

The Church of the Damascus Road Echo!

Volume 4
Issue No. 6a
November 2001
Fort Dodge & Rockwell City, IA

Musings

Even though I will not be eligible for parole until the end of 2004, I often think about what it will be like to enter society. What it will be like to live a life in a way that will not include my addiction. A life that would be totally foreign to me. A life that did not revolve around my addiction and what way or how to supply my drug addiction.

I was a drug user for a very long time. Drugs were my hobby, my passion, my business, my pick-me-up, my provider, my comforter, my reason to live (I thought, as many other addicts did, that I needed drugs to live. Instead, I needed them to die, spiritually and physically), my companion, and the replacement for anything that would provide any sanity to my insane life.

Since our prison system contains a very large number of inmates, male and female, I am sure there are many, too many, that can relate to this. It doesn't matter which drug you were addicted to: crack cocaine, marijuana, heroin, codeine, ecstasy, crystal, or (my drug of choice) methamphetamine. They're all illegal to possess or to use. Some may be legal in cases prescribed by a doctor, none are to be abused.

Those that are in prison for a drug charge must learn how to live life as God intended us to live. To seek a way to support our loved ones by seeking gainful employment.

Because of our past record, our past mistakes, we will be looked down. This will be a strike against us. We will have to convince employers and society that we can and will change.

Like Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden, we will be urged by Satan to live a life that is not the way God would have us live. God loves us and allows us to make the choices about how we will live our life.

Whether it is going to be a life of sin or a righteous life.

We will need to find new playgrounds and playmates. We will have to avoid the temptation that will always be there for those with a past problem of drug abuse. Satan will do his best to let us know that this drug will always be there to tempt us.

He will use every loophole he can find in God's laws to convince us that we can't lead a life without drugs, without sin, or any way that would turn us away from the Lord.

What he will not tell us is that we do not have to face this temptation alone, that the word of God says that we can overcome these temptations by allowing the Lord Jesus to be a part of our life.

It doesn't say we will not be tempted. On the contrary, it does say that these temptation will always be there. That we do not have to succumb to this temptation. That the Lord will not ask us to endure more then we are capable of enduring. He will be there to give us a way out. It is God that we draw strength from.

I find great comfort in the fact that I no longer will have to face life and the many temptations of the world alone. He is always there for us. In my life prior to my arrest, I had to face the problems alone and Satan has a way of justifying a way that would ultimately lead us to sinning.

Just as he succeeded in talking Eve into eating the forbidden fruit, he will try to convince us to do what is contrary to leading a righteous life. We must rebuke Satan and cast him away from our presence with the Word of God. The same words of God that Jesus used when he was tempted by Satan.

I worry that I will not be able to resist returning to my drug addicted life. I must remember that it was this drug addiction that

put me where I am now.

What will be hard is living in a world in which drugs are considered a norm. Drugs are every where and it seems that every one does drugs. One of the problems I will find to be tough is the fact that many of my friendships and even my marriage were built around drug abuse. The only thing that brought my wife and me together was a desire we both had for smoking pot. This is not a way to base a relationship or a life on.

I cannot expect anyone who is involved in drugs to stop on my account. There are members of my family that include drugs as a part of their lives. In my neighborhood alone there was a drug dealer or two on every block. The area I grew up in or lived in could be referred to as the other side of the tracks.

I know there are a great deal of people that will face similar circumstances when they are released. I pray that we remain strong in our spiritual walk. Remain close to the Lord. We will not be alone, God is always there.

I am going to seek out other Christians to fellowship with and who will help me in prayer, and be there for me to draw encouragement from. Whenever we ex-drug addicts feel temptation by drugs, help is only as far as kneeling before God and asking him to help us make it through these trying times.

It will be important to seek out a church that we will be comfortable in. It is also important that we not only pray for help when we are tempted, but we must not be bashful and ask our fellow Christians to pray for us. All things are possible through Jesus Christ our Lord. Go in peace, serve the Lord.

