



Photos8.com

MASTERLIFE NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 2018

MASTERING LIFE IN CHRIST

Amazing Christmas

By **Tim Russell, Nash**

Making a difference in people's lives is often thought to be something more than what it actually is. A major breakthrough is not the only indication that a difference has been made. Often times making a difference is as simple as changing the atmosphere people dwell in, if only for a night.

On Christmas Eve, a party was held at Nash Correctional Institution, with about sixty inmates coming together to hear the Gospel, play games, showcase talents, fill their bellies and share in an experience that none of them had witnessed before. Over and over men were heard saying, "I've been locked up (x-amount of years), and I've never seen anything like this." Those men ranged in incarceration times of three years to thirty-two years. Every one of the men involved expressed heart-felt gratitude and amazement.

One statement made by a young man in his twenties was particularly moving. He acknowledged, "I never had a Christmas this good out in the world". Who knows what type of impact this display of God's love will have on these men; for some it may be a lasting memory of what is possible, for others it may only be one night that was filled with light they don't understand. But it

is possible that this one night becomes the turning point in someone's life.

Not only was this a genuinely good time, it was inspiring and motivating, motivating men to stand up and be the warriors and mighty men of God they've been called to be. Soldiers on a battlefield go hungry; these men of God gave up their Christmas packages to provide for this party. Soldiers are given duties and expected to fulfil them; these men of God humbled themselves and performed the duties of some of the janitors for the night, in order to show the servanthood required by the Godly man.

This is what the Man of God does. Christians go into dark places and shine the light of Jesus Christ. They do not allow the naysayers and Pharisee's to discourage or deter them. This is how they fight the battle of Good vs Evil, and though they already know the victor, they fight anyways, because that is what a warrior does.

There has to be a special thanks to all the men and women involved in making this such a special Christmas. Brother James Benoy's aptitude at organizing such an event was instrumental to its success. The men and women who donated the food and prizes deserve to know that your contribution to the war effort will not go un-noticed, by God or men. Thank you so very much. To all of the men that donated their Christmas packages and sacrificed their own canteen,

we salute you. To Mr. Wolfe, Mr. A Smith, Mr. J Springs, Mr. K Angell and everyone who pitched in with the decorations, gift wrapping, and organization, know that people do recognize your effort, and it is appreciated.

Thank you to all of the participants for maintaining the spirit of the festivities and being open to receiving the gifts God is willing to bestow. Last, but certainly not least, a special thanks to the administration for allowing all of this to happen. Many facilities would not trust inmates to conduct themselves accordingly. When wise men and women realize the benefits of such trust far outweigh the possible detriments, amazing things can happen.

Just one night of change can have a long-lasting effect. It's very possible this Christmas party made a huge impact on someone's life, but even if it didn't, a multitude of successful battles is how a war is won, and this was one battle God definitely won.

I want "THAT" for Christmas

by **Loren Hammonds, Nash**

Throughout the many years of being locked up I have met a lot of men who claimed they were a Christian and loved the Lord. On the

contrary, what did they show with their life? Was the light of God shown forth? Was there any fruit at all? Did they back up what they claimed to live?

The hurtful thing is, no they did not. How are we ever to reach the lost in such a dying world if we are not to sacrifice our very own lives for that great cost to deliver the word of God, no matter what the cost?

However, recently I met one such man out of over twenty some years of being locked up who exercised what he talked. His name is "Benoy". He acted out, loved out, and gave out. And I wanted what he had, hopefully what he had would rub off on me and be contagious. I decided to love like he loves people and give like he does, and surround myself around God fearing men full of God's love. On Christmas Eve, Benoy sponsored a Christmas party that fed 80 men in the block. In it we had food galore and all kinds of prizes to be given away from trivia questions to Bible verses. "All glory to Jesus!"

After the party was over, many fellow inmates were talking in certain circles stating, "never have I ever had such a good Christmas whether in here or outside in the free world". People were astonished at the power of "love". Some said, "I felt like I was not in prison all day long, I felt free from bondage". Looking out at the cheer on people's faces, I felt an overwhelming power of the Holy Spirit working on the lives of these men, softening their hearts. Even the staff members were so amazed that they just got out of the way of the Lord and recognized the Spirit of the Lord working and just let God move in the lives of these men and not interfere. "WOW" at the power of God.

On a personal note, I'm involved in the MasterLife program. The MasterLife program has really taught me how to have a closer walk with God. To dig more deeper into who God is, to have more quiet time with Jesus and let Him speak to me in the depths of my soul. By reading His word and meditating and reflecting on what Christ is saying to me through the pages of His word. For Psalm 119:105 says "your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path". God's word is trying to teach all of us that His word will light the way and guide you, if only you will follow. How do you honestly follow through with that? By seeking God's face as it says in 1 Chronicles 16:11. With following a Christ centered life and truly living it, one will bear much fruit and the outpouring of the Spirit will pour out in every area of your life and others will see it and want what you've got. Why? Cause it is contagious. Amen

Worship

By Brother Ben

Have you heard someone speak critically about the way different people worship at church services? I've heard people say stuff like "that church has a dead worship service, it's too quiet." Or someone else might say. "they go crazy down at that church, they run around shouting, falling out in the isle, they're crazy!" I had a fellow ask me what was I yelling and hollering so loud for, could God not hear me just fine if I whispered?" I attempted to share with him why I shout, clap, stand, and yell "Hallelujah", "Glory" and "Amen". He didn't get it at the time.

Over the past years I have watched, listened and pondered different criticisms about corporate worship in the prison system. I have something to say to brothers in Christ, let people worship the way they want to worship. Don't be found guilty of "quenching the Holy Spirit" in your brother. Don't be found guilty of James 4:11-12. "Do not speak against one another, brethren. He who speaks against a brother, or judges his brother, speaks against the law and judges the law; but if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law, but a judge of it. There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the One who is able to save and to destroy, but who are you who judge your neighbor?". Furthermore, how can you be worshipping God, if you're looking at what everybody else is doing or not doing? You can't!

