

The Church of the Damascus Road

Damascus **Echo!**

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The Ingredient

We may think that we are successful and happy with ourselves, with our occupation, our living quarters, the amount of money we make. But are we truly happy? Real happiness and joy is from within. Our outward appearance, what we wear, have, etc., may give an impression that we are happy and complete, but no one can be happy and complete without Christ. That's just one of many reasons why he died for us, so that we could have life, a joyful, happy life from within which could radiate to our actions. To make someone complete it must start on the inside. Just a show of outside happiness isn't happiness, because deep down every man is missing the key ingredient, Christ. To make a cake, you start from scratch. It's not a cake unless you use the proper ingredients. It becomes a cake when you make it according to the recipe. The comparison of Christ and a cake is that Christ is the ingredient to make a rightness, holy, useful human being. If you don't have the ingredients to make a cake, how can you make it? If you don't have Christ, how can you make a rightness human being? You can't! Does this mean that once Christ is in our life we don't sin? Of course not! We are human, we don't commit the same sin over and over. The spirit of Christ will convict you of wrong. You may know you're doing wrong, but you find pleasure in it, so you continue to do it. We must all be accountable for the things we do in this life, but we can be forgiven for our wrongs right now. We turn to Christ, confess our wrongs to him, and heartfully believe in him and his words. We will want to change, we will want to be different. I can't



sit here and say that it's easy, because it's not, but I can tell you that I've felt the horrible pain and anguish that I have caused myself and others. By doing what we do we hurt our families. Do you think they're happy saying: "Oh, my son is in prison"? But you can make some good out of that. Just because you're in prison doesn't mean life is over. Actually, it means life is just beginning (if Christ is in you, that is), So pour your heart out to him. He is here for you, me, and everyone who comes to him. He turns no one away. I let Christ into my life and now I'm at peace with myself and others. I can think better, I'm spiritually smarter, I'm encouraged to do better in everything I do, and most of all I feel the same way that Christ feels for us, and all of this is to the glory of my God in Jesus Christ, but only because he loved me, do I now see! He is the ingredient!

Christ's disciple, Matt Renaud

Helpful Scripture:

Matt 7:14; 9:6 Luke 13:3
John 3:16; 14:6;4:10 3 John 11
Psalm 37:5 Phillipians 4:13



Two Things

Two things I've learned:

It's easier to forgive than to forget...and it's better to be a best friend than to have one.

Two things I'm grateful for:

There is a God...and I'm not Him.

Two things I'm at peace with:

My salvation...and My Call.

Two things I try to avoid:

Pride...and Prejudice.

Two things I'm thankful for:

What God has given me...

and what He's taken away.

— John Swanger

Cross and Clef Ministries



The Gift

A gift was given, on this Christmas day.
God gave us a Savior, to whom we may pray.
This never ending gift, to one and all,
By accepting His love, answering His call.
It is through grace, and our faith in Him,
It is His precious blood, that washes away all sin.
So always Remember, to praise Him each day,
For He is the truth, He is the way.

— Robert L. Johnson II, 11-27-2001

Memories

Memories of days gone by
Can warm a cold, cold heart.
Reminding us of those we miss
Can tear a heart apart.
When I miss my loved ones
I take it to God in prayer
That He will watch over them
As I cannot be there.
Someday in the future
When God blesses me so.
Back to the arms of my family,
Praising Him I shall go.

— Robert L. Johnson II, 12-15-2001

Time

If I could turn back the hands of time
What would I choose to do?
Would I be the man I am
Or would I be like you?
Would I choose to seek the Lord,
Would I follow Him?
Or would I stay in the world
In a life of sin?
Would I do my very best
To sow a fruitful seed?
Or would I choose to turn my back
On all of those in need?
The answer to these questions
It is a search that you must start.
By looking down deep inside
Of your very own heart.

— Robert L. Johnson II, 12-15-2001

Inside the Echo

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Musings

Something has been laying heavy on my heart lately. It always helps to tell others about it. With the help of the Holy Spirit I will try to explain.