Robert Johnson II

Inside the Echo

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Never Alone

I used to think I was in control
When in reality I had no control at all
Drugs, alcohol and sin
They had control of me
And it took prison for me to see
The only hope I have to be free
Is ask God to look after me.
Now I know I can't do it on my own
But with God in my life I'm never alone
Dale Friedel

Thoughts

"A man's character is like a fence. It cannot be strengthened by whitewash."
"It's hard to stumble when you're down on your knees."
"The wages of sin is death. Repent before payday."
"Can't sleep? Try counting your blessings."
"Christians, keep the faith... But not from each other!"
"Satan subtracts and divides. God multiplies."

Funny how...

Funny how we set our clocks to arise at 4:00am or 5:00am to be at the job by 7:30, yet when Sunday comes we can't get to church for 11:00am to praise the one who gave us the jobs!

Funny how we call God our Father and Jesus our brother, but find it hard to introduce them to our family.

Funny how small our sins seem, but how big "their" sins are.

Funny how we demand justice for others, but expect mercy from God.

Funny how much difficulty some have learning the gospel well enough to tell others, but how simple it is to understand and explain the latest gossip about someone else.

Funny how we can't think of anything to say when we pray, but don't have any difficulty thinking of things to talk about to a friend.

Funny how we are so quick to take directions from a total stranger when we are lost, but are hesitant to take God's direction for our lives.

Funny how so many church goers sing "Standing on the Promises" but all they do is sit on the premises.

Funny how people want God to answer their prayers, but refuse to listen to His counsel.

Funny how we sing about heaven, but live only for today.

Funny how people think they are going to Heaven but don't think there is a Hell.

Funny how it is okay to blame God for evil and suffering in the world, but it is not necessary to thank Him for what is good and pleasant.

Funny how when something goes wrong, we cry, "Lord, why me?" but when something goes right, we think, "Hey, it must be me!"

Oh wait...maybe all this isn't so "funny" after all.

The World from Their Perspective

To close each day's activities in summer and on holidays in the Magic Kingdom at Walt Disney World at Lake Buena Vista, Florida, a huge fireworks display lights up the sky. One night I noticed a small boy about three years old perched on his father's shoulder. The child sat mesmerized, aware only of what was exploding in the heavens. When the fireworks were over, the little boy looked up into the sky again and said, "Thank you, God."

— John Salmon, Portland, Oregon

Friends

Everyone always tells their friends they'll be 'Friends Forever,' but how often does that last? You might be best friends one year, pretty good friends the next year, don't talk that often the next year, and don't want to talk at all the year after that. So, I just wanted to say, even if I never talk to you again in my life, you are special to me and you have made a difference in my life. I look up to you, respect you, and truly cherish you. Send this to all your friends, no matter how often you talk, or how close you are, and send it to the person who sent it to you.

Let old friends know you haven't forgotten them, and tell new friends you never will. Remember, everyone needs a friend. Someday you might feel like you have no friends at all, just remember this e-mail and take comfort in knowing somebody out there cares about you and always will.

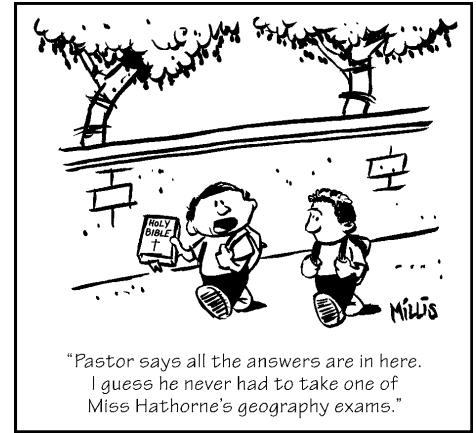
Facts of life:

1. At least 5 people in this world love you so much, they would die for you.
2. At least 15 people in this world care about you in some way.
3. The only reason anyone would ever hate you, is because they want to be just like you. No kidding! I know some of those people.
4. A smile from you can bring happiness to anyone even if they don't like you.
5. Every night, SOMEONE thinks about you before they go to sleep.
6. You mean the world to someone.
7. Without you, someone may not be living.
8. You are special and unique, in your own way.
9. Someone that you don't know even exists, loves you.
10. When you make the biggest mistake ever, something good comes from it.
11. When you think the world has turned it's back on you, take a look, you most likely turned your back on the world.
12. When you think you have no chance at getting what you want, you probably won't get it, but if you believe in yourself, you probably sooner or later will get it.
13. Always remember compliments you received, forget about the rude remarks.
14. Always tell someone how you feel about them, you will feel much better when they know.
15. If you have a great friend, take the time to let them know that they are great.

