

The Church of the Damascus Road

Flash!

Volume 5
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Fort Dodge & Rockwell City, IA

Fundraiser III



Phil and Pam Morgan

Nearly 170 people attended the third fundraiser held on July 19, 2002, in support of The Church of the Damascus Road. Phil and Pam Morgan shared their combined talents to bring us a concert of Country Christian music, all composed by Phil.

Four former members of CoDR were in attendance, George Fox, Jeff Murrow, Henry Poteet and Wade Tolle. George, Henry and Wade told the audience about what CoDR meant to them while in prison and their testimonies were well received (standing ovation, of course). The event was held at Asbury United Methodist Church in Webster City. \$1,600.00 was raised for the ministry of CoDR.



George Fox, Jeff Murrow, Jeff's friend, Henry Poteet, Wade Tolle and his wife.

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The Three Young Men

It was a warm, clear day, with occasional gusts of wind stirring up little dust devils that danced across the vast, endless plain of Dura. Thousands of people, each one a leader or government official or person of influence, congregated around a golden statue of a man so tall it reduced the appearance of the crowd to a sea of ants swarming at its base.

Suddenly an announcement blared out that all who had gathered were to bow and worship the statue of gold when the musical signal was given. If any one refused, he was to be thrown into a fiery furnace. Suddenly a ripple of consternation swept through the people. As they exchanged glances, many must have shrugged in a complacent, resigned gesture, because they had been taught to value toleration of all types of religious expression. Three young men in the crowd also exchanged glances not of indifferent resignation, but of comprehension, conviction, and courage.

The hum of conversation would have ceased as the music played, and like pilgrims thronging the shrine in Mecca during Ramadan, the entire sea of people fell on their faces in outward obeisance to the statue. All except Meshach, Shadrach, and Abednego, who stood with their backs straight, their shoulders squared, their chins lifted, their eyes clear, refusing to even bend.

Their lonely stand was quickly obvious to everyone because they literally stood out from the crowd around them. They were immediately reported to King Nebuchadnezzar, who furiously subjected them to intense interrogation, finally threatening, "If you do not worship it, you will be thrown immediately into a blazing furnace. Then what God will be able to rescue you from my Hand?"

The answer they gave is a classic response of God-fearing, God Honoring, Lonely courage: "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we Serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O King, but even if he does not, we want you to know, O King, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up."

And so Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were roughly seized, tightly bound, then viciously thrown into the furnace that was so hot it incinerated the guards who threw them into it. As the king and his counselors gathered to peer into the furnace and gloat over the destruction of the three uncompromising young people who had dared defy the king's order, the king exclaimed hysterically "Weren't there three men we tied up and threw into the fire? Look! I see four men walking around in the fire."

The three young men who had refused to compromise their convictions, who had refused to worship anything or anyone other than the one true living God, who had refused to "love their lives so much as to shrink from death," those three young men not only experienced God's deliverance from the fire, but God's presence in the midst of it as he shared their lonely position. And the entire world of their day gave God the glory! How much more accurately the world would perceive God if you and I simply abandoned ourselves totally to live for him.

The Real Self

If you want to learn something that will really help you, learn to see yourself as God sees you and not as you see yourself in the distorted mirror of your own self-importance. This is the greatest and most useful lesson we can learn: to know ourselves for what we truly are, to admit freely our weaknesses and failings, and to hold a humble opinion of ourselves because of them.

—Thomas Kempis

Best wishes

May the Lord walk with our fellow inmates who are walking out into the world; Sometimes journeying down a new path might seem scary or lonely to them, if they choose to walk alone. I pray for the Lord to give them direction, and that they stay strong and do well in life, but mostly, I pray that they resist all that is outside of the Lord's warm embrace. Amen

—Richard G. Shiner

Laughter

Laughter brightens the eye, increases the perspiration, expands the chest, forces the poisoned air from the least-used cells, and tends to restore that exquisite poise or balance which we call health.

