Bible is an everlasting journey which I once travel on this life which I live from day to day.

Jerome Harris

I am from Philly, I was raised out of the church, I ran around on the streets selling drugs, robbing people, and trying to sleep with as many women as possible. I went to prison in Philly when I was younger and did my time and went right back to the same life I was living. I came to NC selling drugs and got put back in prison. I go next year when a friend asked me to go to MasterLife, I knew I needed to change. In just this little time have been going, God has put people back in my life that I thought were gone. I really enjoy learning about what Jesus has done for me.



Anthony White, Caledonia

My name is Anthony and I've been incarcerated since November 2008. During the time that I was waiting to go to court I prayed at least three or four times each day hoping that God would answer my prayers by sending me home. Unfortunately, I was sentenced to 18-22 years in prison. Once I got my time, the praying slacked up to about one time a day.

Over the past 8-1/2 years I've experienced a lot of ups and downs. The love of my life (my two oldest kid's mother) abandoned me, the man I looked at as a father (my stepfather) passed away, and that's just to name a few.

Once I started seeking Christ the way I was supposed to, my life changed for the better. Not only did my kids come back into the

picture, I was blessed to know that I had a third child, I may still have to do the other 9-1/2 years, but I don't have to do them alone. Not only do I have my kids in my corner, I have their mothers as well. My mom was also a part of my support system. I know that God is the center of all of this, and He will never leave me or forsake me.

I thank God for all that He has done for me, and everything that He will do in times to come. My life is great now that Christ is a part of it.

Jackie Massey, Caledonia

Since I have been coming to MasterLife; I understand more of what I read through MasterLife than ever before.

The enlightenment that I received through these studies have enriched my belief in the Word of Jesus. Through MasterLife I've enriched my belief and filled my soul with inner peace. Before I struggled with many things inside myself. Through these studies the turmoil has been dissolved into peaceful knowledge of the Word and I know there will be peace and strength in His love as well as strength I've gained from others that I have studied with in the Word. Being able to fellowship with others in my group has given me the hope I needed even after all my struggles. I found joy and so much peace. The love and support has brought me so much needed happiness.

May of 2001, I was told I had cancer. After hearing this news, I felt my life was over so I started to pray to God seeking answers. Emotion, tears and regrets that I was not complete and the feeling that if I died of cancer what would become of me? so I prayed and I called upon the Lord for help. As soon as I started to pray I felt relief. I began chemo right away. God answered me and after several treatments I was told my cancer was in remission. Sixteen years later, my faith has grown but MasterLife has brought a true feeling of completion and accepting of the Lord and His love. Amen.

Charles A. Batchelor "Chuck", Caledonia

This is my third year in MasterLife and my first time being a group leader helper. Craig was our group leader. I just helped him when I could. Each year my walk with my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ gains more abundantly. Quiet time really works. I'm thankful the Lord has blessed me with a single cell so I am able to get alone and study the Word and listen to wonderful ministers on the radio. I recommend the following: Adrian Rogers (Love Worth Finding), Charles Stanley (Intouch Ministries), and David Jeremiah

(Turning Point). There are many others on AFR, GOMIX, His Radio and BBN radio stations. AFR also has a conservative and Christian talk radio shows, as well as real news. This is what keeps me sane and sober in this place. I want to thank all my fellow brothers in MasterLife starting with the one who got me involved to begin with, my brother and home boy "Benoy". I love you man. Next, I want to thank the rest of the group leaders for their time and dedication and love: Brother Kenny, Tim, Zeek, Jimmy, Mr. Lee, Jeff, Luke, Tony and the rest of the third-year guys who have helped. Also, David who has been blessing since Rudy shipped. I miss Rudy and hope he's getting along well at Nash. One more shout out goes to my brother Brandon Potter. I hope you and your family are well and walking with Jesus. We've tried it our way and look where that has gotten us. Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father any other way John 14:6. Last but not least I want to thank each of the volunteers starting with our blessed musician Mrs. Roberta. Thank you for touching each of our hearts with songs from heaven. Thank you, brother Gene, for your wisdom and gentleness. Thank you, brother Farmer, no one's go to sleep when you are giving the talk. Thank you, brother Warren, for your help keeping everybody organized and on track. May the Lord continue to richly bless each and every one who took part in the MasterLife program. Some special thanks go to Travis Mileur whom, I hope to meet some day, Calvary Baptist Church and First Baptist Church of Rocky Mount for sponsoring the program, and Diane Dover for the wonderful prayer cloths and Elaine Seymour for the beautiful certificates!

May the Lord bless each and every one mentioned and the ones I forgot to mention.

Devin Pallone, Caledonia

I begin my story by saying I wasn't raised up in a Christian home. My family was (and still is) broken. My mother and father divorced when I was 5 years old living in New Jersey. I have 2 older brothers, 1 older sister, and 1 younger sister. My mother remarried as my father was in and out of prison. We never heard from him.

My step father was a correctional officer in NC. So, we moved down here which was my biggest challenge. My brothers and I had to go to 3 different elementary schools in the span of 1 year because of fights. It was all racial. Blacks hated us simply because we were white, and the whites hated us because we were Yankees. It was a never-ending war that we never initiated.

My brother Mike was a father figure to me. At a young age we got into drugs, alcohol, and women. By the age of 12 I went through deep stage of depression using music, skateboarding, and self-mutilation as my way out. My family was distant and we struggled financially all the time.

I got into guns quick and soon got into robbing. At age 17 I was doing well. I was enlisted in the Marine Corps and engaged to an older woman than me. I was a mechanic at the time and still in school. I eventually signed out of the Marines the day before going to MEPS over my fiancé. A month or so later I got busted trying to sell a handgun at school, placing me in jail, and losing my fiancé. My depression became worse. I got out on probation and ended up in a hospital after cutting myself too deep.

I began to do well. I quit drinking, smoking pot and my older sister invited me to church a few times where I met women. I was still blind to who Christ was. In fact, He was only a baby in a manger on Christmas to me, nothing else. I soon fell back into the alcohol and smoking pot, and yes, the women. I was dating a stripper which led to a fist fight with my brother Mike in our parents' house leading to us getting kicked out. By this time, I'm 18 years old. I had my own place sharing rent with another guy. We threw massive parties every night and to me things were well. Until one day he decided to attack someone. We thought she was dead and I helped him to dispose of the body.

The next day I'm in jail with Attempted Murder and kidnapping. All I could do was release my anger through fighting, especially after my co-defendant walked. I spent a year awaiting sentencing and an older gentleman confronted me. he saw a Bible on my table and asked I read. I told him "not really". The Bible I had was for blunt papers. He then asked if I wanted to read with him, so I did. He taught me a lot and then I accepted Christ into my heart. Slowly I began to change. I quit fighting, arguing, and smoking.