PEOPLE WORSHIP DIFFERENTLY! People do not have to fit into your mold to be counted worthy, or your customs, culture or traditions. The Pharisees kept people in bondage like this. Jesus brings freedom. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom".

The Bible has many different examples of worship: with instruments, singing, shouting, lifted hands, clapping, jumping, sitting quietly, standing, bowing, laying prostrate, laughing, crying, eyes closed, head to the ground, and King David even danced before the Lord until his clothes fell off. There are many ways to worship God. But, Jesus said..." *true worshippers will worship the Father in Spirit and truth*". (John 4:23) He also said, "Man looks on the outward appearances, but God sees the heart". We also know that God tells us to enter His court with praise and thanksgiving. So, however you worship the Father is your choice, but let your brother have his choice too.

Now to the person who doesn't understand what's going on in a worship service, or

"what's all the excitement about?", I would like to explain why we seem so "nutty" with excitement. First, I want to illustrate by using two separate passages. Acts 3: 1-8, "Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the ninth hour, the hour of prayer. And a certain man who had been lame from his mother's womb was being carried along, whom they used to set down every day at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, in order to beg alms of those who were entering the temple. And when he saw Peter and John about to go into the temple, he began asking to receive alms. And Peter along with John, fixed his gaze upon him and said, "Look at us!". And he began to give them his attention, expecting to receive something from them. But Peter said, "I do not possess silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you: In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene -walk!" And seizing him by the right hand, he raised him up and immediately his feet and his ankles were strengthened. And with each leap, he stood upright and began to walk. And he entered the temple, walking and leaping and praising God.

This man was crippled and a beggar, but the power of Jesus saved him and healed him. He couldn't help but jump up and down with excitement praising God.

- Do you know what it's like to have your favorite team score the winning touchdown in the Super Bowl? It's enough to make you jump out of your seat!
- Think of a 16-year-old who just got a car for his birthday from Dad. EXCITED!!!
- How about the excitement of a wedding as you leave the church?
- 4th of July fireworks
- The thrill of the birth of a new baby

These things might make me jump, shout, cheer, clap, or smile. Are you getting the picture?

Then there is a different perspective. Luke 7:36-47 "And behold, there was a woman in the city who was a sinner; and when she learned that He was reclining at the table in the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster vial of perfume, and standing behind Him at His feet, weeping, she began to wet His feet

with her tears, and kept wiping them with the hair of her head, and kissing His feet, and anointing them with the perfume. Now when the Pharisee who had invited Him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet He would know who and what sort of person this woman is who is touching Him, that she is a sinner." And Jesus answered and said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." And he replied, "Say it Teacher". "A certain money lender had two debtors; one owed five hundred denarii and the other fifty. When they were unable to repay, he graciously forgave them both. Which of them therefore will love him more?" Simon answered and said, "I suppose the one whom he forgave more." And He said to him, "You have judged correctly." And turning to the woman, He said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house, you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has wet My feet with her tears, and wiped them with her hair. You gave me no kiss, but she, since the time I came in, has not ceased to kiss My feet. You did not anoint my head with oil, but she anointed My feet with perfume. For this reason, I say to you, her sins, which are many, have been forgiven, for she loved much, but he who is forgiven little, loves little." The person who has been forgiven much, loves much. But a person who is forgiven little only shows a little love. This passage leads me to believe that a person who shows no love has never received any love or forgiveness. These people have no love, no joy, no peace, no forgiveness, no thankfulness, no shout, no praise, no tears, no smile. This woman's worship is distinctively different than the other passage. She has been out in some deep sin and the storms of life have driven her to a place of brokenness. She also experienced the loving power of Jesus in a different way, thus her worship came out in a different way.

- Do you know how it feels to have a friend feed you a meal when you were broke and hungry?
- Maybe you got in debt real bad and somebody paid your bill.
- How does it feel when you get a letter, a visit, a phone call from someone you love, after a long separation?
- Someone you love says they love you even after you hurt them or done them wrong.

- Picture a small child being rescued by his father from a scary barking dog, or the sudden strike of lightening or thunder as he jumps in his arms, or after wrecking his bicycle or the fear of the dark when the power goes out.

There is a comfort, a peace, a calm that comes for the child when he is in his father's presence – and so it is with our Father in Heaven.

There are many men in a worship service who are shouting, clapping, bowed, singing, crying, sitting quietly, and sincerely rejoicing in spirit and truth because they have been rescued. They have been out in the terrible storms of life, crippled and alone, deep in sin, selfishness and sickness. They have been drowning with no one to help. Many of us have burned every bridge and hurt every person who ever loved us. Some of us were so sick of ourselves and what we'd become that we were ready to end our own lives. We tried everything from AA to A through Z to change, but the lies, the game, the cons, the deceit wouldn't go away. One day in the middle of all the mess, JESUS..... Sweet Jesus touched our hearts. He didn't care what we had done or where we had been, He gave us a new life, a fresh start. He said, "Follow Me", and we dropped everything and followed Him.

So, you see, we are celebrating Jesus when we act "nutty". We are worshipping Him when we cry tears and bow our heads. We are showing Him how much we love Him for bringing us in from that awful storm of life. It's not a touchdown, it's not a homerun, or a new car, it's not a birthday party with a cupcake. We are celebrating and worshipping Jesus Christ, the one who paid the price for my eternal life. I hope; this helps you understand a little better what's taking place during worship part of a church service.

I want to end this with a final thought: there are many men who come to church for wrong motives, or maybe a friend invited them, or maybe they're just trying to get away from the dorm, a bad bunk mate, a bad officer. They are unsaved, still sick, in pain, and out in the storm of life. They are "under the sway of the wicked one..." taken captive by the devil to do his will". They haven't

been given the eyes to see yet. They don't know Jesus. All they see is ...YOU!