A Thought

There are people in the world so hungry that God cannot appear to them except in the form of bread.

— Mahatma Gandhi



God Has Given

God has given us life. And God is here to help us return to life when we have suffered. God has given us a heart, and God is here to help us feel once more. God has given us a soul, and God is here to help us soar once more. God has given us courage, and God is here to help us fight once more. God has given us hope, and God is here to help us dream once more. God has given us this moment, and God is here to help us experience it in all its sacred glory.

Choice?

It is neither desirable nor possible that all things should be left to our choice. So much do I feel this, that if my Lord should say to me, "From this hour I will always answer your prayer just as you pray it," the first petition I would offer would be, "Lord, do nothing of the sort." That would be putting the responsibility of my life on myself, instead of allowing it to remain on God.

— Charles Spurgeon

**The Church of the
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Volume 4.6a November, 2001

The official publication of The Church of the Damascus Road, a Christian Community of Reconciliation, serving the inmate population of the medium security units at Rockwell City and Fort Dodge, Iowa.

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You Can Do It Too!

A day here can be compared to standing around with a bunch of people who just lost their wallets. Imagine the hostility in a situation like that? In prison it's not much different: anger, hate, rudeness, cursing seven days a week, arguing over who won a card game, or irritated because someone didn't get his way, always trying to outdo the other. But for these people there is a way to be peaceful, full of Joy, contentment, and everlasting grace; and that's by knowing the Lord Jesus Christ who has been through all these things that upset and irritate us.

Life's not long enough to always be walking around in a grumpy mood. You see, Jesus knew we would have problems here on earth, but he was willing to walk right along beside us through this life. He said, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." He cares and loves us so much that he died so we could live.

I'm living proof of his great work, so let's be in love with Christ and give ourselves to him completely. I guarantee you will be not be disappointed. You can always go back to that misery if that's what you desire, but Christ will fill your heart with such joy you'll be a changed person, and you'll welcome him all the time with opens arms.

— Matt Renaud



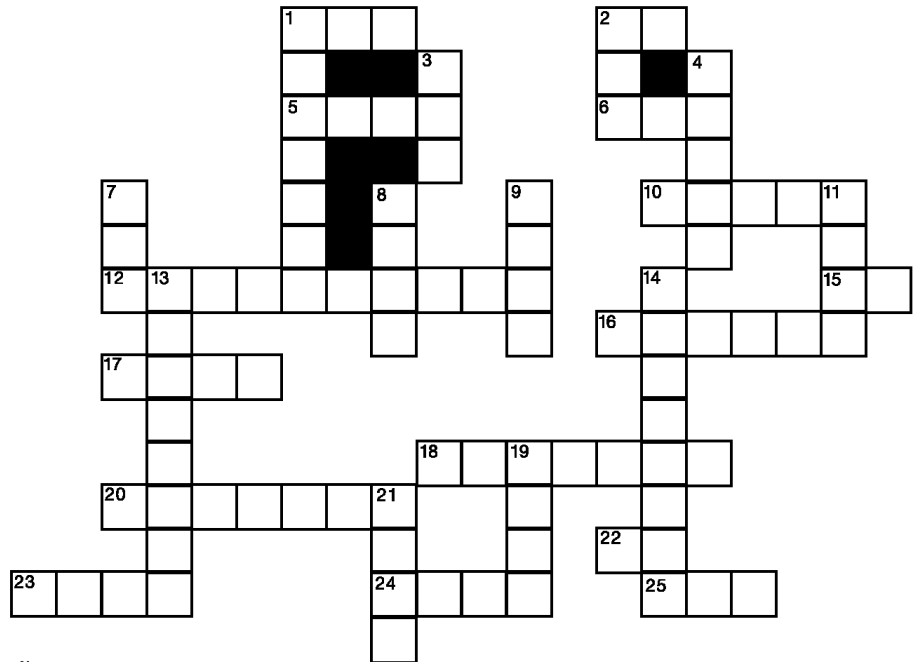
"Lord, Teach Us to Pray"

Jesus' disciples said, "Lord, teach us to pray."