— O. S. Marden



Beautiful Me

I may not be perfect,
I may not be smart,
But I'll always have
God deep in my heart

He cares not
For how I look.
In his eyes,
I'm a beautiful book!

Full of wonder,
Full of life.
That's what he sees
When he looks inside!

So deep in my heart
I'll always believe,
I'm as beautiful as you,
And you as me!

—Jeremiah Hemenway

Growing in Faith

When we don't have enough faith, we try to take over and do things for ourselves. We fail to realize that each circumstance in our lives is there so that Jesus can help us to grow in faith in Him, not in ourselves.

—Bonnie Ricks

Filling Empty Spaces

Grace fills empty spaces, but it can only enter where there is a void to receive it, and it is grace itself which makes this void.

— Simone Weil

Jesus Is Lord

Good afternoon brothers! Let's open with some prayer: Almighty and merciful Lord our God, we come before you Lord to worship and adore you. We feel your presence and we enjoy and need your presence. Please keep our families and us happy and secure all the days of our lives. I ask you now Lord to open these men's hearts and ears, that this message I'm going to give be your words, that they will edify and comfort someone here today! Lord, we love you!

My devotion today is entitled: The mechanics of the spirit! However, before I get started I would like to ask all you brothers to please help me with something. I'm going to count to three and when I get there I would like everyone to say: Jesus is Lord! Not because I'm asking you to say it, but because you believe "Jesus is Lord" must come from your heart. Ready, one two three Jesus is Lord!

(If not loud enough do again)

Okay— Great response! Now I would like to read something out of the word of God. - 1 Cor. 12:3- God's word says; therefore I tell you that no one who is speaking by the spirit of God says, "Jesus be Cursed" and no one can say "Jesus is Lord" except by the holy spirit. (Repeat)

So, now I see by the response, that everyone here is now filled with the Holy Spirit, not just any Spirit wandering around here on planet earth, but "The" Holy Spirit. God's Holy Spirit! Now we need to learn how to use the power of the Holy Spirit so we can stand and fight against the devil.

I look at it this way. I compare this human body to the engine of a car. We need three things for a car motor to run. One- is fuel. We all now have a full tank- filled with the Holy Spirit. 2nd, now we need some spark to ignite this fuel. Does anybody have any suggestions of what spark we can use?

(Take a few Suggestions)

Phi. 4:6 (Thanksgiving)-(Prater) Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your request to, God.

Jn. 13:34 (LOVE) A new command I give you; Love one another, As I have loved you, so you must love one another.

Jn. (Faith) 14:12 I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the father.

Js. 1:2-3 (Joy) Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, (3) because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance.

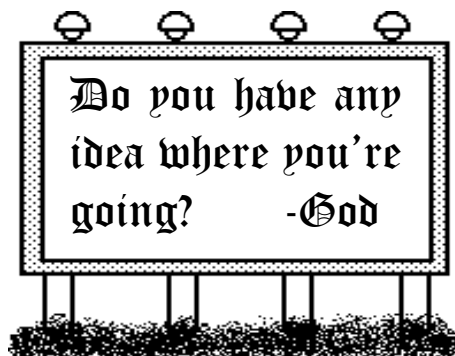
Is. 54:7-8 (Kindness) "For a brief moment I abandoned you, but with deep (compassion) I will bring you back. (8) in a surge of anger I hid my face from you for a moment, but with everlasting kindness I will have compassion on you" says the Lord your redeemer.

— author unknown

The Question

The question remains, "How can God be just- that is, true to himself, in nature and true to himself in holiness, and yet justify the sinner?" The only solution was for an innocent party to volunteer to die physically and spiritually as a substitution before God. There was only one possibility. God's own Son was the only personality in the universe who had the capacity to bear in his own body the sins of the world.

— Billy Graham



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Damascus Road
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Volume 5.5

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

Richard G. Shiner, Editor.