A Transforming Christmas

by Aaron Estes, Nash

Dear Benoy Family and Friends

Thank you so very much for all you have done to make Christmas quite an event here at Nash. It was a very beautiful and special time as the drab and dreary block transformed into a party that glorified God in the highest and revealed Emanuel, as the Spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ was in the house.

The Christmas tree was shining, tables were decorated, hundreds of burritos filled a table waiting to be devoured. Presents were wrapped and sat under the tree. Joy, laughter, and excited conversation flowed at each table. If one closed his eyes it would not be difficult to believe one was not in prison.

Art work lined one wall; drawings, paintings, pastels to be judged for a talent contest to be held later in the evening. The festivities began with an impassioned talk from James Benoy who had the vision and organized the evening. He spoke of the reason for the evening of games, gifts, etc. Benoy spoke of his grandmother, how she lovingly provided for everyone and anyone who might show up at the house, how there was always enough food and fun, always plenty of love – and so he shared with us the love his family created for him and others – and now he was passing; that on as an extension of his mom, family, and friends.

After Benoy spoke, the Gospel message was presented by Larry Doyle. Afterward, we enjoyed a trivia game hosted very generously by Monty Kivat. Food and treats were passed out and every 15 minutes a door prize was passed out. And then the highlight of the evening – the Talent show.

Along with the art work on the wall, the talent show consisted of spoken word, a recital of the Prodigal Son story from the Bible, musical selections, a mime performance, and short play. The short play was a closely contested event.

As the night came to a close, I heard many say that it was the best Christmas they have had in prison. One man said that it was the best Christmas he ever had. Correctional officers and staff looked on in amazement. It

has been the talk of the whole camp. Men have said they want moved to Unit 2!

I have told you all of this so that your joy might be made full, so that you might know that men's lives are being changed by the love of God – and you are source and extension that He is using here on earth in this place where hopes and dreams come to all, where despair and depression reign as king. However, the King of Kings was proclaimed in a very real and powerful way because of your loving gifts and support of James Benoy's call and ministry.

Thank you and may God richly bless you and yours.

Nash Field Ministers Put Feet to Their Faith

By Bro. Ben, Nash

Christmas Celebration 2017

"Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus...(Col.3:17)

"Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might" (Eccl. 9:10)

These two verses best describe what took place at the Christmas celebration held in Unit 2-c block at Nash Correctional Institute. You don't want to miss a single detail of this amazing story, so sit back, relax, and take in all the events that led up to the best Christmas ever for many inmates in Unit 2-C block at Nash Correctional.

It all started when DPS, Joe Gibbs Game Plan for Life, and Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary teamed up to start a field minister program for inmates with lengthy sentences; the goal being that when they finish school, they might go out and make a difference throughout the North Carolina system. With the encouragement of their professors and seeking approval through proper chain of command, many of the students have begun to make a difference already in the dorm where they live. Some of the students were ministering prior to arriving at Nash; therefore, they just began doing what comes natural to them. The awesome thing was how they all began to unify and work together. Through this comm-unity of believers and the support of staff the seminary students have already accomplished: Sunday fellowship, seminary basketball team, birthday club ministry, MasterLife discipleship group, and a store box for indigent inmates. Some have assisted the dorm workers in doing their jobs for Christmas, and some are just offering

encouragement and support for the ones who are laboring (a smile goes a long way in here ;).

These men are working together for a common purpose – and it's not just to make good grades – they are building relationships with fellow inmates in hopes that they might have the opportunity to share the good news of Jesus Christ.

Sunday ministry was the beginning of trust building between the Nash administration and Seminary students when the men were allowed to gather together in the dorm for food, fellowship, and testimonies. It begins with prayer and a scripture reading by one of the seminary students followed by a testimony by another brother.

At the beginning of the semester only seminary men were attending, but as the weeks went by more and more men from the general population of the dorm began coming. Now they are sharing their stories as well. Each week the men pitch in their canteen to prepare food for the dorm. The relationships that have been cultivated have created a more positive and peaceful atmosphere. All of these works of love came to fruition during Christmas break.

The men of C-block were told about a Christmas celebration plan for Christmas Eve, but they had no idea what was coming! By Christmas the seminary men were eager and ready to serve; they teamed up with some of the other Nash brothers and transformed the dorm into the Spirit of Christmas. These men organized a trivia game, talent show, food and candies, door prizes, appreciation presents for workers who live in the dorm, and secret Santa gifts exchanged among the men. There was singing, laughter, and even some tears.

The Trivia game was a joint effort by Montey and Benoy, there were ten teams consisting of five to six players on each team; questions ranged from sports, history, geography, biblical, and general. There were bonus points for bible drills, singing carols, and a push-up contest. The laughter and camaraderie was amazing. Men who never talk to each other were lost in the Spirit as if they were free for one night. Even the officers were in "Awe".

The "door prize drawings" were held by Kirston Angell and Michael Wolfe. They spent the entire afternoon wrapping presents and prizes that were donated from various Christmas boxes. They wrote every inmates room number on paper ballots and held a drawing every fifteen minutes all evening. Men were excited to receive these

gifts/prizes. One man exclaimed that he had never had a Christmas this good on the street.

The talent show was the highlight of the evening. Anthony Smith masterfully orchestrated this event by getting the men in the dorm to sign up and offer their talent with the opportunity for 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place prizes. There were beautiful pieces of art work entered by the Nash Art Program. There was singing of songs ranging from Soggy Bottom Boys bluegrass, Grandma got run over by a reindeer, to Christian rap. One man recited the entire prodigal son passage from the Bible by memory, another read a poem about Jesus' returning, and two seminary men dressed up like mimes and put on an excellent show that had everyone laughing. The winning talent and most captivating act of the night was a skit performed by Marcus Burnett and Steven Barbour. These two displayed a breathtaking enactment of Peter and Judas Iscariot that left one with a sobering realization that we all need Jesus.

When men who have been incarcerated for twenty to thirty years shed tears and say they have never experienced anything close to this kind of Christmas in prison, it can only mean a win-win for the administration, the college at Southeastern, Joe Gibbs and supporters, and most of all our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ to whom all the glory goes.