Eventually I was sentenced to 15-18 years. I went to Polk for processing and straight to Foothills. When I got there my case manager said my time was 22-27 years and I was upset. Yet the faith I had established in Christ kept me calm. Two months in my stay at Foothills I was invited to a Kairos weekend. It brought me even closer to Christ and showed me what the church should be like. The next 3 years I stayed at Foothills. The Chaplains offered me a job as Chaplain assistant, so I accepted. God really opened so many doors for me. My desire to study, pray and be an example enlarged as my desire for worldly

things decreased. Soon enough I was asked to help lead some Bible studies which was a great opportunity to grow more with some of the men. Never before in my life did I ever think would help teach a Bible study. But that's just how God works. My concern for others grew as well. My heart was made soft. My family not being Christian really burdened me. So, I prayed, fasted and pleaded for their salvation. My sentence no longer mattered, it was in God's hands. Leaving Foothills was hard, but I left and went to Pasquotank and two months later came to Caledonia. Being 15 minutes from home than 5-1/2 hours made a difference. I didn't physically see my family but two times in my time at Foothills. By God's grace I was able to hold my mother's hands for the first time and pray with her. God also made a way where my sentence to be fixed. Looking back, I notice how much God has transformed my life. And how often He answered our prayers. A friend of mine at Foothills was a high-ranking gang member. Also, a non-believer. He asked me one day to pray for his aunt who was shot in the back of the head. So, we did, him and I, the whole church prayed. Not only for his aunt but for him as well. Praise God! My friend came to me crying saying his aunt will make it. She just left ICU and is even walking. Even greater was seeing that man put his trust in the Lord as his personal Savior and leaving his gang. I have been blessed to witness many stories and testimonies like this. We often think that God stops moving. That was the devil's lie. God is always on the move. By His love and grace, He changed everything about me. He brought II Corinthians 5:17 to life in me. It has been hard living as a Christian but at the same time easy. I've never been more at peace especially under the trials, temptations, and attacks from Satan. All goes to the glory and power of God.

Gary L Hays II, Caledonia

My personal Christian story is an identifiable one. I have swayed, dodged, and fought against the Lord. I've dreaded church more than I dreaded an imminent 13-hour day at the cannery. But as every Christian knows, the Lord will find a way to reel you back in. I can imagine His infinite face saying "okay Gary, enough is enough. It's the easy way or the hard way". I usually choose the hard way. Not so much anymore. I find that life is easier if you act like there is a God looking down on you. Trust and believe, I know what it means to be mad at God. When you put faith in something, real faith, and it lets you down continuously, you start to lose faith. But why is that? Most of us have favorite NFL teams, right? And usually, year after year, that team

lets you down. But we still have faith, real faith, that they'll be successful next year. Why is it that we don't depend on God like that? Just something to think about. This whole Christian journey starts with betterment of yourself. Now that is an everyday battle. I wake up every morning an angry individual. Why? Because my old self always wants to come back. The ignorant me, the me that put me in here. I must keep that guy in check. Truly, it takes a strong will and help from the Lord. You cannot do it yourself. If you try, you will fail. Next thing you know you will be wearing sin like your brown clothes. It'll be an everyday thing. But the truth of the personal battle is this, no matter what a person may say or see, God knows your heart. He can see what you do in private and that's all that matters. Eventually, others will see it too. They'll recognize it on you like a new haircut. Especially the strong in faith. It's a spiritual thing. Just like the real recognizes the real, Spirit recognizes Spirit. So be honest with God and yourself. If you are mad, tell Him you are mad. If you want to curse him out, curse him out. I promise, on everything I love, He'll tell you like He told me "Finally, some honesty". Stay strong everybody, never ... ever give up, and pray for me as I pray for you.

Jesse Bracey, Nash

Greetings to all MasterLife family members, I do want to greet you in the name of Jesus and love. Well. Our last MasterLife class at Caledonia was good and I really thank the Lord for my group and its leader Jimmy Pennell who did an excellent job of teaching the material and I can tell he sat at the feet of Brother James Benoy. Now Brother Benoy and I have moved to Nash Correctional to move into a new phase in life and we ask that you all keep us fervently in your prayers as we start school August 21st with SEBTS out of Wake Forest University.

Never thought this would be, but God had a plan. Be blessed family and Lord bless. Blessings to the church at Caledonia. "It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes" (Ps. 119:71).

Jimmy Pennell, Odom

Greetings Brothers! I pray that each of you are standing firm in the Lord in whatever situation you may be in. I want to express my love, gratitude and respect to all my brothers at Caledonia, (in no specific order): Tim J., Tim S., Zeke, Walt, Kenny, Luke H., Eric, Jolly and of course Michael. Thank you all for your love, support, kindness and patience for the frustration and irritation that I displayed

while the Spirit has worked on me. It's not always a "pleasant" experience when the Spirit is moving, leading, forming and shaping an individual. We are called and trained to be soldiers for Christ. Soldiers sometimes fear death, have doubts, worries, uncertainties, but he puts those aside to do his duty. So, must we.

The words of Jesus spoke in Matthew are beautiful to the reader, but we sometimes neglect to fully appreciate what we are commanded to do. Love our enemies, bless those that curse us, turn our cheeks, don't judge, examine ourselves for fault, turn from anger and to forgive because we are forgiven. This is where the rubber meets the road so to speak. To love, to forgive, to not judge when everything in our minds and in our flesh, is crying at us to lash out, strike back, say something hurtful. Lately, my lessons have been focused on pride. Before I left Caledonia, Brother Eric said that maybe God is purging me before I go back into the world. Now I reflect that this is exactly what He is doing.

Recently God has restored my family to me just like I prayed for. If you are reading this and have also experienced this blessing, praise God! We must also be aware that there is still healing and forgiveness that must continue to take place. Stand firm because God is still working, teaching, training, shaping, forming and purging. Instead of praying for our wishes to be granted and for ourselves and our loved ones to be delivered from whatever affliction or predicament we happen to be in, let us pray for strength, peace and for God's will to be done in our lives and our loved one's lives. In Luke 8:26 the scripture spoke of a man with an unclean spirit, haunted by demons. He walked among the tombs and was a madman and lunatic. I was that man. Jesus healed that man and he desired to go with Jesus on His mission. Jesus told him to return home and tell everyone what God did for him. I think that's what He wants me to do too. Go back home and tell everyone what God did for me. Next year at this time, if God's willing, I will be at home with my wife and kids again. I guess God brought me here to continue my training. I don't feel ready yet, but who does? When God says you're ready, you're ready. My family doesn't know the Lord so I must go on the battlefield for them. I have to try and bring the message to them. What else can I do? I know that I will need all the weapons God has given me. I love them and I pray that they will know that God loves them as I learned that He loves me. With God's grace, I will strive to be a good shepherd and a good steward over what God has again entrusted me with. The Lord is our strength. I will

never forget the lessons I learned in MasterLife or those who delivered them. There is a battle going on, so armor up! To Weston and Mike, I meant what I said, I never had friends on the street that are as good of friends as you two men are to me, who I met in here. You both are my brothers at Caledonia, God bless you and I love you all. To Weston and Jesse B., hang in there, you'll make it. God has given you both a calling. You both will make fine pastors. To Webster, God bless, I pray your health is returning. I'm in the congregation and the choir here at Odom. I'm playing the guitar and praising God every day. Aaron C., the Bill Glass Ministries are here every week, just like Cale. Let us continue to pray for all at Pasquotank CI inmates and staff alike. Amen. God bless you all until next time.