Part of reaching maturity is being able to take responsibility for our own actions rather than pointing an accusing finger at someone or something.

Let's face it, we all did something wrong causing us to be incarcerated. God so loves us that he gives us the ability to choose which direction we will go in our lives. Not like other creatures on this earth that cannot reason in their own minds; their choices are based on their survival needs.

When is the last time you saw an animal point an accusing finger? Never, I hope. God gives us the choice of whether or not we take responsibility for actions and/or choose to believe in him.

Another act of immaturity is accusing God of the punishment we received as if he is punishing us. God is a loving Father who would never wish bad things upon us. I do not see very many people that point an accusing finger at our earthly parents for the bad things that happen in our lives. We know that our parents would not wish any harm to us. They are there to comfort and guide us.

The same is so of the love God has for us. He only wants what is best for us. He is always there for us in good times or in bad.

It means so much more when we use this God-given choice to seek him out in good times or in bad. God is all powerful and he could make us follow his direction and to

worship Him, but then we would be like a robot. When we choose to love and serve him it means so much more.

I have seen too many people blame God and turn away from him because something bad occurred in their life. I guess, for lack of a better description, they could be called "a fair weather worshipers." They end up turning away from God, blaming God for causing their hardships. Then they ask God to perform a miracle to take them out of the situation that is the consequence of something they have done.

If God always bails us out of our troubles we will never learn from our mistakes and we will continue to make the same mistakes over and over. God is always there to comfort us in our time of need.

So, the next time you receive a lay-down letter, a "Dear John letter" or find yourself in a bad situation, don't get mad at God, all that he wants is to love you, and you to love him.

Just as you would not turn from your earthly parents when you end up in bad times, do not turn from God. Instead, tell him how much you love him, and seek out his wisdom and guidance. He will never allow you to be handed more than you can endure. We are all his children, so in times of trouble, lean on the shoulder of our loving Father in heaven and praise him. Rejoice, for he will always be there and never forsake us!

Go in peace, serve the Lord.

— Robert L. Johnson II

Free Books Available

The Human Kindness Foundation, PO Box 61619, Durham, NC 27715, is offering free books to prison inmates. Here is the latest offering, in their own words.

Many things happen to us in life which we wish could have happened differently. Yet, each of us has a chance—and a duty—to start right from where we are and begin sorting out the problems and mysteries of our lives so that we can become strong, wise and free—even in prison.

We can't help you with everything, but our materials can help you transform your whole life with a foundation of self-honesty, courage, kindness, humor and wonder.

The first time we hear from you, you'll receive the books *We're All Doing Time* and *Lineage and Other Stories*, plus our most recent newsletter. After working with these for a while (please take time to digest them) you're welcome to write again for other materials (on the right). Please only order two items at a time.

Newsletter: Everyone who writes us receives our newsletter (3 times per year), so to save us time & money, *be sure to let us know if your address changes.*

Free to Prisoners

(Order directly from Human Kindness Foundation)
Up to 2 items per month

Books

We're All Doing Time (English, Spanish or French)
Lineage and Other Stories
Just Another Spiritual Book
Deep & Simple

Open Secrets, by Rabbi Rami Shapiro
Seeking Peace, by Johann Christoph Arnold
Father Arseny, translated by Boutenoff
Finding Freedom, by Jarvis Masters

Audio Tapes

If you are interested in receiving audio tapes, please check out your mailroom regulations (all of our tapes are shrinkwrapped and no screws), then write to us with your request. Most of our tapes are of Bo Lozoff's talks in prisons and elsewhere.

ATTENTION!