The Christian Journey

by Tim Jones, Caledonia

"Simple does not mean Easy"

They say it is as simple as driving a car; so, what makes it so hard? Let's consider the story of the man that was given the most luxurious car, known to have ever been made, and given instructions by the owner, that he simply had to drive the car, wherever, the GPS directed him to go, without stopping until he got to the end of the road which he noticed stretched well beyond eyesight. As he got into the car, turned the key in the ignition, even before he was able to put it in gear, there began rain drops falling down on the windshield, as he looked out he could see dark clouds starting to form on the horizon, and could reason that a powerful thunderstorm was coming. Turning on his windshield wipers cleared the rain from his window enough that the vision of the road was clear, so he began to drive the car in the direction given by the GPS system. Only a few miles into his trip the rain becomes increasingly heavier and the thunder and

lightning roars and flashed across the sky as driving conditions become more and more intensive, still he presses on, unharmed by the thunderstorm. But soon the wind begins to blow so hard that he could feel the resistance against the car, and the rain became as a pouring waterfall on the windshield making the visibility possible for only a few feet at a time. Driving slowed to a crawl as the road became slick and slippery from the increase of the rain water, but knowing the reliability of the GPS directions and the superior technology that went into designing his car to be able to withstand any weather condition, the man was able to make it through until finally the storm was behind him. Despite being inside the safety of the luxurious car, the man found himself in physical and mental anguish just from the thoughts of the possible dangers that the storm could produce.

With the thunderstorm fading in his rear-view mirror, the man finds himself traveling on a major interstate with six lanes of traffic moving and looping in every direction. There were thousands of different vehicles in which he had to navigate through, with every driver making decisions that truly impacted his ability to move freely without considering the intentions of every driver on either side of him. Front and back. Somehow, he was finding that it mattered little, him being inside the car he was driving with all its high-tech ability, it didn't stop the nervous, anxious, and restless feeling that came due to a heightened state of alertness he had to maintain in order to travel this highway with other people driving alongside him.

With the GPS system still pointing out directions the man followed them to the letter exactly, and he was confident that he wasn't lost, even though he didn't know when he would get to his destination. But even this knowledge couldn't comfort his ever growing feeling of powerlessness that play on his mental states. He realized that making the agreement to drive the car didn't come without a price. And in his case, it meant surrendering control and trusting something other than himself to get him to a place beyond what he could see. This man found out that Simple did not mean Easy. It seemed a small thing to drive such a luxurious car that he didn't have to work for nor could he ever afford, The Long Trip – The Outside Danger – Other Drivers and – The Anxiety of the Unseen, made the trip much harder than he expected.

So too, is our journey as a Christian, having made a commitment to surrender our will to obey and follow the will of the Lord. Remembering to count the cost, we see that

Simple does not mean Easy! But victory is sure no matter how hard or how long this Christian journey appears to be.

My brothers, keep the faith, stay close to the Master, and remember that "His Strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9).

The Lord is my Shepherd

by **Duncan Burton - Nash**

Jesus is my shepherd, I will not want. Jesus makes me lie down in green grass, Jesus leads me beside still waters. Jesus restores my spirit, Jesus guides me in the path of righteousness, for Jesus' namesake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, which is this dark world, I fear no evil, for Jesus is with me, Jesus' rod and staff, they comfort me. Jesus prepares a table in front of me in the presence of my enemies, Jesus has anointed my head with oil, my cup overflows, surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life, And I will live in the house of Jesus forever.

We cannot always see goodness and mercy ahead of us, but when we look behind us, we see them. This helps us to look ahead and see more clearly where we glimpse our place at God's side forever.

On My Way Home

by **Walter Finley Jr, in probation**

Dear MasterLife Christian family,

Words cannot express the love that I have for all of you. I can honestly say that I have never felt closer to a group of people as I have felt to all of you and the beloved volunteers.

I will be praying for all of you and writing some of you as God permits. I thank Travis, First Baptist Church, and everyone who prays for us from outside of prison behind enemy lines. Sister Roberta, Brother Warren, Brother Gene and last but not least Reverend Farmer are Christian super heroes.

Brother Tim has taken the reins of MasterLife at Caledonia and it could not be in better hands. Tim moves by the leading of the Holy Spirit regardless of what the "popular" things to do is. That's why God chose him. Jesus is our example.

Pray for me as I go out into the enemy's territory for he has already taken a battle stance against me today. Hold the Line!!

TESTIMONY

James Hayes, Nash

Dear Brother Travis and fellow readers of the MasterLife Newsletter,

I greet you in the matchless name of Jesus, our Risen Lord and Savior. I am writing to thank Brother Travis for my subscription to the MasterLife newsletter, and to let all readers know about the mighty move of God that is taking place here at Nash Correctional Institution (NCI).

When I received my first newsletter, Issue 2017, volume 5, my heart was overcome with joy. Reading the inspirational stories and the testimonies contained in the newsletter blessed me immensely. I am so grateful to my beloved brother and friend, James Benoy, for giving my name to Brother Travis so that I could begin receiving the MasterLife Newsletter.

I am a 58-year-old, currently in my 24th year of serving a Life + 40-year sentence. I am housed at the Nash Correctional Institution (NCI). A couple of years ago while at NCI, I recommitted my life back to Christ. God has blessed me in so many ways because of being housed here, chief of which is becoming a part of the North Carolina Field Minister Program (NCFMP). In all my years of being incarcerated, I have never been a part of anything that compares to the NCFMP. As you may have learned, it is a Christian "based" program that has been facilitated by Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary (SEBTS) in partnership with North Carolina Department of Public Safety (NCDPS), and Game Plan for Life. Game Plan for Life is the non-profit organization started and funded by Mr. Joe Gibbs. Owner of Joe Gibbs Racing in Charlotte, NC.

As a teacher's assistant in the NCFMP, God has allowed me to observe daily the working of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the students enrolled in the program, while they are in class, as well as in the dorm. The out-working of the Holy Spirit has been nothing short of a spiritual awakening in the lives of those that interact with the seminary students.

