

Yokefellowship
Prison Ministry

Lehigh Valley
Council

The Yoke and the Cross



NOVEMBER 2013
JANUARY 2014

The Voice of the Yokefellowship Prison
Ministry in the Lehigh Valley

Yokefellowship Prison Ministry
PO Box 3114 - Wescosville, PA 18106
610-820-8469 - www.yokefellowpa.org

The Yoke and the Cross brings the latest news and events of the Lehigh Valley Council of Yokefellowship Prison Ministry to the volunteers, friends, inmates, and former inmates involved with Yokefellowship.

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Charles L. Goodge

Council Pastoral Advisor
Pastor Gary Morrison

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Lisa M. Perry

Vice Chairman
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The Director's Chair: Greetings in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It is our sincere hope and prayer that all is well with each of you and that you have been greatly blessed this past year, which is nearly over. It has been a busy year but a very rewarding year as well. We are blessed to have the volunteers that we have, but we really could use more. We attend the prison six (6) days a week, for Bible studies, as well as the Work Release Center and the Juvenile Detention Center. We also have those who write letters to the inmates, and people who serve as mentors and spiritual advisers. Some people are able to donate to our Bible Fund, so that we can distribute Bibles to the inmates. So if God has laid it on your heart to be a Yokefellowship volunteer, in any capacity, please call us anytime. We'd love to hear from you.

Our annual picnic was held at Lockridge Park, on August 18 and it was very well attended, in spite of the weather. We do have a very nice pavilion there, so the weather usually isn't a factor. The only problem is that we always have way too much food, which causes me to over-eat, and then I have to exercise harder. Besides the food, we had games, singing and a lot of good fellowship.

The semi-annual training classes held on September 13 were well done and very informative. Among those in attendance was Dale Meisel, Warden Lehigh County Prison, Lisa Cope from Probation and Parole, and Alma Maldonado Colon and Larry Coleman, from the state Yokefellowship Board. If you were not able to attend, we will have training again in the spring, so be sure to attend.

Unlike our picnic, where we had an abundance of food, at the banquet we actually ran out of food. The caterers were very upset, in spite of the fact that I assured them it was totally my fault. We urge people to make reservations, but towards the end, we simply said to just show up, we will have plenty of food. I had told the caterers that we would have about 50 people, based on last year's attendance, which I felt was more than enough. I was wrong. In actuality, we had nearly 80. When I realized how many people were there, I told the caterers we would have to pray for God to stretch the food out to last. Well, my wife and I were the last to go through the line, and we got the last of the food. God is good, but next time we will be better prepared, for sure.

Finally, our long term treasurer, William Truckenmiller, has resigned for personal reasons, and so we are in need of a new treasurer. Currently, Lisa and myself are handling it, but we really need someone to handle it for us. If you, or anyone you know would be interested, please call us anytime. Thank you for all that you do for Yokefellowship, and may God richly bless you all.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

Dues information will be sent out early 2014. Please make sure you complete the information required and return your dues in order to update your membership.

Spring 2014 Training

Dates and facilitators to be announced

Charles L. Goodge

If you would like a group to come to your church to speak about Yokefellowship Prison Ministry, whether to a large group, or to your Sunday School class, please contact Chuck at 610-820-8469.

Are you willing to share the Gospel with those in prison but don't know how to start? Come to the **Timothy Program** at, Bethany United Methodist Church, **Tuesdays, from 7:30 – 9:00 pm** and learn how you can serve the Lord by sharing God's love with those in need of hearing how God can change their lives. Inmates, volunteers and their families are welcome.

"Know that the LORD, He is God; It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; We are His people and the sheep of His pasture. Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, And into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name. For the LORD is good; His mercy is everlasting, And His truth endures to all generations."

Psalms 100:3-5

CHRISTMAS FOR CHILDREN OF INMATES

If you would like to donate \$5.00 we are willing to purchase gifts for the children of inmates on your behalf and this year will have a party for the children. Please send your donation in the enclosed envelope. This is a great opportunity for churches, Sunday Schools and children to collect monies for those who are seeking the Lord!

If you would like to give Christmas cards to inmates, please forward the cards by December 15th to Yokefellowship Prison Ministry, PO Box 3114, Wescosville PA 18106. The cards cannot contain glitter, ribbons, glue and must be unsealed. If you would like to drop them off instead, please contact Chuck at 610-820-8469 for directions to his home. It is a good opportunity for your Sunday school to share the Word of God with those who are away from their families and searching for answers as to how they can change their lives and follow the Lord.