Marvin Harris, Marion

To be honest, I do not have testimony. Not because God hasn't been involved in my life, but for that very reason I say I don't have one. God wakes me up every morning and gives me the strength and ability to make it through each day and given the circumstances I got through each day unharmed. I avoid trouble each day. I'm fed each day. I wake up each day in my right state of mind. I'm in good health and my loved ones are doing well. More importantly, I have a release date. God blesses me every day. I didn't start with the MasterLife program nor will it end with the MasterLife program. MasterLife has helped me realize my true blessings and by doing so it has helped me prioritize my life in the way it should be. Things I used to think mattered are no longer even a concern. Life has a new meaning to me. No, I'm not perfect. I still have temptations. I still struggle with the flesh. I'm still growing but I am very appreciative about the MasterLife program. MasterLife did not "give me a fish", MasterLife taught me "how to fish". I say that because MasterLife didn't give me a testimony, it taught me when every day you see me with a smile on my face, I AM THE TESTIMONY.

Michael Able, Caledonia

First of all, I been in here just about all my life 44 years all together, and I enjoy coming to the MasterLife program, and I have gotten better. I learn so much about people who really love God, I'm talking about the volunteers, I felt very comfortable around them, they make you want to come, I learn so much about love and caring for other people, and about God's love for us and I'm going to keep inviting change in my life and that's what this program is about change and

that I have changed thanks to coming to this program and I'm going to keep getting better. I love God and I got a lot out of this program. Thank you.

Richard Morton, Caledonia

To start, I came here to get closer to my Lord and Savior. MasterLife is the only Christian service I attend. I need to stop making reasons why I can't attend other services. I need Jesus more now than I ever had. When I attend service at MasterLife I learn about what I need to do to live the life I need to live and be a Christian I have to be. I strive hard every day to do what is right. I know if I keep at it, it will work. I know following others is wrong but following God will never be wrong. It's a battle each and every day. I do know there's a plan that God has for me. Hard or easy it's meant for me to deal with it, to do the best to be a better Christian and a better person. I want to thank the people who help people like me to be able to come to MasterLife and make it possible. Thank you and God bless.

Robert Clapp, Scotland

I came to MasterLife to see how it works. It's a very great program to have for fellowship. My journey has been up and down, have made mistakes along the way, but I knew coming to MasterLife was the best decision I have made. I have known life is very hard, sometimes you have to have the Lord Jesus Christ in your life just to wake up the next day to breathe to just get during a day. He always holds your hands or carry you or walk with you every day. I have always known the Spirit of God was touching me, I wish everyone can experience what I feel. Also known the spirit of my ancestors, I'm a Native American Indian (Cherokee). Just like we do in MasterLife in a circle we are in Full circle in Native American service too. While thanks to leader and member of MasterLife for having this program.

Swain Jones, Hyde

I like to give honor to God, who's the head of my life, and means everything to me. I like to thank MasterLife for helping me to be a better man of God. I learned about the Disciple's Cross, the Cost of Discipleship, the books of the Bible, and how to fellowship with others. I just thank God for everything He did in my life. So, God bless the MasterLife family. I love ya'll.

Timothy L Headen, Caledonia

Something used to pull at me from hearing the church music from across the street. I would find myself singing to the songs that

they sung on numerous occasions but I could never push myself to go. I was introduced to a life of crime at a young age (11). I learned from the best and soon I was caught up in the lifestyle. The 1st time that I got caught stealing I thought that it would break me but it didn't. My little brother Jerome learned from my mischievous ways and soon we were a team. We would rob any store that had money. In 1990, me and my brother, were separated. We both were sent to reform school. While I was in reform school I went to church but I couldn't latch on to who Jesus was. We (me and my brother) were set free after earning enough points to get out. Upon arriving home, the church was at their normal, and I could still find myself singing along to the songs until the church closed. The following Sunday morning I got up, put on my best clothes, and I was on the steps of that church ready to find out about who this man they called Jesus was. Once I was in the church, I was distracted with one of the young girls that sang in the choir and I didn't learn a thing. I went right back to the lifestyle of crime. I was addicted to it. I met this girl that nobody liked in school. Her mom was a bona-fide Christian. Once she found out that I was liking her daughter, she pulled up on me one day and rolled down her window. Her words were short and sweet "Be ready for church Sunday at 8am, no excuses!" there were no smiles about this and I knew that she was serious. That Sunday came and I was ready to go. I got in the back seat with my girlfriend and we were driven to church. Once inside I that there were small mats placed upon the floor. People went and knelt on them to pray. I was the only one wasn't on a mat so I was motioned to come and pray to God but truthfully, I didn't know how. It didn't take long for me to return to my addiction. One day one of my friends offered me a gun for \$35 dollars and me and my brother bought the gun. Twenty minutes later we were trying the gun out in the back yard. My mom came out and begged me and my brother for that gun but we wouldn't give it to her. No matter what she said we wouldn't budge. When she saw she couldn't get it we finally left. We were broke and we needed money. By 8pm that night me and my brother and crime partner had killed a man for his money. Once I was in the jail cell and was able to lay on bunk, I could hear my mom asking me for that gun all over again. I could hear the church songs too. If only I had listened to the song "God is trying to tell you something" more clearly, then maybe my calling would have come much sooner. I'm in a place now where I can listen. I'm still not 100% but I believe. I know who my Lord and Savior is and that is Jesus.

Since coming to MasterLife I have become closer with my Lord and Savior. I know how to talk to my Lord using quiet time techniques. Fellowship involves other people to fellowship with. I was always one who wanted nothing to do with other people when it came to God. I'm thankful for signing up for this program because now I have become friends with people that I don't even know. I know that it's still God being in my life. All I have to do now is to keep my eyes on the cross.

Timothy Rankin, Caledonia

MasterLife has been a great help to me, before my walk with MasterLife, there was no walk with Christ. I always did the worldly things. I used to chase women, I loved sexual immorality. Love to get high, thought it was sure, did not even know what serving God was, until MasterLife

. I lived a life of crime before coming to prison, stealing, selling dope, and hang with the wrong people. Now I have changed since learning what God done for me by sending His son to die. I want to be more Christ like, spread His word to others, and obey His commandments. I want to grow more in His word where I can pass along to others. I want to be a better father to my children. I stopped getting high. Pray God to lead me in my daily walk.

Tony Floyd, Lanesboro

After carefully reading the vision for MasterLife, and the first two bulletins, I was compelled to come get some spiritual knowledge to help me develop a more intimate relationship with God. I have much knowledge of the Word since I was raised in the church, but living and applying it is two different stories. I was professing God but I didn't know what came next. I always had a problem figuring what to study, the right or wrong way to pray, and I sincerely want to change my way of living. I would always use the excuse: God is judging the intention of my heart to slack. The MasterLife program is helping me to develop the spiritual skills such as: spending time with God (quality time, quiet time), live in the word (journal, applying what you read to your life and write notes in journal on what God gives to you concerning the scripture), developing a strong and effective prayer life and finally witness and fellowship. All in all, I have greatly benefited from the MasterLife program and the extra bonus is the fellowship where the brothers can break bread together. I personally would recommend this class to others seeking to do better or wanting a deeper understanding and appreciation for God.

Walter Finley Jr., Caledonia

I was shy, timid, reserved and quiet for the majority of my life except when I was working. I was always afraid to offend someone if I "preached" the gospel to the ears of friends or coworkers. Soon after entering the military I got put career, sex, money and games at the center of my life instead of my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Later as I change careers three more time searching for the fulfillment my life came crashing down. I was diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder. Not long after that series of events starting more than 8 to 9 years earlier led me to jail two weeks after I moved from Chicago to North Carolina (where I had to live for some years in the past).

