

MISSION GATE UPDATE

Turning Lives From Crime to Christ Since 1985

FEBRUARY 2024

Special Valentine's Day Edition



God's love is golden —Rick Mathes, Co-founder



God is love, thus He is loving. He is Savior and Lord, and I have expressed my faith through my works for Him since I believe obedience is not an option. So if you are loving, if He is your Lord, and if you are about the calling He gave you, then you believe and obey. This is your part of your covenant with Him.

It is our submission to His love completely that separates us from the rest of the world. It is the golden truth of what love is. Won't you join us in expressing God's love through our ministry?

Our love for God has held us together so closely in our marriage and in ministry. We celebrate 45 years of marriage this Valentine's Day.

We
love
because
He first
loved
us.

—1 John 4:19

Everyone can celebrate Valentine's Day

Most people think of romantic love on Valentine's Day. But what if you're not in a romantic relationship? That's the beauty of God's love: You can share it every day with anyone—make a friend feel special, tell a child they're loved, and give a hug to someone who needs it.

Mission Gate teaches that God's love is the best foundation for marriage, a sacred vow we make before Him. Join us as we celebrate three couples whose love and marriage are founded in faith.



Love is risky business, and we took a fall—Andrew and Amanda Fortner



Before they met, both Andrew and Amanda were in prison and searching for God. Andrew accepted Christ in prison, and Amanda found her Savior at Hannah's Ranch. The two met in church. Andrew says, "When I first laid eyes on Amanda, my jaw dropped. She was gorgeous! My jaw still drops every time I see her." But when he asked Amanda out, she "ghosted him" and cut off communication for five months.

Amanda says, "I wasn't ready for a relationship." But she did start making a list of qualities she wanted in a husband, including someone who is godly, kind, and faithful.

Andrew laughs, "My list was stupid stuff, like making coffee, doing BBQ, putting up with my jokes."

Their paths crossed again after Amanda graduated from Hannah's Ranch, and they both worked at the same place. They also attended church together, and their friendship grew. Then Andrew moved to a job at ADB Construction—working 250-500-foot high atop cell towers, held up by ropes. Amanda's concern for Andrew's safety grew as he pursued this risky job. As she kept checking on him frequently, they finally both fell—in love.

Andrew's family loves Amanda. His son praised him for "finding a woman who is universally out of your league!"

They both give back to Mission Gate by counseling men and women residents. Amanda is earning a degree in psychology at Colorado Christian University. Andrew volunteers at church, and he still works as a Tech 3 climber, dangling from ropes for his company.



Andrew and the men he counsels

MISSION GATE UPDATE

Special Valentine's Day Edition FEBRUARY 2024, CONT.

God had plans for transformation —Chris and Jamie Gerloff's story



Chris, who was in the Fort Good Shepherd program, first saw Jamie at church. He asked his friend, "Who IS that?" Little did he know that Jamie was at Hannah's Ranch, and Mission Gate doesn't allow men and women in their programs to date each other.

"I wasn't even looking for a man," Jamie remembers. "I was heartbroken because I'd lost my sons. I only wanted to deepen my relationship with Christ and get my boys back. But God made it clear this was the man for me—even if I didn't want one!"

In the meantime, Chris learned more about relationships from his training at Mission Gate. "I thought I knew what I wanted in a woman, but God knew better. Mission Gate allowed me to reflect and realize I wanted a godly woman."

At Hannah's Ranch, Jamie was learning how to be a good partner in a relationship and how to be a nurturing, responsible mom. After Jamie graduated, Chris stayed on at Fort Good Shepherd. They finally connected when volunteering at a vacation bible school. Jamie, dressed as a beautiful butterfly, and Chris, dressed as a frog, symbolized metamorphosis—the dramatic changes that occur when a person accepts Christ. And that very transformation began taking place in their lives.

Jamie says, "As we deepened our relationship, God made it clear He has a purpose for us as a pair. We are in ministry together." She continued, "Mission Gate blessed us with a beautiful wedding at Fort Good Shepherd. Now, we both give back to God and to Mission Gate by counseling residents on our days off from work. I counsel at Hannah's Ranch, and Chris counsels at Fort Good Shepherd."



Chris: We have 6 kids—hers, mine, our daughter, and a child we're adopting. Four have been baptized so far.

No one can fathom what God has done beginning to end —Ecclesiastes 11:3



Trish remembers, "Shortly after I met Rick, I just loved being with him. He was so positive and strong. I didn't realize until after we married that Rick was very deep into alcoholism." Although Trish and Rick weren't Christians, somehow they knew they would get through this together.

"I told my neighbor Jane I longed for a better life for my children," says Trish. "Jane began taking our kids to vacation Bible school. The kids also wanted me to go to church on Sundays, so I begrudgingly went," Trish recalls. "I then started Bible Study Fellowship. One afternoon I dropped to my knees at my bedside, confessed my sin, and asked Jesus to become Lord of my life. I began feeling such peace and joy. I knew if God could save me, he could save Rick also."

Trish continues, "A pastor at my church led Rick to the Lord, and then Rick spent hours and hours in Bible study. Some Covenant Seminary students from church invited Rick to go with them to give his testimony at the old, decrepit Gumbo Jail (now torn down). In subsequent visits when Rick spoke, countless men flooded the altar to give their lives to Christ." Trish said, "Rick came home so excited, talking endlessly about his experiences. I didn't fully understand—but I kept listening because I was so thankful Rick was getting fulfillment from ministry, and no longer from alcohol."

Churches began asking Rick to speak about prison ministry. Rick invited people to come forward to help in the ministry. "At one service," Trish remembers, "I was the only one who went forward, and Rick told me to go sit down." He didn't want me in prison ministry because of the danger involved. I whispered back to Rick, "God called me up here, not you!" I did not sit down. We argued all the way home in the car until we finally realized God had called us both to work together. Just look how the Lord has blessed our love story and faith as we minister through Mission Gate.