If you are interested in sharing the Word of God with those incarcerated, we can order Bibles directly from the publisher and mail them to the individuals. Current prices for Bibles are: \$6.00. Please forward a check to the office and mark it for the Bible Fund. Thank you to all those who have contributed in the past.

Blessings to All of You

I just want to take a moment, during this holiday season to thank each and every volunteer who has participated in Yokefellowship Prison Ministry over the past year. It has been a blessing working with you and I thank God for all of you. Also a special 'thank you' for all who were unable to go into the prison, but have remembered us in your thoughts, prayers and in your support. Without you this ministry would not be able to continue. I would like to wish each of you a very blessed Christmas season, and may the joy and peace of Christ dwell within you, and your families through the upcoming new year. Finally, I would like to apologize for the lateness of this newsletter. It has been a hectic time and then the printer died on us, so we are very late this time. We will make every attempt not to be this late again. Thank and God bless you all.

You Have All It Takes

Hi Friends: For many years after becoming a Christian I had tried to relate to God through the lives of fellow Christians; I judge, blame and accuse God for the events and mishaps that I saw happening in the lives of other believers. I knew God as God, but not as "My" God. There's a difference between knowing of God and having a personal relationship with Him.

Genesis 17:1 - When Abram was ninety- nine years old, THE LORD APPEARED TO ABRAM and SAID TO HIM, "I am Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless."

I talk about the great things God did for brother A and sister C; I was living in the shadow of other people's testimonies and never had stories of my own. I hadn't given God a chance to prove Himself or "appear" to me personally. I had not met and experienced the Almighty God personally in my walk. In fact I didn't have any walk with Him other doing the weekly religious routines and sacrilege. Do you have personal stories and testimonies of what God has done for you as far back as last week?

Romans 8:37 - "Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us."

My dear friend, I quickly found out how boring and unfulfilling my Christianity was. I knew of God, His goodness, and miracles but I didn't know Him personally. Every time I fell into some sort of challenge or trouble I would throw in the towel, dodge, or walk away from all appearances of hardships. Little did I know that all of the greatest men and women of faith who ever lived discovered the goodness, might and greatness of God in the midst of their hardships and turbulent experiences. God designed your life to be full of adventures and stories of victory. There's always a story behind every glory. The message of the gospel of Jesus Christ in your mouth is nothing but empty words without testimonies of what God has done in your life.

How would you experience the greatness of God in your life if He never helped you in your time of hardship? Champions are born out of afflictions. You're like a tea bag that will never come into its full potential until it's placed in a cup of boiling water-then its aroma and goodness come out. Moses would never have known God as the deliverer if Israel never faced a red sea situation (read Exodus 14:1-31). Daniel would have never known God as a miracle worker if he was never thrown into the lion's den (read Daniel 6:1-28). Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego would have never known the saving hands of God if they were never thrown into a burning furnace (read Daniel 3:1-30). God delights in manifesting Himself to us in the midst of life's most challenging situations, so next time you're facing a difficult situation, get ready because God is about to birth a miracle through you. You are about to witness the hand of the supernatural.

Christmas - A Personal Promise

By Charles F. Stanley

What do you consider most significant about Christmas? Many people would say visiting with relatives, attending parties, or giving and receiving gifts. For believers, however, Christmas is far more than a December holiday with time off from work. It is a personal promise from God to mankind.

The significance of this special day is embodied in two scriptural names. In the first chapter of Matthew, an angel of the Lord told Joseph that Mary, his fiancée, would bear a son conceived of the Holy Spirit. He instructed Joseph to name the child "Jesus" (v. 21). He also announced that the birth would fulfill Isaiah's prophecy: "'They shall call His name Immanuel,' which translated means 'God with us'" (v. 23, referring to Isaiah 7:14).

Let's examine the two names in this passage — Jesus and Immanuel. The name "Jesus" is a transliteration of the Old Testament Hebrew word *Joshua*, meaning "the Lord is salvation." When the angel said, "You shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins" (v. 21), he was pointing to the significance of that original Christmas: God provided a solution for your sin and mine, as well as for the sin of the entire world —past, present, and future.

Seven hundred years before Christ's birth, Isaiah's prophecy was a word of hope and encouragement to Judah as it faced a great crisis. The prophet's message was an indication of what God was about to do then as well as what would ultimately be fulfilled in the Messiah's advent. *Immanuel*, a name full of promise, was God's way of assuring the Old Testament saints that He was with them. Taken together, these two names encompass what we need for our entire life: Jesus, the pardoner of our sins, and Immanuel, the divine presence within us to help and guide every moment of every day. The names and the promises in them are the foundation for every facet of Christian life.

