

## A Few Testimonies from 2017

**Cassie Johnson** - We had a big group of 15 today. It's awesome to see so many people coming! I have asked at the front for additional pencils so each student can have one during class. I told the students that we will still give out the Life Recovery Bibles but only after they have participated in CR three times. With this many students we could be giving out 10 per week which isn't in the budget. We did principle 8. Next week we start over with principle 1. We also read a children's book today, The Three Trees. It is a story with a Christmas tie in and a greater theme of God's sovereign purposes for us will come to pass as we trust in Him.

We had a good group today! 12 ladies joined us for the discussion and the general feel of the class was positive. We covered principle 1. The ladies had some very insightful things to say. We talked about three general categories of people in recovery...those who don't want to be sober, those who will try recovery but not invest in it, just hoping sobriety will fall on them, those who are committed and willing to do what it takes, who answer the questions that are part of homework, that practice the principles even when not in class, that look for good supportive people and make some changes to their associations. I encouraged them to really ask themselves which category they fell into.

**Dan & Roz Miller** - We are now limited by staff to 17 maximum attendances. We talked about God's love and that any relationship with God begins with God loving us first. We used Ephesians 1:5, Jeremiah 29:11-13 We also talked about what kind of relationship we have with God in Jesus, 2 Corinthians 6:18; And that being a Father child relationship. We talked and made a list of what makes for a good relationship. Response - We had a wonderful study. The men were engaged, and seemed genuinely interested in sharing. At the end of the group, a number of men repented of their sins and prayed the sinner's prayer with us. We are going to develop a system for getting their names on cards so we can continue in prayer for their spiritual growth. (I had my eyes closed in prayer and didn't see who or how many.) Praise - No praises except from us, praise The Father, Son and Holy Spirit; that we, unprofitable servants, would be used in bringing souls to Christ. To Him be glory honor and praise forever. Amen.

**Greg Tronson** – First off a prayer request for MEC Volunteer Ted Deluca – he just celebrated his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday then suffered a stroke. He is currently at Mercy Hospital recovering. He can't speak yet, but has improved so that he can eat on his own. He is alert.

Now for an update – Last night I had 5 guys that committed their lives to Him asking for salvation power to forgive and the grace of God was just there with me. Usually I have about 8 guys. About two weeks ago I had three guys, one of the ... men started crying and the men were consoling him. We told him it was ok. He had to go over to the corner where the Bibles were and lie prostrate and cry for about 5 minutes. I filled in for Sandy with the women twice as she was sick. I teach on grace not works, but created to do good works. I tell them I am an addict and do a lot of good drugs. I tell them that I do large doses of the gospel. I love preaching the word. The Holy Spirit does the work, not Todd or My sister says (and I use it), "You know why you should not ride the fence? The Devil rides that fence." We testify that I was an alcoholic and used to beat my wife.

**Sue Janick:** Dear Prayer Partners, today we painted a birch tree forest in winter using oil pastels, white glitter paint, and crystal glitter glue. I used the devotion I shared last time about how the snowflake can

teach us about God's redemption. When I finished reading, Y. had a big smile on her face, realizing that she could have all of her sins wiped away because Jesus had already paid it all! Three wanted to pray to receive Jesus gift of forgiveness and new life. Y. prayed with a loud voice! She is hoping she can have a large print Bible because she doesn't see well. Dianne and I were so filled with joy for these dear friends who responded to God's call to give their lives to Him. Prayer is everything! It's such a humbling thing to see God work through His Word, and the prayers of His people. Thank you so very much! Serving Him Together With You.

There were five ladies in the art class this afternoon. I shared some thoughts about the symbolism of the Easter lily. White reminds us of Christ's purity, righteousness, and sinlessness. The lily's beautiful fragrance reminds us of Ephesians 5:2 that tells us Jesus loved us and offered himself as a sacrifice for us, a pleasing aroma to God. The bulb that is planted in the ground is nothing like the beautiful flower that grows from it. Jesus died, was buried, and raised to life in a glorious immortal body. The trumpet shape reminds us that there will be the sound of a trumpet when Christ returns and all of us who belong to him, whether living or dead, will receive new bodies and be with him forever! We used watercolors and white acrylic paint to make lovely Easter lily art. As always, each one was totally unique and beautiful. Thank you for your prayer support. I so needed it this morning when everything that could go wrong before I left, did go wrong. But, as always, the Lord gets his work done through his imperfect vessel.

**Keith Heintz:** The Lord blessed Paul Ylonen and I with 8 guys and a great study last night. We focused much of the night on what does it mean to repent and what does it mean to believe (Mark 1:15). Guys were honest in their struggles with sin and in some cases not wanting or ready to give up that sin. We talked about addiction, pornography, swearing, etc. and how that hurts our Savior. But also that Christ willingly took the punishment for those sins and when we repent and believe, we get His righteousness. Please pray that A. will give himself completely to Jesus and not hold back.

**Jean Strub:** We were joined by 9 lovely women but one of them left almost immediately after being seated. Seemed very anxious. The other women were very open and sharing many new faces and hurts to embrace. We started to read John 15 about Jesus being the vine and we are the branches. Which lead to talking about how grape Vines can smother out other plants and wrap themselves around them. But Jesus wraps his loving arms and Embraces us instead of smothering the life out of us He smothers us with His love. We talked about parasites that try to suck the life out of us. Couple of the women shared that drugs are the parasites sucking the life out of them. There were a few people with tears as they shared their struggles in their Journey with God. And that negative people or as one of them said toxic people, and places are some of the enemies they have to stay away from. We talked about people putting guilt on you especially family members and that Christ does not do that he forgives when we repent. That there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ. We spoke about how we must abide or remain united to the Vine and that Jesus is God's own son that came down and died on the cross and rose for us to give us life.

