



Hope Beyond the Bars
3rd Quarter Newsletter
for 2021

Happy Fall everyone,

I pray that your spirits are lifted as the temperatures falls. May the Grace and Love of God warm your soul and fill you with His joy.

Our 3rd Bible study is underway with a few more changes from the last time. The deadlines for session answers have been eliminated and a work at your own pace approach has been adopted due to the overwhelming delays in men receiving their study books. There are delays with shipping as well as delays with property distribution within all institutions due to employee shortages. Several of our Bible study participants have not received their study books shipped in early August.

We were planning to have an Advent Bible study during our 4th quarter but due in part to the forementioned problems, we will be changing gears to a more traditional daily devotional Advent book provided free of charge by an organization called the Society of St. Andrew that focuses on ending hunger. Scottsville United Methodist Church will also be offering these booklets to our congregation, as we have for the past several years.

I will pose a few questions or offer a topic of discussion each week for everyone registered in the Bible study to respond to as a means of remaining active and eligible for their donation at the end of the quarter.

Everyone, whether registered in the Bible study or not, will receive a copy of the Advent devotional to enhance their time spent with God leading up to the celebration of the birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

We are happy to announce that we now have 25 registered in our current Bible study group, 7 in our art ministry (5 of whom are also in the Bible study) and 5 others receiving fellowship and devotional materials, which brings our total to 32 participants in 9 different facilities. Praise be to God.

As our enrollment grows, so does the time and funding needed to run the ministry. This is another reason for the decision to take advantage of the free resource of Advent devotionals from the Society of St. Andrew. Scottsville United Methodist Church contributes \$100 per quarter to our ministry which is a true blessing, but much more is needed to maintain at this level, and we would love to continue to expand. Financing is the only limitation to how far reaching this program can grow.

I recently had to submit a grant report documenting the use of funding thus far this year. Hope Beyond the Bars has raised, through grants and donations, \$5,787.00 and invested \$5,496.00 directly into the ministry with the remainder to cover expenses for devotional materials in the 4th quarter. These funds have provided Bibles, study books, devotional materials, Jpay correspondence, stamps and supplies needed for our ongoing correspondence, and on top of all of that, the quarterly donations given to the inmates. I shared this information with our participants in hopes that they will realize people see them as worthy of investing in.

The grant committee also asked that we name some ways in which the participants benefited from our program. I shared the following information with them along with testimonies from two of our participants which I have included at the end of this newsletter.

If a participant does not have their own Bible, we will purchase a study Bible for them. One participant named Christopher was so moved by the gift, he told his mom how much he loved it and she expressed a desire to have one as well. When he reached out to me to find out how he could get one for her, our church mission team gladly purchased one for her and she was adopted into our women's prayer group. Christopher said he felt like her words of excitement and appreciation came through the phone to embrace him in a big hug. He was so grateful.

We also established a re-entry fund to assist individuals in need, without family support, to find housing upon their release from prison. Hope Beyond the bars will donate up to \$300 and accept additional donations on behalf of the individual to help with rental assistance, clothing, tools, and food as needed. These funds are paid directly to the landlord or items purchased by Hope Beyond the Bars. To date, we have helped six men find housing, two of which received financial assistance.

We recently began consulting with a man by the name of Kevin, referred to us by one of our current ministry participants. Kevin was released from the VADOC last year and is consulting with us on ways to improve our ministry from a very valuable perspective. He emailed me the following, "I appreciate the opportunity to help in any way that I can. I'm sure that you've heard many times about the difficulties for formerly incarcerated individuals to get involved in things and feel a sense of belonging. This is helping me meet that need, so thank you! Talk to you soon. Peace, Kevin"

We now have two Spanish speaking participants within the ministry that receive regular devotions and email correspondence that we have to translate into Spanish using an online translating tool because none of our volunteers speak Spanish. It is a tedious process for us, but it is a labor of love.

Through one of the men in our program, we were introduced to a woman in the Virginia Correctional Center for Women who recently joined our Bible study. With this new addition, we now have a presence in nine of the facilities within the Virginia Department of Corrections simply by word of mouth and recommendations by the inmates within the program.

I have attached two unsolicited testimonies that can answer the question of how this ministry benefits the participants, much better than I can. Jesse, after more than 20 years of incarceration, will be going home next year. Carlos, who has also served over 20 years, will never see life outside of prison walls again. He went in when he was only 21 years old. They are both beloved children of God and need to be fed on His Word and loved and supported by their Christian brothers and sisters. Hope Beyond the Bars helps to make that possible.

As we learn about the Prayers of Jesus through our Bible study, we ask that each of you be in prayer for our ministry participants and volunteers listed below.