So how did God engineer that first Christmas to fulfill the promises of Jesus and Immanuel? His method was the incarnation. On the night Christ was born, the eternal God — motivated by love — entered the human family. He was supernaturally conceived by the Holy Spirit and physically born of a virgin. Jesus never ceased to be God, and He remained perfectly sinless in His being.

(Continued You Have All It Takes)

In the Bible, a Christian is described as a warrior and soldier; Ephesians 6:10-18 says for you and I to "put on" the whole armor of God. The first book of Apostle John talks about you and I being Overcomers. Overcomers are folks who overcome one thing or the other. You're not qualified to be called an overcomer if you never go through trials and conquer them. Why should you and I be generals in God's army if we never fought and won life's battles through God's help? Jesus had fought the greatest battle of all and won, all we're required to do is enforce and maintain the victory He won for us.

Venture into the deep. Go where no man has ever been before. Launch out into the deep for a catch. Stop dreaming small sized dreams, start dreaming God-sized dreams! Go for things in which you know you would fail if God doesn't help you. Go for things bigger than you, then will you see the saving hands of God in action in your life and ministry. Go for things that are impossible for men, for with God all things are possible. Stop thinking human thoughts and start thinking God thoughts!

God said to David in the book of Psalm 2:8, "ask of me and I will give you the nations and the ends of the earth for your inheritance and lot". God wants you and I to ask Him for big dreams; He gets pleasure from seeing us slap and defeat Satan every day. He rejoices when we trust Him for our healing, breakthroughs, miracles, transformation, and hopeless situations. God boasts in heaven when we conquer problems through faith in His power and strength. He wants you to put on His strength whenever your strength fails; He's waiting for you to stop being natural but rather become supernatural by partaking of His divine nature.

In closing, what is that thing you desire to be, do, or accomplish? What is that big dream and vision God has given you? What are the challenges you're currently facing today that is terminal and has no solution? I want you to know that God doesn't expect you to solve these in your strength and might, so stop trying to do it on your own! Retire your human strength and abilities; step out of your limited human ability and faculties and step into the super ability of Jehovah by asking Him to help you pray. God's dream and vision can only be achieved using God's ability; God will never give you a dream you can fulfill without Him.

Let's move forward together, let's brave our red seas together with the rod of authority and miracles in our hands.

Written by Afolabi Oyerokun

(Continued Christmas – A Personal Promise)

If the incarnation hadn't taken place exactly as it did, then we would still be living in our sin. According to Scripture, the punishment for sin is death (Romans 6:23). The Bible also says that God rejects any imperfect sacrifice (Deuteronomy 17:1). Jesus, because of His absolute sinlessness, is the only one who could save us by offering Himself as a payment for our sin debt.

Apart from the birth of God in human flesh, every one of us would have to stand before God with all of our sin resting upon us, and our sins would separate us from Him (Isaiah. 59:2). So the incarnation is the promise of Jesus — "the Lord is salvation" — for every person in the world.

But that was not the full extent of God's awesome plan. He also promised us His presence, which was fulfilled in the birth of Immanuel. Jesus was "God with us," the incarnate Deity, who physically lived and walked among men to show us what the heavenly Father is like.

Before His crucifixion, Jesus encouraged His disciples with the promise of God's indwelling presence. Christ said that when He went away, He would ask the Father to send the Spirit of truth, who "abides with you and will be in you" to teach, remind, comfort, and guide every step of the way (John 14:17, 26).

Far better than God simply being "with me" is God *within* me, for me, and through me! And that is His promise to every generation of believers — the incomparable, supernatural, immeasurable God will take up residence inside us and be everything we need. Once He lives within you, there will never be a time you have to walk without Him (Hebrews 13:5).

In light of the wonderful promise of God's redemption and presence, believers should be confident and courageous. We don't have a single need He can't satisfy. How can we worry when the sovereign, almighty God is with us?

So this year, as you gather on Christmas morning, I encourage you and your family to kneel and give thanks to almighty God. The incarnation is the very essence of Christmas. There's nothing wrong with the gifts or festivities, as long as they don't crowd out what belongs in first place: Christmas is about God breaking into humanity, shattering time, and becoming life and hope and help to all mankind.

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