I would also like to thank everyone that played a role in making sure that we had a spirit filled Christmas celebration in our cell-block. I know that it took a lot of planning and sacrifice on the part of so many individuals. Many of us feel like this was the best Christmas we've experienced while

incarcerated. The highlight of it all this holiday season, is that our beloved brother Benoy introduced me and others at Nash to the MasterLife Discipleship program. Again, I thank God for the mighty move of God that is taking place at NCI.

Anthony Hill, Nash

My name is Anthony Hill. I'm 54 years old. I have 3 older brothers. I was raised up in church. Two of my brothers were just like me as we were growing up. As far back as I can remember I started smoking cigarettes. Then one day as my brothers were smoking pot, I asked them for some. I've been smoking, drinking, and doing drugs every single time I've had the opportunity. I started getting in trouble at a young age because of my drug use. My first time down, I was 19 years old. God, I know has saved my life. I've done everything under the sun and God has been by my side because I am still here for a reason. Here I sit in prison for the third time. I believe I should have been dead but the prayers from my mom, grandmother, and kids helped protect me through the years. I have met two great men of God. You will find no better guys than Benoy and Big Jim. They have led me to the Lord. Benoy is such a Christ centered man, that if it ain't about God, don't bring it his way. He loves everybody. I am very grateful he is teaching me about Christ. I pray for these men daily. I thank God for putting them in my life. The MasterLife program has taught me how to live a more Christ centered life. When I have quiet time now it helps me get closer to the Lord and I'm more able to understand His word. Now I know how important it is to spend time with the Lord and other Christians, and witness to my family and friends. God has blessed me with my family and we are growing closer every day ---Hallelujah!!! I am so proud of my mother and father. They have always been there for me. My children are my heart and I love them. When I was living in sin and selfishness, my family was by my side and now all I want to do is make them proud. I want my grandkids to see me living for the Lord and accept Jesus as their Savior. I am so thankful to the Lord for opening my eyes to know Him better and for bringing these seminary men into the dorm where I live. They all bless me and encourage me to live better. Thank you for the chance to tell everybody my good news. Amen!

Justin Walker, Nash

My name is Justin (Blaze) Walker and it has been an absolute pleasure participating in the MasterLife class and interacting with the group leaders and participants. I've never

been a part of, or participated in any type of Bible study group, so for this to be my first one it has made a profound impact on my walk with Christ. I want to thank all past participants of MasterLife because without you the good reports of the MasterLife class would not have continued to spread and reach out to people like me seeking the truth. I would also like to encourage present participants to continue to live a Christ centered life. I would also like to welcome future participants and say give MasterLife a chance. I'm positive you'll gain more insight to your purpose as a believer in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Kenneth Nichols, Nash

Who would ever of thought that Nash Correctional would have been invaded by the army of God. One has to ask one's self, was I in prison, or some kind of God guided boot camp? By my observation, I have to go with the latter of the two. For those of you who are reading this, the State of NC and DPS has begun a 4-year Bible seminary school, here at Nash Cl.

Amongst the student population, I have the privilege of having my cell next to, one James Benoy aka Bother Ben. So, if anyone knows our Brother Benoy, then you know what he invited me to do. That's right, the MasterLife study. Here I was thinking it was just going to be another Bible study that inmates go to, and argue about God's word all the way through.

Well to my surprise it was nothing like what I thought it would be. It was organized, orderly, professionally presented, to a level I didn't think possible by inmates in prison. I guess what I am going to have to say is, I witnessed a miracle. Luke 1:37 – For with God nothing is impossible.

MasterLife to my amazement brought forth a platform that was unique to me. This is the only time that I have seen three levels of Christianity being addressed at the same time. It presented clear information for the curious non-believer, clear understanding for the new believer, and a deeper conviction for the seasoned and mature Christian. So, my friends, I highly recommend going if you are ever presented with the opportunity. May God Bless all who read this.

Can Anything Good Come Out of Gastonia?

By Jason Smith, Nash

As I write this letter I am sitting in Nash Correctional Institute, incarcerated for the sixth time. I can sum up my life of crime and sin with three words, "I'm from Gastonia". I attended church with my family as a child. My relationship with God and Jesus was strong until I became a teenager. My parents divorced when I was 14, and the last fight they had was over my mother making my father buy me a pair of Nike Air Jordan's for \$150. For many years I blamed myself for the divorce thinking if I hadn't "needed" those shoes my parents would've stayed together. To this day, my father still thinks it is absurd to pay that much for a pair of shoes. LOL. My mother re-married and I rebelled. I also discovered girls, sex, drugs, and began a life with a multitude of unfathomable sin. I always knew God was there but I had let the flame in my relationship with Jesus be extinguished by my constant sin and negligence of repentance. After arriving at Nash and being housed in the same block with the seminary school students, I ran into Weston. We first crossed paths four years ago at Avery Mitchell. A mutual friend invited me to a MasterLife class and I went. Unfortunately, at the time, I was still entangled in the world and myself. Always believing that I was not only in control but also had control of my life. Doing whatever I wanted with my life without following Jesus is wrong – even if the choice results in something positive. Success alone is not the determining factor when it comes to pleasing God; the determining factor is whether or not Jesus led me to the success. The outcome of choices I make apart from Jesus may at times please me, but they will not please Him. One day as Weston and I were conversing in the block I mentioned MasterLife and he informed me that he would like to do a class during the Christmas break from seminary school. I told him if he did I would commit my time and be faithful to my attendance. HALLELUJAH, AMEN! The greatest and best decision I have ever made in my life is accepting Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. Before the class began two weeks ago, I started attending church again with Weston and some of the brothers from the seminary program. After watching these men in the dorm and around the camp, I have noticed a sense of love, joy, and peace among them that I have wished and yearned for. I was broken and wanted to be fixed. I asked Jesus to forgive me, repented for the sins I've committed. Therefore, by accepting

Jesus as my Lord and Savior, I know that through Him and prayer, my relationship with God has been restored. I am a new creation. I am forgiven. I am saved. I am a Christian. I know I am more prepared to build my relationship with God because of the tools that I have been able to put in my toolbox through the MasterLife discipleship study group. I have learned how to truly repent for my sins and how to go to Christ in prayer. I am by no means claiming to be perfect or better than anyone, because neither of those will I ever be. There is nothing noble about being superior to your fellow man, true nobility comes from being superior to your former self. Brothers, my wish for you is that you come to know Jesus, or if you have let your flame be extinguished, that you rekindle it, and become on fire for the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ to whom all glory goes. Amen.