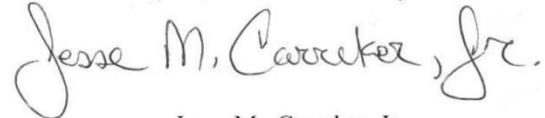
Abigail	Brian C	Christopher P	Francisco	Kenmonta	Matthew	Tarelle	Tyler
Allen	Brian M	Christopher R	Freeman	Kevin	Michael	Tavoris	TJ
Andrew	Carlos	Diamond	Heather	Leo	Robert	Tom B	Wes
Ann	Chad	Douglas	Jesse	Ludwig	Staci	Tom L	Yahshau
BeeBee	Charles	Erland	Joe	Margaret	Steve		

I greet you in the name of our Great Redeemer and Savior Jesus Christ. I pray that heaven will smile upon you filling you with pure joy as you read these words. I wanted to write you this letter to let you know how the bible study "A Way Through the Wilderness" has impacted my spiritual growth and development. First, the Bible reads, "Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth; a stranger, and not thine own lips (Proverbs 27:2)." I want to give honor to the Hope Beyond the Bars staff for allowing the Holy Spirit to use them in a mighty way in sharing the Gospel message to the Incarcerated Body of Christ. We often get neglected due to where we are currently housed. I can speak for myself and say that the two bible studies (Rewritten Life and A Way Through the Wilderness) have impacted me tremendously.

I was raised under the separatist teachings of the Nation of Islam. I came to true faith in Christ in a prison cell in Hampton, VA back in 2002. When it pleased God, He answered the prayers of my grandmother and used jail volunteers coming into the jail to bring me to an understanding of the Gospel message by revealing His dear Son to me through His Word. Over the years I have learned who I am in Christ, and what my purpose is. I am a member of the Incarcerated Body of Christ. Since 2009, I have been a part of the leadership as a bible study teacher and minister, in our church here at Nottoway. Our church's name is affectionately Nottoway Tabernacle Church of Love where we come to be: "Changed by the Word of God!". It is only the Word of God that can produce change in the life of the believer, so studying the Word becomes all the more important, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God (Matthew 4:4)". I have had the privilege to be involved with several ministries, and bible studies over the years, but none of them have been as interactive as the study I have done with Hope Beyond the Bars. Most of the studies I have done have focused more on the academia of the Word, remembering and reciting of Scripture, which is important and it has its place. Their focus was less on the application of the Word, which is the most important thing "Be ye doers of the Word, and not hearers only... (James 1:22)". It is not about how much of the Word that you know, it is how much of the Word that you can apply to your life that demonstrates if you have truly made a change and have been changed by the Word of God. A Way Through the Wilderness, took us on a journey of self-discovery and taught us invaluable tools on how to navigate the various "wilderness experiences" in our lives. A point that I loved is how the author demonstrated that the wilderness isn't a one-time event. As long as you walk with Christ, you will experience a wilderness. The design of the wilderness is for preparation, not punishment, for correction, not condemnation, for learning how to depend on God, and not trust in your own ability. I made some wrong turns in my life, but through the Grace of God I am on the right path and I wouldn't trade that in for anything.

This study helped me to refocus my vision, reclaim my purpose, and reconcile my relationship with my Heavenly Father. The approach to bible study by Hope Beyond the Bars is innovative and encouraging. The use of e-mails, letters, and supplementary reading materials is a wonderful way to ensure the person doing a study that a team is invested in them, and that they are not alone. This to me is an excellent demonstration of Christ. The old saying is true: People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care. Hope Beyond the Bars cares. It is evident to me that they love Christ, and they want to follow the Great Commission by sharing the Word of God. It has been an honor and a privilege for me to be feed, study, and grow in the Word of God with such a great ministry. I look forward, eagerly, to the next study. This is my prayer for Hope Beyond the Bars, "Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him... (Ephesians 1:15-17)". I pray that the spirit of wisdom and revelation will guide you and the Hope Beyond the Bars staff as you serve the Lord. Continue to feed your faith and starve your doubts.

Yours in Christ,



Jesse M. Carreker, Jr.
Kingdom Representative, and Humble Servant

August 16, 2021

I want to thank you and your team for such a good job with these Bible studies. I really enjoyed them and am looking forward to the next one.

A Way Through the Wilderness has brought much wisdom to my life and much growth. Learning God's purpose for the wilderness and how important for us to get the lesson that He intended. I needed this book and Bible study.

I cannot thank you enough for making yourself available for us all. God is looking for people like you that will say yes to his will rather than theirs. You are a bright light that cannot be hidden. Your heart is big and your love for people is bigger, only God could have put that desire in your heart. You are the apple of his eyes, a loving demonstration of His love.

Sometimes we don't feel love but experience condemnation. Thank you for not judging but allowing God to show you who I am now. I would have never equated myself to being a bad person, but mirroring myself to the word of God, I was wrong. Thank God for Grace! Right now, I'm trying to develop my faith and learn more about who I am in Christ. I am not content with my relationship with God. To be honest, sometimes I feel like I am not saved. Looking at other people's relationship and hearing their experiences with God, my heart breaks. I desire to be close to God. I want to hear His voice and feel His presence. The only thing I feel is loneliness and brokenness. Every time I hear about God, tears come down my face. I need him and I can't find a connection with him.

I don't believe that God doesn't love me or want the best for me, I just cannot figure out how to make the quality time with the Lord and get more out of our time together. Is something wrong with me? I see the difference in the behavior and language of those who are close to God. Despite these shortcomings, I know God has a plan for me. I can't wait to see what his plan looks like in my life. I know I am not what others think about me or even what I think about myself. My worth is solely based on Christ. Your continued prayers over my life and my relationship with God are what is going to get me through these trying times.

May God continue to bless you daily and know that I pray for you and thank God for you daily.

Carlos