If you are reading a copy of this letter that is not yours, you can subscribe and receive your own copy by writing to:

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Musings

I have been struggling with something that's laying heavy on my heart. There is a great deal of discussion as to whether or not an inmate chooses to follow Jesus. I know this is only an attempt by Satan to destroy our spirituality.

What I feel makes this such a problem is the lack of maturity among inmates and the way to focus toward others so they themselves are not confronted because of their own lack of self esteem. There is going to be a certain degree of immaturity here because of the age group that most of the inmates fall into. There has been speculation as to FDCF being considered a kids' camp and a gladiator school.

It was pointed out a short while back that less than 10% of the inmates here are 35 years or older. That means that there is somewhere around 1000 inmates under 35. I must admit that I have met men in their teens that acted mature beyond their age. I also have met men in their 30's or 40's that have yet to grow up. Maturity does not only mean knowing what or who we are, it also is accepting others for who they are and not condemning them.

Many times I've heard inmates point out the sincerity of fellow inmates who truly have turned their lives over to God. I feel that it does not make a difference as to what inspires them to come to Jesus. What is most important is the fact that they did! I have had my fellow inmates look down their noses at me because I am a Christian. They consider this a weakness. They think many people seek the Lord as a way to get out of prison sooner. I admit that some men do use this in a negative way. It is these men that seek the Lord for the wrong reasons. These men usually fall away from God sooner than later. They do not open their hearts completely to the Lord. It is these men (that do not seek the Lord with all their heart) that soon tire of their new so-called spirituality. They look at worshipping God as a way to receive rather than to serve. They do not realize what is most important and are very easily discouraged and turn away.

I wish I had a nickel for every time I've been asked, "Did you go to church on the outside?" They then point out that they did not attend church on the outside and are not going to start now. These men are only fooling themselves. Hell is full of fools and you will not find a fool in heaven. Because choosing eternal life over hell is not a decision that is made by a fool.

As for me, I know I do not need to justify my reason for salvation to anyone. This is a personal matter between Jesus and me. I will clarify this matter as a testimony of what Jesus has done, is doing, and will do for me. He, too, will do this for you, if you seek him with a sincere heart.

I was 17 when I first met Jesus. My uncle invited me to a revival at a church he was

attending. As I look back I can see I was immature and decided I wanted to study to be a minister. I thought I was ready to make such a decision in my life. The truth is, I was not ready for such a commitment and began a life full of sin that ended up where I am now.

Life is full of choices and you do not need to be a genius to see that I made my share of wrong ones. I still continued to know in my heart that God was there. I did not choose to allow him to be present in my life. I can never praise him enough for not turning his back on me as I had on him.

I now know that he is the one and only true living God and that not having him in my heart will only give me a place with Satan, spending eternity in hell.

My life focuses on one thing. I was living life either doing dope or seeking dope. I should have sought the Lord instead. The sad thing is that the only way to get me in church back then would have been to tell me that I could obtain dope there. I, as many others that I know, worshiped one thing—that was the demon by the name of methamphetamine. Sad, huh?



I praise the Lord for loving me enough to allow the only thing that could get me off dope and keep me off it. The drying out process takes a great deal of time. It is a process of healing that only the healing power of Jesus Christ can accomplish.

Don't get me wrong, treatment, education, frequent drug tests, intense probation, and groups such as narcotics anonymous are important. The problem is that this demon will continue to be sitting on your shoulder, whispering in your ear about how good life can be if he is a part of it.

This is a trap that can only be avoided by not facing our problems alone. We do not have to be alone. The Holy Spirit is always willing to be with us, and with him on our side, we cannot fail!

In Matthew 19:26 Jesus said, "With God all things are possible." Again in Mark 10:27 Jesus says the same about what we can accomplish with God on our side.

There are many people that would consider me crazy for praising God because I am here in prison. If I was still on the street I would still be on dope. That is, if I was still *alive*, and there is a good chance that I would not be.

I spent over 25 years of my life doing dope. It will take years for my life physically and spiritually to regain what I once had and to be able to resist the urge to do dope. I lost my sanity on dope and with the Lord's help I will find it again.