CO-LABOR with Larry Doyle, Nash

The new year is about to begin as we wrap up the last session of the first MasterLife program here at Nash. I will admit when James Benoy asked if I would like to help was not sure what to expect. Needless to say, I was blown away by what I experienced, and by the impact it had on those in attendance. As for me, I saw what was possible when a few faithful men work together to serve the Lord. Moreover, I learned what it means to be a Co-Labor with someone for a common goal, as often I have found myself in situations where I labored alone. My prayer now is that God will prepare me to carry on what I have seen and that He will bring more laborers in my life that we may work together for the glory of the Kingdom.

Finally, thanks be to God for the friends and family of Benoy for supporting the ministry. Although we can labor alone, with your support the love of Christ has shown more brightly in a place often devoid of light. May God continue to bless you as you obey the command not to forget those in chains. PS. Big Jim, you are in my prayers Brother.

Doug Zary, Nash

It started out innocently enough, I've been at Nash over the past nine years and this past summer the new seminary students were chosen and then sent to live in the block that I have called home these many years. I was intrigued by the program and was looking forward to a front row seat to this new experiment and experience. In other words, a spectator. Well the first semester was coming to a close in December and everything was going well, despite some personal problems I had enjoyed the

atmosphere the 30 students brought to the block and you could almost feel a palpable force flowing through the day room. One day in December, James Benoy approached me and invited me to join him and some others in a two-week Bible study during the semester break. Well I am not that much of a joiner but again I was intrigued at the idea of the new experience so I half-heartedly agreed.

At the first meeting, I was surprised to see ~20 inmates gathered in a circle to discuss the Word. Benoy handed me a guideline to the Disciple's Cross and told us about a program he has been involved with for several years called MasterLife. Towards the end of the first meeting he asked each of us to state out loud and to each other whether we were a Christian or still searching and are we committed to meeting daily for two weeks. To a man, everyone was all in until they got to the last man, which was me. Well I answered that I call myself a Christian but I have a real hard time with commitment of most anything, but I was good enough to start.

For lack of a better name, I will call this Bible group a mini- MasterLife although that is not meant to denigrate any of you who have done the full course as I understand that it is an intensive challenge that can take 6-12 months to work through. As you may have surmised by now that something changed in me during those 2 weeks. I cannot honestly say whether it was a gradual change or an instantaneous one, but I do know something happened and I am better for it and could not be happier. I've been reading the Bible almost daily for the past couple of years and thought I knew the book fairly well and had a solid, if lukewarm relationship with Jesus. A change happened one morning, like I've told a number of guys, it was as if someone came by in the middle of the night and took my old dependable Bible, tore out the pages and replaced them with new ones. Mind you, the words were all the same, but all of a sudden, no matter where I turned in my Bible it read differently than what I had been reading these past few years, well actually these past 60 years. The message Jesus spoke became simple, straight-forward, and loving. I felt a tremendous weight being lifted off my shoulders and warmed to the core by His blessed assurance. Obviously, I don't need to tell any of you reading this about my feelings, but I can't help myself, walking around grinning like the cat who caught the canary.

I do not know what is ahead for me, but I will enjoy diving ever deeper into the Word, strengthening my prayer life, ministering

where I can, and basking in fellowship with Christian brothers. Maybe if you know someone on the fence, you can share my story to encourage them to take a chance and put their trust in Jesus. That trust is 100% satisfaction guaranteed, and the warranty is good for eternity. While this new chapter starts innocently enough, I am no longer a spectator, half-hearted, or lukewarm. Count me as all in for Jesus. Special thanks to Larry Doyle, Tim Russell, Jamarr Springs for their help to Benoy in this endeavor.

Kyle Triplett, Nash

Greetings to all my fellow "MasterLife" Brothers. What a blessing this past year has been for me. Let me start off by commending those who completed the first MasterLife here at Nash, of which it was a part of. Needless to say, it opened up my eyes and showed me where my Christian walk had been lacking. At times, it so easy to get caught up in what other people are doing and not even realize you are stuck in quick sand yourself. However, after completing the personal spiritual inventory the first day; I was able to identify and correct those issues. In Luke, Jesus professed "If anyone desires to come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily and follow Me" Luke 9:23. The daily part was one of my lacking areas. Although Jesus never said it would be easy, "For whoever desires to save his own life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake save it" Luke 9:24. I am comforted by those words. It is all about living a Christ centered life. The Disciple's Cross showed me how to implement the word, fellowship, prayer, and witnessing into my Christ centered life. Throughout MasterLife, I was able to grow spiritually and really enjoyed being able to fellowship with the twenty or so brothers that participated. During that time, I was able to witness to and encourage non-believers, as well as believers. Jesus said, "For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them" Matthew 18:20.

As we move into the new year, let your mind and body "be renewed in the spirit, "so that you put on the new man which was created according to God" Ephesians 4:23-24. "Show love to one another, as Christ has commanded" John 5:12. In all things "Rejoice in the Lord... be anxious for nothing, but ... let your requests be made known to God, and the peace of God ... will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus" Philippians 4:4-7. Therefore, know that "when we were still without strength ... God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" Romans 5:6-9. Likewise, I leave you in the same

manner in which Paul left the Thessalonians, may “the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen” I Thessalonians 5:28.