After coming to prison and earlier submitting my life back to Christ completely, I went to the MasterLife program. Now that shy, timid, reserved and quiet guy was made brave, bold, unleashed, and loud for God by God. The MasterLife program forced me to dig deep into God's Word and look deeply into myself.

I matured spiritually, mentally and because I was able to focus on my martial arts again I matured physically too. All thanks to Jesus Christ and taking the MasterLife program that first time. I also was a group leader in the past classes except this one. I chose to be a sponge this class since this is my last MasterLife class, God willing. God bless the Family of Jesus Christ! Peace.

William Graham, Caledonia

Dear Father as I set here help me to understand what "You" want to show me? And give me understanding of what "Your" word means. Let "Your" words be inspiring to me so that I may live the way that You would have me. "Your" Holy Spirit have taught me many things. He has taught me to put "You" first and others before myself so I now thank "You" for that at this time. Cause it was very hard for me to do it myself. My Father, I'm still working on how to do "your" will. So, please help me find the way forward with my life and to do "Your" will, cause sometimes I'm not sure what I should do next. I now asking "you" with all my heart to give me wisdom and confidence, to do "Your" will and mine. Father I now give "You" all of me this day. Giving thanks to my Lord and savior Jesus Christ for saving me. I now thank You for the peace of mind and the love I have for others as well as for myself. You have brought me a long way God and for me to look back and see where I came from I know I could not have made it without You. To this day I now know what love, peace and happy is. Thanks to "You" and Your Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Thomas "Skip" Skipper, Caledonia

I have been a gang member and drug dealer since I was 12 years old. I also caught my first charge at that same age. I was charged with 5 counts of attempted murder but it got dropped to attempted 1st degree arson. That was the beginning of my life of crime but it was the first time anything good happened to me. My uncle told me to thank God, but I didn't want to hear it, I put it off as me having a good lawyer. I've always had questions but never any answers. If God exists, why does He let babies and good, innocent people die? If He made Jesus, who made Him? I know some questions don't have answers I want to hear but it doesn't stop me from wondering. I am 26 years old and I'm still doing the same things as when I was 12 but I've come a long way. I've just spent the last 4 years in prison for nothing. I am a practicing Native American but I joined MasterLife to see if I could learn something. My questions still haven't been answered but I have learned a lot about Jesus and why He died for our sins. That's something we can never repay and the kind of love almost all of us will never be able to comprehend. I want to thank all the volunteers that have made MasterLife possible and when I go home I won't stop searching for answers. I also thank all of you for allowing me to attend and learn all that I have.

Jonathon Berry, Caledonia

It's difficult to write a testimony because it's still a work in progress, by God's grace I'm still alive and given another opportunity to fully allow Him to work in my life, which I can honestly say I haven't done. I had moments when I was, I believe, led by the Holy Spirit to act on a situation of a person's life, and many times I've listened. There have been times where I haven't though. I still struggle with certain things - until I can lay these aside and live according to His word. I know I'm hindering my walk with God, not allowing the Spirit the opportunity to work through me, God doesn't need me for anything, but at the same time I can be of great use if quit being a hard head and let those desires of the flesh be put to rest. So, in short, right now, my testimony is I'm still here and know that God still wants me to return to Him. Praise God! This world is so full of division and hate but there are still strong men and women of God doing what He called us to do. Be the light in the dark and I thank Him for that because without that I don't know if I ever could have believed. So right now, believe without a doubt, Jesus is who He says He is, it's up to me to let Him lead me while I'm here.

James T.

My testimony starts with "Help Me". Not something a prideful person likes to admit. Even as a Christian, we are always under attack by worldly things and people. Sometimes we don't even realize we're at war until you're in trouble, then pride keeps you from finding fellowship because you don't want to admit you've made a mistake. No one is going to know your emotional problems. I learned through the Disciple's Personality how to tell where my emotions needed to be, and that my spirit will teach me God's ways to glorify His Son in a battle that begins on my knees in prayer. You can't help others without helping yourself through fellowship with our Father's word through His Son Jesus Christ.

Turning Point by Elder T Gardner

It was September 11, 2006, when my wife of 9 years didn't come home as scheduled! She was down at Bethel's Police Department filing charges against me; in which, pulled me from a life of drugs!

I left home on that night, only to turn myself in to the law, after showing up at my parents' house, in another county, upon being tipped off that I was there!

After making bail, I was asked to go to a church service by one of my mom's friends. I went since a DVPO was taken out on me, I wasn't allowed to see my wife or kids for an entire year!

Little did I know that my life was about to change dramatically! I was called up for prayer and I laid out in the Spirit before God, as a song was sung over me as I laid unable to move, touched by the hand and power of our living God, and I once was finally able to move, which must have been 30-45 minutes, I knew I truly had been set free from the devil, demon or spirit from hell that used my body. I've been full-force towards God ever since, not wanting to do evil, but good!

William Allison, Caledonia

I grew up in a home filled with all kinds of abuse. I was molested at 8 years old by a male cousin, then at ages 13-15, my Dad's brother molested me. Then at 15 years old I met an older man from church, he got sent to prison only for 2 years for molesting me.

I grew up being beat on a lot by my grandparents and father I seen them beat and abuse my mother as well. Growing up I felt like the only way I could have anything or feel what I thought was love was to allow people to do sexual stuff to me for drugs and

clothes and food. This way of living led me commit a crime at 16 years old but I didn't get charged until I was 17 years old and was given 20 years in prison.

I've been in prison 18 years and I started out on the youth spreads – Polk Youth, Highrise, Foothills and I went through hell. People used to spit on me, jump me, put shit in my hair, take my food. I was scared to defend myself. I stayed to myself a lot in my cell. If I had one cause, fear of inmates was in me.

First adult medium custody camp I went to was Morrison, I thought if I just hang around older men I'll be good, they will lead me in the right way. Well, wrong. They were nice alright, they would give me food etc. but I ended up doing sexual favors for food and protection. I had fear in my mind. I got into trouble at Morrison, ended up in closed custody at Marion and one day I said to myself I'm sick of living like this, allowing people to use me, and I swore to myself, no matter what, I'm gonna man up.

I did just that, I got into trouble with people, got into fights, didn't win them all but I'm not the person I use to be, who allowed people to use me or just run over me. What else worse can be done to a man, I'm not perfect but my God brought me through my hell in these prisons.

I will be released soon from prison but for anyone who has been in my shoes, I want to say never give up, never give in, God is with you, and He didn't bring you this far to leave you, you're never alone, not even in the darkest cell, He is there, He has been with me all my life. You may wonder or you may know my God has a better life ahead of me, to use all I went through to help someone, and with His help I'll do as He asks on me. God is good, He made the way for us and carried us when we couldn't go no more, He is our life, we live because of Him.

Jimmy Pennell, Odom

I was raised in a working-class family in Easton, NC. If you had asked my family they probably would have told you that we were "Christian" people. However, we didn't live like Christians do. We didn't go to church or pray together, or fellowship with other Christians. There was always a lot of arguing, fighting, and shouting in our house. My grandmother used to keep a large Bible in the living room and read from it occasionally. That was it. I had no one to teach or instruct me in the word of God, or His commandments. By the time I was six or seven I was already somewhat wild and rebellious. When I became a teenager, I began to experiment with drugs and get into

Rock and Roll music. My sister bought me my first guitar and it was a perfect fit for my rebel loner personality. I spent hours teaching myself chords and scales and getting lessons from older more experienced players. I began to play music in "garage-bands" and "open mic" gigs at the local clubs. I hung around the music scene and the college crowd. We fancied ourselves "free thinkers" and so-called intellectuals. I began to question the existence of God and I became an atheist.