I spent over 25 years doing what is not right with God. How can I not repay him for rescuing me from the sin of drug addic-

tion and spend the next 25 years serving him? If I am not to be blessed to live another 25 years. I know that by leading a righteous life I will spend eternity with the one that by grace saved my life. And he is willing to do the same for you.

To illustrate my response to those who try to condemn our relationship with God because we did not seek him on the streets, let me describe it this way.

Sin is like an illness that can only end in death. Not just physical death, but spiritual death also. When someone has been healed from a life threatening disease or illness, we give thanks and praise that this person will live.

This is also what we should do when someone has turned his or her life over to Christ. Just as the angels rejoice when a soul has been won, we as children of God do the same! In the healing of the sick we do not question when, how, or why they are healed. The important thing is that they have been healed.

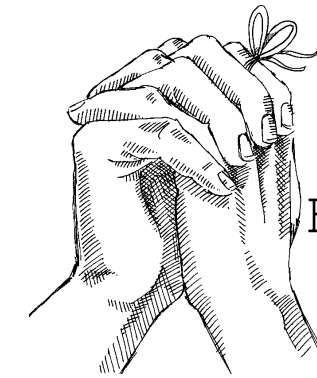
When someone questions our salvation and they themselves are not saved, it is their salvation that should be in question, not those that are already saved. I say "Come on people, wake up!"

It is not important as to how, where, or when we seek the Lord. The important thing is that we do it soon, because no one but God will know when judgment day is here. On that day he will be here to judge the living and the dead.

I pray that each and everyone of us accepts Jesus as our Savior soon. Remember that those who are persecuting us Christians are doing so because misery loves company.

It truly amazes me how many people can't see the forest because of the trees. I pray that everyone who does not carry Jesus in his or her heart to seek him. Seek what is eternal and not what is temporal. Go in peace, serve the Lord.

— Robert L. Johnson II



Resolve
to pray
each
day

Prayers Make a Difference

Our prayers may be awkward. Our attempts may be feeble. But since the power of prayer is in the one who hears it and not the one who says it, our prayers do make a difference.

— Max Lucado

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October 2002

Artists' Corner



<http://www.dodgenet.com/~cjang/index.html>



Rafael Cardenas

Invite the Pastor to Worship

The worship services at The Church of the Damascus Road are scheduled on week-nights for two reasons. One is to enable people on the outside to worship with the inmates and not miss worship in their own congregations. The second is to make the pastor of Damascus Road available to visit area congregations on Sunday mornings. The pastor can give a brief update on the ministry, sermon, children's sermon, adult forum, children's Sunday school opening or cross-generational class session, any or all of the above, and/or is open to suggestions. All that is asked is that there be time to prepare.

Call 515-955-3579 or write to: The Church of the Damascus Road, PO Box 834, Fort Dodge, IA 50501-0834, or by e-mail at <DamascusCh@aol.com> to arrange for a visit to your congregation. The pastor speaks Episcopalian, Methodist, Baptist, United Church of Christ, Covenant, Presbyterian, Lutheran, Catholic, Evangelical, Reformed, Assembly of God, Nazarene, and a host of other denominations, independent, and non-denominational as well.

A note to secretaries and pastors—

Copy Me, Please!

We send our newsletter primarily to *congregations*. It's printed on white paper so it can be *copied* to include all or portions of it in your newsletter or bulletin, or simply made available to members of your congregation.

Anyone wishing to be on our mailing list may send name, address, and phone numbers to The Church of the Damascus Road, PO Box 834, Fort Dodge, IA 50501-0834, or by e-mail at: DamascusCh@aol.com. The Flash will be sent directly to your home.

-- Pastor Carroll Lang

Worship & Bible Study

FDCF Fort Dodge

7:00pm Wednesdays Holy Communion
7:00pm Fridays Bible Study

NCCF Rockwell City

6:30pm Tuesdays Bible Study
6:30pm Thursdays Holy Communion

All Readers: Send Contributions

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