Find the special prayer that Jesus taught them. Fit the words from the list into the squares on the puzzle.

Then, transfer them to the blank lines below.

- | | | | | | |
|-----|------|------|-------|----------|------------|
| be | for | come | name | Father | hallowed |
| us | not | each | sins | against | temptation |
| we | our | Give | your | Forgive | |
| And | who | into | bread | Kingdom | |
| day | also | lead | daily | everyone | |



" _____ , _____ 14 _____ 22 _____ 11 _____ 19 _____ 11 _____ 18 _____ 24 .
 _____ 23 _____ 15 _____ 21 _____ 25 _____ 6 _____ 10 _____ 4 _____ 20 _____ 15 _____ 6 _____ 9 .
 _____ 3 _____ 2A _____ 5 _____ 20 _____ 13 _____ 2D _____ 9 _____ 1D _____ 15 .
 _____ 1A _____ 17 _____ 15 _____ 7 _____ 8 _____ 12 _____ ."

Luke 11:2-4

Each Day

Lord, may I always be thankful, for this day you've given me,
 For giving me life in your son Jesus Christ, and opening my eyes to see.
 I know that I still stumble each day, but I know you are always there.
 To give your mercy and forgiveness, to pick me up with loving care.
 For I stumble in this world in many ways, from people, in one thing or another.
 Lord, teach me love in greater measure as I forgive myself and my brother;
 To forgive what I have left undone, or didn't do what I could.
 Remind me always to do what is right as I know that Jesus would.
 Yes, may I seek you in all things Lord, for I know in your Son is the way,
 For through him, in him, and with him, I am never alone night or day,
 Because I only long to serve you, Lord, in all my nights and days,
 For all is yours you've given me, to you I will give all of my praise.
 Allow your spirit to guide me, Lord, that whatever direction I take,
 Will be something that others will see you in me, for your selection is no mistake.
 Each day you give, I find your gentle hand in everything I do,
 So teach me, Lord, in humbleness, that I give thanks each day to you.

Henry Poteet

Answer: Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. And lead us not into temptation.

A Matter of Choice

Michael is the kind of guy you love to hate. He is always in a good mood and always has something positive to say. When someone would ask him how he was doing, he would reply, "If I were any better, I would be twins!" He was a natural motivator. If an employee was having a bad day, Michael was there telling the employee how to look on the positive side of the situation. Seeing this style really made me curious, so one day I went up to Michael and asked him, "I don't get it! You can't be a positive person all of the time. How do you do it?" Michael replied, "Each morning I wake up and say to myself, you have two choices today. You can choose to be in a good mood or ... you can choose to be in a bad mood. I choose to be in a good mood. Each time something bad happens, I can choose to be a victim or...I can choose to learn from it. I choose to learn from it. Every time someone comes to me complaining, I can choose to accept their complaining or...I can point out the positive side of life. I choose the positive side of life.

"Yeah, right, it's not that easy," I protested. "Yes, it is," Michael said. "Life is all about choices. When you cut away all the junk, every situation is a choice. You choose how you react to situations. You choose how people affect your mood. You choose to be in a good mood or bad mood. The bottom line: It's your choice how you live your life."

I reflected on what Michael said. Soon thereafter, I left the Tower Industry to start my own business. We lost touch, but I often thought about him when I made a choice about life instead of reacting to it. Several years later, I heard that Michael was involved in a serious accident, falling some 60 feet from a communications tower. After

18 hours of surgery and weeks of intensive care, Michael was released from the hospital with rods placed in his back. I saw Michael about six months after the accident. When I asked him how he was, he replied. "If I were any better, I'd be twins. Want to see my scars?" I declined to see his wounds, but I did ask him what had gone through his mind as the accident took place. "The first thing that went through my mind was the well-being of my soon to be born daughter," Michael replied. "Then, as I lay on the ground, I remembered that I had two choices: I could choose to live or I could choose to die. I chose to live." "Weren't you scared? Did you lose consciousness?" I asked. Michael continued, "The paramedics were great. They kept telling me I was going to be fine, but when they wheeled me into the ER and I saw the expressions on the faces of the doctors and nurses, I got really scared. In their eyes, I read, 'he's a dead man.' I knew I needed to take action."