As I drifted further and further into the drug scene and began abusing alcohol, my life began a downward spiral, out of control and I began to get into trouble and have brushes with the law. I eventually landed in prison with a lengthy sentence.

While serving my time, I got into programs to deal with my drug addictions. My body and my mind healed somewhat but my spirit still suffered. I studied Buddhism and Eastern philosophy in an attempt to achieve spiritual peace, but I never got real peace. Since I gave my life to the Lord now know that these things are pagan in the eyes of God and a sin. I was invited to play guitar in a church choir in prison. I was reluctant at first because of my beliefs but my desire to play guitar overcame my reluctance. I was doing it for the wrong reason, to glorify myself and not for the glory of God.

I met Brother Ben(wa) at Caledonia in 2015. I knew Ben's brother Mike from another camp several years ago. He talked to me about Jesus Christ in a way that I could relate to. Ben encouraged me to participate in the next MasterLife group at Caledonia. I prayed about the best I could and a small voice told me that I should "take the program, this is your last chance". I listened to the voice. I attended the MasterLife with a spirit of openness, receiving what was being brought to me.

I learned that the reason I avoided church was because of strongholds I held. The reason why I was never filled of the Spirit when I did try church was because I never made Jesus the center of my life. I never knew that in order to be filled with the Spirit and lead a Christian lifestyle that I must read the word, pray, fellowship and witness.

These things must be done in accordance with one another, daily, not one or the other sometimes. When I learned to do these things, the veil was lifted from eyes after all these years and I could finally see! Tears fell from my eyes to the floor of the Caledonia Prison Chapel and I knew at that moment I was saved when I asked the Lord Jesus to

come into my heart. I confessed everything to Him. On May 14, 2016, I was baptized into the church here at Caledonia. Sealed by my Father a new man in Christ. I go to church regularly now, every Sunday. I read the word and pray and fellowship with Christian brothers every day. I am beginning to witness to other men. I joined the church choir and I play the guitar at our services. Now, for the right reasons. To glorify Him and to lead men to Him. My heart is filled with joy every time I am allowed to praise and glory Him this way.

I have peace in my life now. I have a counselor, a friend, a brother and a Father who will never leave me. I have brothers in Christ and we encourage one another and we lift one another up the name of Christ. God has delivered me from strongholds in my life and He continues to deliver me as I hold fast to His promises. No matter what happens to me now I know all things are the will of God. I am saved and sealed and under the blood. I try to live the right way to show Him I love Him, because I know now always that He loves me. Amen.

Webster Neumann, Nash

I am a 63-year-old who at the age of 13 gave my life to Jesus Christ. I did this on my birthday, so it had a special meaning for me. I was not really raised in a Christ-centered home, but it was a God-fearing home. Our family Bible was on the coffee table, on the bottom shelf. We were a very active family what with school and after school activities, while I was not very active in sports; I was involved with chess and chorus or choir, and the drama class.

Our times of recreation involved camping. First a walled tent when I was little, then my family got a "Pop-up" RV and finally as I got older we got a 35' long 5th wheel RV. During our summer vacations, we traveled to many different National Parks or we would visit friends (who also camped out) and spent weeks visiting. I even learned to water ski before I became a teenager.

Our "Church" time was varied, even though our family were Methodists, Dad would take us to visit many other denominations. Yes, I could say I went to Sunday School and maybe a mid-week service. There is an "analogy" about being a "fence-rider" ... about being neither "hot or cold", I (and my family) were basically "lukewarm", I knew what to do for Jesus Christ, but I was stuck in a rut. As I got older, but still in my "teens".

It was not until 2013, after I had spent 23 years in prison, and was 60 years old that I realized what a "stronghold" was and the real

way to be a Christian!!! I thank my Lord Jesus Christ for the MasterLife study that I signed up for in 2013 and for the Holy Spirit in allowing James W Benoy to enter my life.

Years ago, I was told that Jesus does not promise us a rose garden, that we would go through rough patches; there are many types of addictions a person can have and all of them can be overcome by the blood of Jesus on the Cross...but we must give up and put those strongholds in Jesus' hands. This I have done, but life has its consequences and sometimes those take time to resolve themselves. I want to thank all my brothers in Christ for their continued prayers.

From the Front Lines of Ministry - Nash

Rake - Hey man what's up with that Christian program at Nash?

Make - It's a seminary program, oh yeah that's a bunch of penitentiary Christians trying to hide behind the bible. you know what they are in here for?

Rake - nope, they are just using the Bible to get out of prison early, they think they are special or something, but I think they are a bunch of weak coward sissy-type dudes that cannot handle prison.

This is the perception that a lot guys have toward the people in the field minister program at Nash Correctional. **WRONG! NONE OF THE ABOVE!** Inmate.com can be a tricky place to get the facts from like a lot of other fake news sources. So, to set the record straight and a few thoughts from the front line of the program.

The field minister program that has recently started at Nash CI has selected 30 men to participate in a 4-year bachelor degree program. These men will be trained in pastoral ministry and counseling and then sent to various prisons across the state to serve their fellow inmates. Joe Gibbs Game Plan for Life – has teamed up with DPS and SBCTS college and decided these "lifers" were worth investing in. To actually have something to live for, has given hope to these men and to have DPS administration encourage and support them has changed the attitudes of a lot of inmates toward DPS. The instructors from the college are some of the finest professors available and are eager to pour into the men at NCI. One inmate said these people genuinely care! As if he had never had someone care for him.

To set the record straight, these men aren't your "run of the mill penitentiary Christians" in other words, these men don't fit the usual labels that are put on most prison Christians. The background of these men is: ex-gang members, ex-death row, super-max, m-con, double homicide, and habitual felons. They appear to be men who "ran hard" and kept it "one hundred", then something happened that changed their lives – Jesus step in and they came to their senses. Like Jesus' disciples these guys have put their past in the rear-view mirror and they aren't looking back. Some them say "they have been resurrected from the dead". While others say they feel like they have been set free from prison – God put them in Bible college – while others are just excited to go to the mission field to serve others. No more life sentence mentality, it is all about a life lived for Christ – "it's an adventure".

What are you guys learning, we are learning about how to think critically, learning how to research facts, and how to write clear and concrete papers. We are learning that God is faithful to His covenant, and He cares for us.

The first semester is complete, and everyone is looking forward to Christmas break. There has been a lot of hard work put into this project thus far and it's had some ups and down and bumps in the road. The main one is staying focused on Christ and what He has called them to do.

One thing is certain there is definitely a change in the atmosphere around these men. Whether it be in class or on the yard, they have a hope and joy that is evident to everyone and they walk with a purpose. In closing with the words of one of the students, "no matter how bad life may seem to get, all it takes is one decision to turn things around – yes Lord, send me, I will go".