Not A Fan by Kirston Angell, Nash

Greetings to you, who are blessed to be in Christ. Thank God for another day and opportunity to rise, study His Word, pray, and fellowship with the brethren. First, I'd like to send a special thank you to the family and friends of the Benoy's – Thank you for your faithfulness, love and support. financially and spiritually, you're a blessing. “Memaw, mom, aunt, and Travis”. As for the MasterLife program ... I was skeptical at first and I wasn't sure if I could personally grow from the program. Once again, I was wrong. While the focus of the program was to lay the foundation of Christ (1 Corinthians 3:11) and how we must remain in Him to bear fruit (John 15:5). The passage and teaching that struck me, stuck with me, the most was Luke 9:23 which says, “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow Me”. A person can have biblical knowledge, can quote scripture, all day, yet still not be a true disciple “Follower of Christ”. When Jesus said “come after me ... (Luke 14:27) he meant to become a disciple. Denying oneself isn't simple rejection of certain things in life, but denying personal control of one's life. Surrendering it to Christ to use as He pleases. Taking up our cross means a total commitment to Christ Jesus, and being willing to suffer rejection, persecution, hardship, and possibly even death for Him. Throughout the two weeks of MasterLife, I could not get away from this passage. I was reading a book called “Not A Fan” by Kyle Idleman, which spoke of the same thing as Luke 9:23. Be a fan or be a follower. I had a decision to make, stay in my will and comfort zone or come to Christ on His terms; could I do this? I figured out that I can't pick and choose where and what I surrender. Jesus wants it all. As part of the church, and the church being the bride of Christ, which He purchased with His blood (Revelation 5:9). We are married to Christ, we are in a relationship of faithfulness. When a man and a woman decide to marry, they agree to give themselves totally and completely to one another, in sickness and health, for the rest of their lives. It's a full commitment. How many people would want a spouse that is unfaithful, undependable, or reserves a part of their lives for themselves, keeping it separate from their partner? None! It's the same with Jesus (Luke 14:33), with that said I am happy for this personal revelation, and for the other wonderful things I had an opportunity to witness during the class and the block Christmas party. I'm

sure other guys have written about the particulars and events, but my 3 favorites were when #1 – The grumpiest guy in the block not only participated in the party/trivia but actually sang along with the chorus of one of the evening's talent show performed with a smile on his face. #2 A self-proclaimed satan worshipper participated also, and at the end of the evening stood as a link in our massive prayer chain and prayed with us in conclusion of the night. #3 And God touched the hearts of the staff supervising us allowing all these things to take place. Glory Be to God! I encourage you brethren ... “seek first His kingdom and His righteousness and all these things will be given you as well” (Matthew 6:33) Amen.

My MasterLife Experiences by Tim Russell, Nash

Just like anything in life, the more you put into something, the more you get out. The MasterLife Discipleship program has shown me what God will give us when we put forth the effort to draw closer to Him.

I was appointed the task of group leader in this year's MasterLife program. The workers must have been few if they need to appoint me, but the harvest was ripe! I experienced things that I have not experienced before, because even though I didn't feel qualified for the job, I stepped out on faith and trusted the Lord to use me as a vessel.

For the first time in my life brought the gospel message, something I had never done and was honestly scared to death about. I just didn't want to mess it up or tell somebody something wrong, however, when we put our trust in God, He will see us through. I'm sure it wasn't the best gospel message you have ever heard, but I know it was right, and I felt close to God because of it.

It was also my duty to teach on fellowship, and the things I learned in trying to put a lesson together opened my eyes to the importance of brotherly love and Christian community. I employed all of the tactics used in the program to center Christ in my life and I'm convinced the way to abide in Christ and have Him abide in you is through prayer, reading the Word, fellowship, and witnessing. I put these principles into action and I saw God speaking to me, blessing me, and using me to bless others.

I also learned why my Christian walk hasn't always been a straight path; Christ wasn't my center, so I veered off course often. The MasterLife Discipleship program was a

positive experience for me. it let me know that I don't have to be scared to bring the Word. We are all called to be disciples and as long as Christ is the center of our lives, He will empower us to accomplish that which He has trusted to us. So be assured and go make disciples of your own.

Tony Ball, Nash

I was inspired and encouraged by the fellowship, (and coffee) ☺ the lessons and assignments, and the memory verses. It felt good to memorize scriptures again. I used to be in this habit of memorizing a few verses per week. But had gradually tapered off to the point I was no longer doing it. It was a very refreshing two-week course, and I was especially impressed with the personal revelations upon doing the Personal Spiritual Inventory. It would be a wonderful thing if MasterLife's Discipleship Courses swept through NC's prisons like wildfires, stirring up men's hearts to live for God.

I was grateful to be one of the avenues MasterLife used to sponsor, both this Christmas party and the New Year's party. I would encourage my fellow brethren to give up “their cut” out of a sponsor's contribution, in future discipleship programs. If we all, each and every one of us, put the next man's needs above our own, we would speed Christ's message throughout the prison system and beyond these walls.

Justin Walker, Nash

I would like to humbly say thank you for your stamina and endurance and the efforts you all put forth to ensure that the MasterLife newsletter reaches our brothers in Christ across the state. You all are responsible for facilitating a platform for us to share our testimonies and experiences with this great program and our walk with Christ. And that deserves a huge Thank You from all of us. I would also like to send a special Thank You to Memaw of the Benoy family for your continued prayers and support throughout the years. Even though you don't know me personally, your prayers for the lost included me and thanks to you and your prayers I'm no-longer lost. Please continue to pray for us as we continue to pray for you as well. Once again, Thank You for all, from the bottom of my heart!

THANK YOU

We hope you enjoyed the Christmas issue of the Newsletter. It was a blessing to hear from so many of you. Thank you for your faithfulness to this ministry by sending in stories and testimonies

This is a special issue to let everyone; know how things are going with the Nash Field Ministry program, as well as the latest Christmas party and MasterLife groups.

Let me know what you think, how you are doing, and how God is blessing you.