Things to Remember in 2002

As we start a new year, here are 21 things to remember:

1. No one can ruin your day without *your* permission.
2. Most people will be about as happy as they decide to be.
3. Others can stop you temporarily, but only you can do it permanently.
4. Whatever you are willing to put up with is exactly what you will have.
5. Success stops when you do.
6. When your ship comes in... make sure you are willing to unload it.
7. You will never "have it all together."
8. Life is a journey, not a destination. Enjoy the trip!
9. The biggest lie on the planet: "When I get what I want, I'll be happy."
10. The best way to escape your problem is to solve it.
11. I've learned that ultimately 'takers' lose and 'givers' win.
12. Life's precious moments don't have value unless they're shared.
13. If you don't start, it's certain you won't arrive.
14. We often fear the thing we want the most.
15. He or she who laughs...lasts.
16. Yesterday was the deadline for all complaints.
17. Look for opportunities, not guarantees.
18. Life is what's coming... not what was.
19. Success is getting up one more time.
20. Now is the most interesting time of all.
21. When things go wrong... don't go with them.

The Church of the Damascus Road Echo!

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January, 2002

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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Can you find 'em all?

Hidden Books of the Bible

Can you find the names of 25 books of the Bible in the following paragraph? The answers will be in the next issue of Echo! See if you can find them all before the next issue comes out in March.

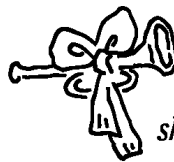
This is a most remarkable puzzle. Someone found it in the seat pocket on a flight from Los Angeles to Honolulu, keeping himself occupied for hours. One man from Illinois worked on this while fishing from his john boat. Roy Clark studied it while playing his banjo. Elaine Vicks mentioned it in her column once. One woman judges the job to be so involving, she brews a cup of tea to calm her nerves. There will be some names that are really easy to spot, that's a fact. Some people will soon find themselves in a jam, especially since the book names are not necessarily capitalized. The truth is, from answers we get, we are forced to admit it usually takes a minister or scholar to see some of them at the worst. Something in our genes is responsible for the difficulty we have. Those able to find all of them will hear great lamentations from those who have to be shown. One revelation may help: books like Timothy and Samuel may occur without their numbers, and punctuation or spaces in the middle are normal. A chipper attitude will help you compete. Remember, there are 25 books of the bible lurking somewhere in this paragraph.

A Thought...

Never let a problem to be solved become more important than a person to be loved.
— Barbara Johnson

I'm Free

Don't Grieve for me, for now I am free.
I'm following the path God has laid, you see.
I took his hand when I heard him call,
I turned my back and left it all.
I could not stay another day
to laugh, to love, to work, or play.
Tasks left undone must stay that way.
I found that peace at the close of the day.
If my parting has left a void,
then fill it with remembered joys.
A friendship shared, a laugh, a kiss,
Oh yes, these things I too will miss.
Be not burdened with times of sorrow;
I wish you the sunshine of tomorrow.
My life's been full, I've savored much,
Good friends, good times, a loved one's touch.
Perhaps my time's seemed all too brief,
Don't lengthen it now with undue grief.
Lift up your heart, and peace to thee.
God wanted me now; He set me FREE!
— Eric J. Conerd



Special Times for the Israelites

"This day shall be a day of remembrance for you. You shall celebrate it as a festival to the LORD; throughout your generations you shall observe it ..." Exodus 12:14

The biblical calendar had many feasts and festivals. They were connected with the changing of the seasons or special events. Below are some of the special days observed by the Israelites.

Use the code to find the name of the special day and the month of the Jewish year in which they are celebrated.

CODE:

**A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z
Z Y X W V U T S R Q P O N M L K J I H G F E D C B A**

<u>Season</u>	<u>Holiday</u>	<u>Month</u>
1. End of Summer	(New Year)	GRSHIR
2. Fall	(Day of Atonement)	GRSHIR
3. Fall	(Festival of Booths)	GRHSIR
4. Winter	(Festival of Rededication)	PRHOVE
5. Winter	(Festival of Lots)	ZWZI
6. Spring	(Feast of Unleavened Bread)	MRHZM
7. Spring	(Feast of Weeks/Pentecost)	HREZM

Answers: 1. Rosh Hashanah; Tishri; 2. Yom Kippur; Tishri; 3. Sukkot; Tishri; 4. Hanukkah; Kislev; 5. Purim; Adar; 6. Passover; Nisan; 7. Shavu'ot; Sivan

Think Hard! Mind Chew This!