From the Front Lines of Ministry – Avery-Mitchell

Brian "Fish", Avery-Mitchell

I wanted to write and let you know that we just finished a MasterLife Discipleship class right here in the cell block and that I had the blessing of teaching four very dedicated men all the essentials of the program. We met 3 nights a week for 2 hours at a time, for the last 5 weeks. We had perfect attendance and were able to be a "light" in this block, and even an example to other Christians.

The discussion and interaction was very good, their questions were insightful, and the overall interest level was very high. They won canteen prizes and we also had a huge spread of nachos (fully loaded) for our fellowship meal after the trivia game. When game was completed and the prizes distributed, before we began preparing the meal, I asked the men if they would each express what MasterLife for them and what they got out of it. I announce these men fully graduated and discipled.

Everyone was told how in 2010 Benoy came to my cell to ask if I would participate in his first MasterLife study at Alexander CI. At first, I really did not want to because I was very independent and preferred just to be by myself. But I also realized that I truly needed to step out in faith, come out of my comfort zone, fellowship with some other believers, and start actively living this faith I professed I believe. I knew there would be some ridicule and persecution because the environment we were in at that time. And there was. They tried everything to drown us out, discourage us, intimidate us, etc. – but Benoy kept teaching and we kept on learning through it all. After that class, he did one after another, and it started to increase interest among the onlookers. More and more people participated and I attended these studies, learned immensely, and as you know – he and I taught it for some time in the chapel. Well, I felt like there was a need in this block to share all that Benoy had taught me. He took the time and made the sacrifices so that I could grow in Christ – and it is my responsibility to do the same for others. Disciples make disciples. These men have been taught and encouraged to go and do the same. For as long as I am with them I will continue to encourage and mentor them – like Benoy always did for me. and when we all get moved around, like what always happens in prison; my prayer is that these four men will take what has been shared with them and share it with others.

Daniel Brook, Avery-Mitchell

Man, I just finished MasterLife. It was great fellowship. I watch men enjoy themselves as we learned the truth. As God worked through this thing it helped me more visibly to see my role in the body of Christ. I am glad I did it and wouldn't take it back for anything. Jesus was honored and lifted high throughout. He is the reason we were able to hear his commission, understand foundational principles, and together glorify His name.

Each of us in the group are different, all from different backgrounds, different life experiences. We came close to God together and grew in listening and applying good practices in our life through memorizing scripture, encouragement, the power of prayer, true fellowship, and strength in time of need.

For me I will go on from here a wiser Christian, aiming to abide in Christ and bear fruit. Praise the Lord for all His disciples.

Cecil Saunders, Avery-Mitchell

First, I would like to thank MasterLife to allow me to take this class. I have learned a lot by taking the class and I enjoyed it. What I learned the most and that will be with the rest of my life is that I am now a disciple for Christ. I fully didn't know what it would take to become a disciple for Christ. I know that I have to take up my cross daily, and follow Christ. It's not something I can do one day and then skip a day or more. I must do it daily. And by doing it daily, I know that Christ will shine through me so that others will see Him in me. Also, I have more courage to speak to others about Christ. I have been strengthened through this class I will fall but I will and can get back up on my feet and be able to help others get to know Christ and want to be disciples for Christ. It's truly a blessing to have the class. I wish it was all over the world so that all can learn about how to be disciples for Christ. This is exactly what this world need and we need it now. Again, thank you and may God bless you.

Justin Shoemake "Jay", Avery-Mitchell

Well I just finished with MasterLife here at Avery-Mitchell in NC. I've been hearing about MasterLife for a year now and thought it was pretty cool. I met a man that had the material and already took the class several times and the subject got brought up and we felt the Holy Spirit saying "yes, go ahead" to this. Going through it I learned not only new "deep stuff" but also the very basics to a Christian life. I believe I've grown closer to my brothers and a result of this class, I see just how much God is wanting to work in

mine and my brother's life. This series I recommend to all Christians, no matter what stage of walk they are in. now after finishing I can see why God blesses this study. I want to thank you and all who have not only support this class financially but also prayerfully. So now I can't wait to meet an individual or small group that I can share this study with.

Slade Hicks, Avery-Mitchell

Dear fellow brother and sisters. Hello, my name is Slade Hicks. Today we finished a MasterLife study and game. MasterLife has helped me focus on the troubles of my mistakes and gave me a solution to most of my misunderstandings with interpreting God's word. I see a lot of elements in God's word that I didn't see before. It also helped me realize how unorganized I have been with other paperwork in my life and how important it is to be organized.

Most importantly, how much God's word shows us how much God loves us. It's given me more hope than I thought I could ever have. And now I know how important it is to be a follower of Christ and disciple. The MasterLife program has played a major role and I am dearly thankful for everything that's been taught to me. Thanks, you all so much. I am praying for you all!



RETURN

by Shawn Walker

"... return to me says the Lord of Hosts, and I will return to you..." Zech. 1:3

Zechariah the prophet carried a message to the people of Israel at a very pivotal moment in their lives. They had recently been set free from their captivity with the Persians and the Babylonians. This newfound freedom brought much joy and hope to Israel. I can imagine that their exuberance and zeal must have been very close to what we experience upon coming to Christ and being set free from our captivity to death and sin.

The Israelites were set free in order to rebuild God's temple. They set about the task with a lot of zeal and enthusiasm, in very much the same way as many of us went about trying to share God's word and be witnesses to those around us. But then something changed. The people of Israel were harassed by their neighbors, the work became tiresome, discouragement set in, and the building stopped.

About fifteen years later, God spoke to the discouraged Israelites through the prophet Zechariah "... Return to me ...and I will return to you...". This message reveals so much to us about the heart of God. These people were despondent, disillusioned, and facing a daunting task. Yet God is there and He is beckoning His people to come back to Him. For those of us who believe that our salvation is a gift of God's sovereign grace, we must never neglect to see that much of the burden of what we will become is dependent upon our response to Him. If we have drifted from God, His call is to return to Him. God promises that if we will return, He will renew His relationship with us. James 4:8 promises that if we draw near to God, He will draw near to us. Matthew 7:7 guarantees that if we seek Christ, we will find Him.

I spent much of the last year battling sins and addictions which God had once delivered me from. I became caught in a vicious cycle where I would sin, feel convicted, turn to God, then become discouraged by the guilt of my sin. While I knew in my mind that the Bible says that God is eager and willing to forgive, I did not feel this in my heart. I tried and tried to overcome this sin in my own strength and will power. My center had shifted from Christ to the storm and I was sinking. As my own poverty and weakness was set before me the word of God came to me in Zechariah 4:6 "Not by strength or by might, but by My Spirit says the Lord of Hosts". This word from God reminded me

that victory would not be found by my own power, but by His Spirit.

This reminder, which God also gave Israel as they faced the daunting task of rebuilding the temple, spurred me to read further into Zechariah's message and there, in the third verse, I discovered God's heart toward me. "RETURN". If you are reading this and have become complacent in your relationship to God or you are locked in a struggle with some persistent sin, then I pray that you don't become satisfied with a relationship that is broken by sin and void of the power of His Spirit. I thank Him today for His irresistible grace and His mercy towards me. you will never see a man more miserable than a saved man who is living like he is lost. I'm glad I'm not that man today! But if you search your heart and find that you are, the solution is simple. Return to Him! And He will return to you! Oh yeah, did I mention, four years later the temple was built.

P.S. thank you Wes for making me read Ezra years ago. What a seed that was!