A. shared that our dear K. she found out is doing well and in Ramsey County going to Hennepin but that the deportation charges against her have been dropped! Praise the Lord praise the Lord prayers have been answered!!

A. was honest about not really knowing what all she believes about God and Jesus but she is searching and starting to read the Bible. Marilyn was next to her so was able to talk to her one-on-one

while I was engaged with the other women. Please pray that God gives her the deep yearning to know him more fully and to believe in him and his salvation and love

**Andrea Ursel & Cassie Johnson:** We had 8 ladies join our CR class today. Cassie and I shared Principle One with the group. We had a good discussion about the concept of “powerlessness” – how it is not hopelessness or helplessness but actually the beginning of faith and access to God’s redeeming power for us. We talked about denial and pride. We talked about the challenge of letting go the things that have become valuable to us even though they have destroyed us. Hopefully the women left encouraged pursuing greater humility and dependence as a first step!

**Sue Janick & Dianne Henschel:** What a delightful time Dianne and I had with eight of the women in today's art class! One remembered us from an art class at Christmas last year. We used chalk pastels to make a still life of pumpkins, apples, and pears. The room was filled with joy and excitement as each one was able to create something beautiful. I shared the same devotion from two weeks ago about the great harvest at the end of the age, when Jesus comes to claim those who belong to him. Two ladies asked to pray for the first time. Three others said they had prayed to receive Christ in the past. It was such a blessing to be with these women. They were so appreciative of every small thing done for them, and they were excited to know that they were being remembered in prayer. It's hard to put into words what it means to them to know that you care enough to bring them before the throne each day. Thank you so much! From another week Today we painted a birch tree forest in winter using oil pastels, white glitter paint, and crystal glitter glue. I used the devotion I shared last time about how the snowflake can teach us about God's redemption. When I finished reading, Y. had a big smile on her face, realizing that she could have all of her sins wiped away because Jesus had already paid it all! Three wanted to pray to receive Jesus gift of forgiveness and new life. Y. prayed with a loud voice! She is hoping she can have a large print Bible because she doesn't see well. Dianne and I were so filled with joy for these dear friends who responded to God's call to give their lives to Him. Prayer is everything! It's such a humbling thing to see God work through His Word, and the prayers of His people. Thank you so very much! Serving Him Together With You.

**Sherry Olson:** I did not send out prayer requests for Parenting with Purpose the Tuesday before Thanksgiving because God did the unexpected and had a different plan than I did. Usually when I arrive, the deputy – K.- has already set up the room and gone to get the inmates. But this time I arrived a little earlier than usual and she was still setting up. We got talking and talking and before we knew it, it was well passed the time to start the class. She apologized greatly, but I told her that I not only want to be there for the inmates but for the deputies too and that God was in this conversation ... Please pray with me that this relationship can continue. It is still on the surface and we haven't discussed spiritual things yet but ...

On 11/28 & 11/29, M came to the Parenting Class and was getting out of jail soon and indicated she wanted to continue the classes when she got out. Then she came to Bible Study the next day and accepted Christ. Once again she confirmed she wanted to get together when she got out. I gave her how to contact me through Parenting with Purpose - many times the women do not follow through when given the opportunity to make contact, but M. did. Please pray for me for wisdom and discernment as I will be meeting with her next Tuesday. She has requested a Bible and as many books as I can give to her. She says this is not a one-time meeting and would like to continue to get together. She lives in Lake Howard but is willing to come here to meet. Oh, Holy Spirit, open her heart to hear the truth of who You are and to deepen her desire for a relationship with You.

**Karen S.** I met with A.O. for re-entry today. Some of her first words to me were, I really, really want to get into treatment and am trying to get into Teen Challenge. During the course of the conversation she took several packets to work on such as Problem thinking, Anger and loneliness. She had done three years in prison and said that if she did not get into treatment she would either die or go into prison for a long time. Her boyfriend also wants to change the way that he/they had been living and to go there if he can get admitted. She has developed a very good system of what she does in getting up and ready for the day, walking, praying, working on reading the Bible and recovery materials.

**Jeanie Strub-** Well I think I can speak for Marilyn as well as myself when I say it was good to be back to be with the women and share God's word. It was a very emotional and difficult time together. But I can truly say that I felt the Spirit there warring against the demons of depression, doubt and fear. Marilyn and I shared Bible verses of Hope and Promises of God. We had them read some of them together and asked what before had helped them to feel closer to God. One of them said when she was reading the Bible a lot but now she has no hope and doesn't even want to read it. We encouraged them to meet together and read Bible verses out loud together.

A. wept most of the time as she told us her 2 year old and 3 year old have been taken away from her. She has been in and out of jail due to addiction. But she wants very badly to be able to get into a Christian-based treatment center. She is hoping if she is successful she will get her children back, she said otherwise she just would rather kill herself.

L. spoke most of the time about the unfairness she felt about her charges and her depression and how much she misses her children. She for a while felt close to God but now she is in a depression and cannot feel that He's near or that He really cares about her. She has no hope. Her mother was a drug addict and she saw her brother being murdered. She desperately wants to be with her children.

H. also was very hopeless and in despair over her possible 5 to 8 year sentence to prison. She just could not see any hope in her future.

Thank you for lifting up these women in your prayers. May the Power of God's Living Spirit Reign over you and your families forever!