Hope the New Year brings all your blessings and a closer relationship with the Lord.

God Bless!

To: Nash Administration

From: Field Minister

Thank you!

"When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice", Proverbs 29:12

We would like to extend a special thanks to:

Mr. & Mrs. Hawkins
Superintendent/Region

Ms. Brake Assistant Superintendent

Mr. Pulley Assistant Superintendent

Ms. Lee Program Director

Mr. Sledge Unit Manager

Ms. Webb Assistant Unit Manager

Mr. Herring Programs/Chaplin

Ms. Chisel Education/Jobs

Mailroom

Also for all of the sergeants and staff on Unit 2 that make things run so smoothly. Sgt. Moats and Co. Brown for a smooth Christmas Eve – Thanks!

Without your trust and support the content of this newsletter would not have taken place. Not just the Sunday gatherings and Christmas fun, but the transformed lives. This Field Minister Program is already making a difference because of your help. God is clearly using all of us for His good and His glory. We hope that you do not take this as a light recognition of your part, but as a sincere gesture of our gratitude.

To: Game Plan for Life and the College at Southeastern

From: Loren Hammonds

"A student is not above his teacher, but he who is perfectly trained becomes like his teacher"

Luke 6:40

On behalf of the grateful men in the Field Minister Program, we would like to extend a "Thank You" to everyone for all of the hard work you put into this program. We are humbled to have such an opportunity, words cannot truly express what is taking place in our hearts. Not only in our hearts, but the people around us and our families. This is amazing!

Yes, there is a word to describe it -----
JESUS

God bless every one of you!

*Thanks Mr. Herring for that Christmas message! Thank you, Jason

*Thank you, Mr. Sledge and Ms. Webb, for a peaceful unit and the best Christmas Eve ever!

Congratulations Seminary students on a successful 1st semester and for your excellent grades!!! Well done! Benoy family

Thank You to:

Michael Wolfe, Marcus Burnett, Montey, Anthony Smith, Loren Hammonds, Steven Barbour, Aaron Estes, Tim Russell, Justin Walker, Kyle Triplett, Larry Doyle, Barry Mintz, James Kelliher, Jonathan Ramirez, Roman Perdomo, Kirston Angell, Lucas Rash, Tony Ball, Jason Smith, Anthony Hill, Doug Zary, Jamar Springs, and Benoy for all of the help and hard work you did to make the best Christmas ever!

Kenneth Nichols, Nash

First, I want to thank you for the support and all your prayers. With your help and Jamar's obedience to God's call on his life, this has truly been my best Christmas ever in prison. Just seeing everyone working together, smiling, laughing and just enjoying themselves allowed me to forget for a wonderful moment where I was. Now that I'm thinking about it, this is the first Christmas I didn't go to sleep with the pain of missing my family eating away at me.

Thank you again, may God bless you all and pray that God will give you all the peace He gave me through your love and all these days ahead.

Thank You by Kyle

"If then there is any encouragement in Christ, if any consolation of love, if any fellowship with the spirit, if any affection and mercy, fulfill my joy by thinking the same way, having the same love, sharing the same feelings, focusing on one goal. Do nothing out of rivalry or conceit, but in humility consider others as more important than yourself. Everyone should look out not (only) for his own interests, but also for the interests of others." Phil. 2:1-4

"From Christ, the whole body fitted and knit together by every supporting ligament, promotes the growth of the body for building itself in love by the proper working of each individual part." Eph. 4:16

A special Thanks to Mr. Hawkins and the whole Nash C.I. Administration, also would like to thank Mr. Sledge, Mr. Herring, and all the staff for your support.





CONCENTRATE ON THE FOUR DOTS IN THE MIDDLE OF THE PICTURE FOR ABOUT 30 SECONDS.

THEN CLOSE YOUR EYES AND TILT YOUR HEAD BACK.

KEEP THEM CLOSED. YOU WILL SEE A CIRCLE OF LIGHT, CONTINUE LOOKING AT THE CIRCLE.

WHAT DO YOU SEE?

Philippians 1:3-21 HCSB

[3] I give thanks to my God for every remembrance of you, [4] always praying with joy for all of you in my every prayer, [5] because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. [6] I am sure of this, that he who started a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. [7] Indeed, it is right for me to think this way about all of you, because I have you in my heart, and you are all partners with me in grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. [8] For God is my witness, how deeply I miss all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus. [9] And I pray this: that your love will keep on growing in knowledge and every kind of discernment, [10] so that you may approve the things that are superior and may be pure and blameless in the day of Christ, [11] filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God. [12] Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has actually advanced the gospel, [13] so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard, and to everyone else, that my imprisonment is because I am in Christ. [14] Most of the brothers have gained confidence in the Lord from my imprisonment and dare even more to speak the word fearlessly. [15] To be sure, some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of good will. [16] These preach out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel; [17] the others proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, thinking that they will cause me trouble in my imprisonment. [18] What does it matter? Only that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is proclaimed, and in this I rejoice. Yes, and I will continue to rejoice [19] because I know this will lead to my salvation through your prayers and help from the Spirit of Jesus Christ. [20] My eager expectation and hope is that I will not be ashamed about anything, but that now as always, with all courage, Christ will be highly honored in my body, whether by life or by death. [21] For me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.



SPECIAL THANKS

Thank you to **Rocky Mount Baptist Church** for their dedicated service in the MasterLife and Alpha programs at Caledonia.
 To the **Nash CI Administration** support
 To **Tim Jones and Zeke** in accepting a leadership role in 2018 Caledonia MasterLife program.
 To other MasterLife programs in the State of North Carolina.
 Please forgive any miss-spellings, it was inspiring to read these many testimonies.
 Thank you to **Waltea and Bequita**, they typed and proof read the newsletter for errors.

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.

MASTERLIFE CONTACT

TRAVIS MILEUR

PO BOX 21

PRYOR, OK 74361

tmileur@gmail.com

[903-239-2328](tel:903-239-2328)