Why?

by Jonathon Berry, Caledonia

Why do we hurt the ones we love the most?

Can't understand it because it don't make any sense

Living life with regrets

Holding on to memories so that I don't forget

You live in my heart and in my mind, but I won't tell you

I lost you, but in losing you I found you

You're probably thinking I'm crazy

How could I love you and find something so amazing?

Truth is, I lost sight of what you meant to me back then

Lost sight of everything, blinded by a life of sin.

Didn't see that until I felt Christ within

Wish I could've seen things back then like I see them now

Wouldn't be looking at pictures of you, thinking, "If only somehow..."

Why do we hurt the ones we love the most?

Can't understand it because it don't make any sense

Indulging in the pleasures of this world, forsaking what is heaven sent.

Christ says we must become like children, and now I see

Nothing more truthful and innocent in the world, take it from me.

Nothing more precious than a child in a Father's eyes

In Christ, we see the way.

Thank God, a Father's love never dies.

Gregory Ross, Piedmont

I hope this letter finds you well in the wonderful Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I attended MasterLife with Brother Benwa back at Avery-Mitchell and was blessed greatly through the program.

As I read over the MasterLife Newsletter, I recognized many of my Christian brothers that I have met over the years. It's great that they are continuing in the faith of Jesus Christ through the amazing grace of our Father God. I sensed the prompting of the Holt Spirit to send you my testimony that is written in a poem. Although it is lengthy, each line describes my life from bondage to freedom in Christ. May it be a blessing to all who read it and most of all, may God be glorified as the great and good Father.

FROM BONDAGE TO FREEDOM

I walked in darkness and not the light;
 I thought this life was just a physical fight.
 Being bound in chains by my own sin;
 I had no peace or hope within.
 I thrived on pain was so full rage;
 My rebellion trapped me in its cage.
 I looked for freedom or so I thought;
 Not knowing or caring the bondage it brought.
 I sought fulfillment in the bottle and drugs;
 The daily quest to get a buzz.
 When all was gone I wanted more;
 My life it seemed a revolving door.
 Is this all to life in store?
 What about death? There's got to be more.
 I couldn't accept that all would go black;
 Was I ignorant? What knowledge I lacked?
 Naked and cold one day in a cell;
 At my lowest point, I felt this was hell.
 Not wanting to live, but only to die;
 I began to tremble, I began to cry.
 Never hardly before, I thought I was tough;
 Had complete control, though times got rough.

It was in this state I began to see;
 A way of peace for you and me.
 My burdens so heavy I could not bear;
 To carry them longer, I wondered who cared?
 I began to remember what Mom said to me;
 How Jesus had died to set sinners free.
 I rejected all that she had to say;
 And in my pride, I chose my own way.
 But the reality of my life had set in;
 No hope in this world, could I find it in Him?
 Would Jesus forgive me if I called on His name?
 Would He accept me, and free me from my shame?
 Before this was crazy, it sounded absurd;
 But now I believed the gospel I'd heard.
 On my knees in guilt, from the things I'd done;
 I cried to Jesus, "Please forgive them each one.
 Come into my heart and have mercy on me;
 Make me the new man you'd have me to be".
 I write to you friend; my witness is true;
 Christ will surely do what He promised to do.
 When the things of this world caused me such strife;
 In the end only Jesus could give me true life.
 A life full of peace, joy, and love;
 That can only be given from the Father above.
 Now my heart is filled with such heavenly bliss;
 And I have a new song that goes just like this.
 Father in heaven, how great you are!
 Thank you for salvation, through Jesus our Lord.
 Christ died at Calvary, to save you and me;
 Through the blood of Jesus, God's forgiveness is free.

MAILBAG**Tim Jones – Group Leader, Caledonia**

I truly thank God for being allowed to once again to be allowed to serve as a group leader in the MasterLife Discipleship Program, it has been more than your average Bible class and I have been greatly blessed by it. There is no doubt that I learned as much as the men I was blessed to instruct and share the Word of God with. Looking forward to next year's class as there is a very honest yearning to see how God will work in the lives of the men here at Caledonia. All around us, we daily see men hurting and weighed down with guilt and shame, and these men have been given a very real program to direct them to the only place that they will find lasting peace – Jesus! MasterLife can't save them but it sure leads them to the one that can – Jesus! There will always be programs seeking to help men change their lives, I can truly say that MasterLife is the one that sits high on that list, and God is pleased.

Aaron Pretty, Caledonia

To all my brothers in MasterLife I am still in the Lord Jesus Christ. I want to thank everyone in the ministry and I have been praying that someday I will be free of prison. I have been working on my case for years and with the good Lord Jesus Christ and everyone's prayers, I am looking to getting out of here soon one day. So, keep praying for me and I will always pray for you. Amen.

Aeric Whitehead, Caledonia

This is the 3rd year I've attended MasterLife. MasterLife is a way to fulfill a God give directive to fellowship. It's a place I can be myself and don't have to be ashamed about my walk with Christ. Even though I go through trials and maybe even slip up, I receive encouragement from my brothers and sister. It also gives me a stable platform from which I can grow spiritually. I enjoy the fellowship, the singing, the kind words, and the opportunity to build upon the foundation that's been laid down throughout my youth. Thank you for accepting me. love ya'll.

Anthony Smith, Caledonia

As a 3rd year participant and a servant, it was truly a blessing to see the light come on in some of the men who participated in MasterLife. I have never been so proud as I am now to be of service to men who want to know the Lord. To God be the Glory for the group leaders, the men who served, and most of all, the men who made a commitment to MasterLife.

Joseph E. Knight Jr., Caledonia

I thank God for opening my mind up to a lot of things. He has showed me the importance why I should study His word and to meditate and to listen. He lets me know that He can do all things but fell. MasterLife has proved to me, that fellowshiping with other believers helps you out where you are weak. It's a program that should always be around, John 1:1 stands out to me.

Kenneth Morris, Caledonia

MasterLife has been a real blessing to me. I started taking it in 2014. I took it in the visitation area and the gym. But I also took it in the dorm, with Benoy, and a few others. I made all the way through all four books. That was an exciting time for me because I start things and don't finish. But I am happy that these days I am seeing things through the end. When Benoy asked me if I wanted to be a group leader, I'll admit, I was kind of hesitant at first. I have a fear of failure. Something God is helping me with to overcome. So, the enemy began to mess with me, saying things like "you're going to fail, you can't do it, you don't finish what you start." I was in the cannery at one point, so I could not be a group leader working over there. I used that as an excuse. But then God made a way, and brought me out of the cannery, so now I didn't have an excuse. So, I said, "OK Lord, I will do it but I need you Lord God to be with me every step of the way." And God has done just that. I now have a deeper understanding and view of what MasterLife is really all about. I have gotten to see it from both sides. Being a group leader was the highlight of my life. I got to see men being blessed. Some were introduced to something new, some were back for either a second or third time. Either way, I got blessed by seeing others get blessed. I am so glad God gave me this chance. MasterLife to me is a wonderful program. I hope I get the chance again to be a group leader, but even if I don't, I'll take what I have learned with me where ever I go, for the rest of my life. Amen.

ARMOR PRAYER

by Brother Ben, Sold Out Soldier

Our Father who art in heaven how great your name is. I come to You today in the name of Jesus. For it is only by His blood that I am able to call myself your son. It is only by Him that I am totally cleansed from all my sins and made perfect in thy sight, oh God. It is only by Him that I have been given eternal life.