"What did you do?" I asked. "Well, there was a big burly nurse shouting questions at me," said Michael. "She asked if I was allergic to anything. 'Yes,' I replied. The doctors and nurses stopped working as they waited for my reply. I took a deep breath and yelled, 'Gravity.' Over their laughter, I told them, 'I am choosing to live. Operate on me as if I am alive, not dead.'" Michael lived, thanks to the skill of his doctors, but also because of his amazing attitude. I learned from him that every day we have the choice to live fully. Attitude, after all, is everything. "Therefore, do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own" Matthew 6:34. After all, today is the tomorrow you worried about yesterday.

This Day's Thought

We've said this before, but it can't be reiterated too many times... God makes everything that happens work to the good for those who love him and are called according to his purpose. Everything. No matter what is happening in your life right now, no matter how devastating the circumstances may seem, have faith in God. Know that his hand is working, even in what may seem to be the most horrible circumstances you could ever face. Know that his will will be accomplished, no matter how the people and circumstances in your life try to stop it. Know that his hand is on you and on your life, no matter how frightening things may be. So instead of feeling frightened or worried, feel blessed.

Bonnie Ricks, New Song Ministries

Stepping Out in Faith

God rarely gives you a sign that you are on the right track, until after you have stepped out in faith! Because that's what faith is...believing in God's power, believing in his word, believing every promise that he has made! In his wisdom, God knows that it doesn't build your faith if he gives you a written road map for each and every thing you do. He wants you to believe in Him, not in signs, or wonders, or yourself. He wants you to step out on faith alone...knowing that He is there, with you, always. "...Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed." John 20:29



Unknown

Making Pancakes

Six-year-old Brandon decided one Saturday morning to fix his parents pancakes. He found a big bowl and spoon, pulled a chair to the counter, opened the cupboard and pulled out the heavy flour canister, spilling it on the floor. He scooped some of the flour into the bowl with his hands, mixed in most of a cup of milk and added some sugar, leaving a floury trail on the floor which by now had a few tracks left by his kitten.

Brandon was covered with flour and getting frustrated. He wanted this to be something very good for Mom and Dad, but it was getting very bad. He didn't know what to do next, whether to put it all into the oven or on the stove (and he didn't know how the stove worked!).

Suddenly he saw his kitten licking from the bowl of mix and reached to push her away, knocking the egg carton to the floor. Frantically, he tried to clean up this monumental mess but slipped on the eggs, getting his pajamas white and sticky. And just then, he saw Dad standing at the door.

Big crocodile tears welled up in Brandon's eyes. All he'd wanted to do was something good, but he'd made a terrible mess. He was sure a scolding was coming, maybe even a spanking. But his father just watched him. Then, walking through the mess, he picked up his crying son, hugged him and loved him, getting his own pajamas white and sticky in the process.

That's how God deals with us. We try to do something good in life, but it turns into a mess. Our marriage gets all sticky or we insult a friend or we can't stand our job or our health goes sour. Sometimes we just stand there in tears, because we can't think of anything else to do. That's when God picks us up, and loves us, and forgives us, even though some of our mess gets all over Him.

We can't stop trying to "make pancakes," for God or for others, just because we might mess up. Sooner or later we'll get it right, and then they'll be glad we tried...

Contributions invited

The editor of this newsletter is inviting **ALL READERS** to contribute articles, poetry, art work, and opinions for the newsletter. So don't be bashful.

Worship & Bible Study

FDCF Fort Dodge

7:00pm WednesdaysHoly Communion

7:00pm FridaysBible Study

NCCF Rockwell City

6:30pm TuesdaysBible Study

6:30pm ThursdaysHoly Communion