To Address The Problem of "Private Slavery."
When we "Surrender" to voices, alcohol, drugs, fleshly lust, gluttony, power and fame, almost any goal that's a virtue in moderation becomes a vice in excess! This is why we hear our own "self warnings" against "blind ambition." We let certain "passions" steal our soul, and we become "prisoners," made miserable day by day by our cravings "we can never satisfy!"
 Surrendering to voices and ending up a prisoner of the voice we embrace! There are people walking the streets in search of these "paragons of virtue" and strength. They're lost in misery because they can't resist some voice or another. People who are prisoners of lust, betraying their mates and their own bodies, and hating themselves for it! There! Right there is the sickness that causes so much unhappiness! I have discovered this for myself, by my own observation!

Oh, temperance is part of it! I'm not perfect, nor am I a slave! I want to share my knowledge with everyone. I preach against slavery, all slavery! Not just one type, every type! I urge everyone to take a look at themselves, their life's quality, where they truly want to be. I want everyone to live a "free life" in command of their bodies and souls, avoiding all vices!

Drunkenness, lust, power, fame and politics! Society has plugged its ears, gotten set in its "sickness," set limits in its mind. I yearn to show them what a free man or woman can and could be. But, who really cares what I think, or will listen to me? I'm not talking about the absence of laws! Laws help keep us safe, they govern us. I don't and never will promote anarchy, lawlessness, or the untrammelled will or even free love. People as a whole think (key word here, think) we are free, but in the big picture we are all slaves. Are you choosing to be a slave to today? I choose to be Free!

— Robert A. Large III



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

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,
 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

Being a Christian

Being a Christian is more than just an instantaneous conversion- it is a daily process whereby you grow to be more and more like Christ. Jesus Christ is the man God wants every man to be like.
 — Billy Graham

Time for Change

To do the right thing, you have to be strong.
 You have to be willing to admit you're wrong.
 Our learned behavior got us where we are.
 Away from freedom, our family's afar.
 You must have the desire and be willing to change.
 Your morals and thought patterns, you must rearrange.
 It will take some time, as we all know,
 We're all doing time, so let's use it to grow.
 In order to grow, we must change our old habits.
 So let's stop doing time and running like rabbits.
 If you will use just a little part of your brain,
 You can stop your addictions, and you won't go insane.
 I am saying all of this, because I have the desire.
 I'm giving up my past, all the bad things I retire.
 I am doing what it takes to make my life better.
 I am putting my mind, heart, and soul back together.
 I know I've done wrong, I know I have sinned.
 But God has forgiven, now I'm free as the wind.
 So give it some thought, and let yourself see,
 That until you surrender, you will never be free.
 Robert Stewart



It's Time

The time for America's grieving will never be over, but it is time for America as a whole to move on. What was done to us was a blow to all our people, but to let it affect our lives for too long will give the message that the terrorists have won.

All over the world people have shown resolve. We see it in the eyes of our fellow Americans and in the voices of the world.

Churches have pulled together to lend their support for the people lost, and the people fighting to find the remnants of life left behind. A pastor said that all people have a calling from the Lord, some with singing, others with their words. What is your calling?

You have a calling. It's time to use it for yourself and for the world to help overcome what has happened. It may take time and it may be hard, but it can be done. Always remember that help is there for us, as help should be there for others in need.

We Americans must be careful with how we deal with what has happened on September 11. To say that the people are evil would be a mistake. In their eyes we are the evil ones. They are misguided. They are sheep led astray from the flock. They will be shown that what they have done will only make us stronger as a nation. God bless.

— Perry Major

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 Wednesdays Holy Communion
 7:00pm Fridays Bible Study

NCCF Rockwell City

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