Today, I enter into Your presence with praise and thanksgiving. Praising You that I am Your child, that You love me, You chose me, You called me, You gave Your life for me, and You changed me. I am no longer a slave to sin, drugs, lust, lying, manipulating, cheating, stealing; these things no longer have power over my life. For You have given me the Spirit of power, love and sound mind. I am of God and have overcome them. Oh Hallelujah, I praise You, I worship You, I thank You.

I thank You for eternal life, I thank You for the truth, I thank You that You have revealed the truth to me. I thank You that You pulled me out of the pit of lies I was living and setting me on a firm foundation. I thank You for giving me a purpose; allowing me to be a part of Your work here on earth and in this prison. You called me, You knew my name in the matrix of my mother's womb, You said I am Your servant, ordained, a chosen instrument, a royal priesthood, a holy nation. You called me a special treasure. And above all, I thank You that NO MAN can snatch me out of Your hand. I have been sealed by Your Holy Spirit until that day.

I am no longer conformed to the thoughts of this world but I have been transformed in my thinking by the renewing of my mind. My mind is saturated with Your Word. Your Word is my Truth. It stands pure, it has been tested and never fails, it holds the very foundation of the world together and it will endure forever. My mind is made up and now I claim the mind of Christ because You said let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus and since He suffered for me, let me arm myself with the same mind.

Toady the helmet of salvation is firmly fixed on my head. Covering my mind. The enemy has no access to my thinking. I will set my

mind on things above, not on earthly things. Today I will think thoughts of good not evil.

I now take the breastplate of righteousness. To cover my heart, this is where my emotions are. I know that the heart is most

deceitful and desperately wicked. But You Lord have given me a new heart. I ask You now to search my heart, try my thoughts, see if there is anything wicked or wrong in there. Show me Lord, forgive me Lord, cleanse me Lord from all unrighteousness. Help me to overcome anything that is not pleasing to You. You tell me Your word that if I confess my sins, You are faithful and just to forgive me and cleanse me from all unrighteousness. I believe You, I receive Your grace and mercy. I forgive myself. I am righteous. You have clothed me with the righteousness of Jesus Christ. There is now no condemnation to those who live in Christ. You, Lord, become sin who knew no sin, that I might become the righteousness of God. The breastplate of righteousness is firmly fastened to my heart. I am righteous.

Today I will walk with the mind and heart of my Lord and Savior Jesus. I am filled with the fruit of His Holy Spirit and I will have the heart of a servant towards all men and bear much fruit.

As I put on the belt of truth I recognize that the belt holds all the Armor firmly in place. I will walk in truth today. I will not be deceived by the lies and tricks of satan. I will not compromise or water down the truth because of my feelings. I know the truth because Thy Word is Truth. You said if I continue in Thy Word then I am Your disciple indeed and I will know the truth and the truth will make me free. Free from the lies and deception of the world.

Help me Father to be honest in my words and in my dealings with other people today. Help me to be honest, help me to be honest, help me to be honest. Today, I will not allow the enemy to spread his lies by listening to him. I will not listen to foul talk, false teachings or anything that is unwholesome. For Your Word tells me if I do this then I am participating in his evil deeds. You are the way, the truth, and the life; no man comes to Father but by You.

My mind is Jesus, my heart is Jesus, I am rooted and grounded in "the truth of Jesus". I will share your truth today and fulfill your

great commission, by going out and telling people the wonderful things you have done.

Now Father, as a I put on the gospel shoes of peace. I will walk in peace with all men wherever possible. And I know You will make even my enemies live at peace with me when my ways are pleasing to You. You are my Prince of peace. Your peace will guard my heart and mind through Christ Jesus. In the middle of the storms You are my peace. You will keep him in perfect peace whose mind stays on You.

Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah! Thank You for Your peace.

Now I ask You Father to help me be ready in season and out of season, to share the gospel of peace, always being ready to give a testimony of the hope I have in You. My wonderful counselor, my mighty God, my everlasting Father, and my prince of peace. Pen the door of opportunity today, Lord, that I may spread Your gospel and someone might be saved.

As I step on the battlefield today help me remember that my weapons of warfare are spiritual and Your Spirit lives in me. my ammunition against evil is good and the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and temperance. As I walk in these I will take up the shield of faith that I may quench the fiery darts the wicked might bring at me.

Help me rejoice in my persecutions and remember it isn't me their rejecting, it's You.

SPECIAL NOTICES

Ron Hiebeck – going great, sends his love.

Jimmie McElreath – making MAP contract, Fantastic job! Don't ever give up!

SPECIAL THANKS

Thank you to **Rocky Mount Baptist Church** for their dedicated service in the MasterLife and Alpha programs at Caledonia. To the **Caledonia CI Administration** support, **Superintendent Vaughn and Mr. Duke**. Without you, there would be no program. To **Tim Jones and Zeke** in accepting a leadership role in next year's MasterLife program. For **Diane Dover** for the prayer towels and many other people working to make this a successful time Please forgive any miss-spellings, the typist is old but it was inspiring to read these many testimonies.

Help me to remember that You have overcome the world and so have I. I am in a fixed fight, I am on the winning side.

So, I will hold my shield up and advance in faith. I will not run when things go bad. I will not skip church when I am down and out, I will not speak defeat but I will have faith in You today.

I have a BA degree in faith. Believe and Action Equals Faith. Some may say they have faith without action but I will show my faith by my action. Hallelujah for that faith, hallelujah for that power, hallelujah for that strength. Hallelujah to the Lord on High.

I will always be armed with my sword. The sword of the Spirit is the Word of God. It is a double edge sword to be used on one side to fight the attacks of the enemy when he comes with temptation, on the other side it is used to cut into my heart and correct me when I am wrong. Help me always to remember that it is not a triple edge sword, it is not used to argue, or attack another human being. When I use it, help me to be led by the Your Spirit, my words graceful, seasoned with salt, and that I may use it knowing that Your word never returns to You void. Heaven and earth will pass away but the word of God will stand forever. Obedience, Obedience, Obedience; not my will but Thy will be done!

I now have on the full Armor of God. I have put on the Lord Jesus Christ and I shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. For He is my salvation, He is my righteousness, He is my

truth, He is my peace, my faith is in Him alone and He is the Word made flesh.

I am steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord ...

I have been crucified with Christ ...

I no longer live but He lives in me ...

Nothing moves me nor is my life done to myself. I will finish the race with joy and the ministry given to me by Jesus Christ to testify of the gospel of the Grace of God.

Now Lord, tell me what to say, tell me what to hear, tell me where to go, I surrender to Your will daily. I now pray for all men, kings, rulers, governors, my church, my family, my enemies, my friends. I pray that Your will be done and Your kingdom come. Grant me victory today in my battles that You may be glorified in all I do.

In Jesus name, Amen.



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

MasterLife teaches some very important skills for witnessing. It also teaches the men to start a relationship with Jesus without the religious hang-ups; it simplifies Christianity, and it creates an atmosphere that brings the church men and lost men together, thus tearing down barriers.

Mastering life in all areas of bible study, scripture memory, fellowship, witnessing, serving, behavior, relationships, the church, the community, the world.

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