



Shiloh Messenger

December 2008

RESTORED!

“It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for your brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found.” (Luke 15:32)

It is getting close to Christmas here at Shiloh. For the first time in our lives, we men at Shiloh are experiencing restoration and coming to understand the real reason for Christmas. I am so grateful that I did not die in my addiction. I am just beginning to understand the true significance of the birth of Jesus and why the angels heralded a “King is born.” I praise God for this new revelation that Jesus came to restore me and give me an inheritance. I do not still have the mind of a slave, but my mind has been transformed so that I truly believe I am a son of God. In **Galatians 4:7**, Paul writes, *“Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ”*.

I frequently entertain thoughts of going home. The discomforts of community living and missing home are difficult. I struggle with feeling that this place robs me of my independence. I often get so tired of seeing the same 12 men every morning when I get up and living with everyone bustling about trying to shower, getting beds made up, and getting ready for quiet time and breakfast. Please LORD let these remaining months fly by. I hate structure and guidelines!! My flesh screams out to be gratified. Can anyone relate to how I feel? Remind me that my life is not my own. I have tasted of the LORD for He is good, blessed, is the man who trusts in Him!! (Psalms 34:8). My spirit man quickly rises to a place of gratitude and praise with thanksgiving to what He has done for me and for others who trust in the LORD! I cannot deny the transformation that is taking place day by day as I allow the Holy Spirit, His rightful place in my life.

I often reflect back on the mistakes I made and how it affected not just me, but so many other people that I love. Throughout my life, I was ambitious and striving to become successful. Early in my adult life, I accomplished making good grades in high school and in college. My hard work elevated me to a place of prominence in the field of computer software. I bested most of my fellow classmates in my endeavors to become the most knowledgeable about computers. Little did I know my selfish and hard driven ambition aimed in the wrong direction had me pursuing nothing but an ever elusive brass ring. For all my fast and hard driving, my misdirected ambitions drove me directly into disappointments, depression, and drug addiction. As my mind contrasts the tranquility and beauty of the Thanksgiving and Christmas season here at Shiloh with the ever replaying nightmarish memories of my going to motel rooms to smoke crack cocaine, I am truly broken with humility. I used to stay for days locked up in a room watching indecent movies and smoking crack. I was addicted to the highs of the escapes from the emptiness I was feeling in my life. The irony of it all is that I was replacing emptiness with Demons. The drugs and awful images I was poring into my mind and spirit served as open doors for all the Demons of Hell to manifest and torment. Not only did I not know Jesus, but I could not even begin to cry out to Him and invoke his power to drive the Demons away. To this day, it is hard for me to comprehend how I could have gravitated so low, but I do now know that a man without a relationship with Jesus is living an empty life even if he has lots of apparent academic and material successes. I am learning by studying about God that every man is meant to have a full life here on earth and throughout eternity. An empty man will seek to fill his life with something, and unless he hears the truth about God, he will likely fill his life with vain and destructive pursuits of nothingness.

In our daily Bible classes, we are taught that the Word of God is the Spirit of Life. It is amazing the truth that is brought out about the heart of Father God. In the book of Luke there is a wonderful illustration of a loving Father who welcomed His son home after the young man had squandered his inheritance. Jesus describes the young man as one who “wasted his possessions with prodigal living” (In Luke 15:13). *The dictionary defines prodigal as being “extravagantly wasteful, bordering on recklessness”*. This illustration describes me to the tee. I cannot believe the mercy that has been shown to me about the awesome love of Father God. To think even when I was far away from Him, He was waiting for me to come home to Him (Luke 15:21). He did not give me what I deserve, which is separation from Him. But instead, He welcomed me home and gave me a bountiful inheritance. God chose Shiloh as a place of refuge for me. It is here that I have come to be restored and to experience God’s awesome display of **LOVE, MERCY and GRACE**. *Shiloh Ministry Team.*

Earlier installments of this fictional story about Cecil Armstrong are on our website at www.shilohmensministries.com

Letter From A Graduate

Shiloh continuously follows up with the men who sojourned through this place. One of the many men we have been blessed to stay in touch with is Tommy DeShazo. Since Tommy graduated from Shiloh in December 2003, he has gone to be on staff at "The Foundry", which is the Bessemer Alabama Rescue Mission and Recovery Center. They take in donated clothes, household items, electronics and automobiles. Tommy is the shop manager at The Foundry Auto Center. During the day, he supervises several of the men in the one-year program as they repair the donated vehicles, and then The Foundry sells the vehicles to help fund the program. Most of the men who have worked for Tommy have been seasoned mechanics, but there have been several whom he has enjoyed teaching them their mechanical skills. At night, Tommy supervises 26 men that are either close to graduation from the regular program, are recently out of prison, or are other staff members. Tommy said, "I monitor behavior, assign chores, inspect rooms and do random drug testing. Although I am not a trained counselor, I often have occasion to speak a word of truth into the men's lives and I am humbled by this honor Pastor Rocky." Shiloh recently received the following letter from Tommy which touched our hearts.

Hello Pastor! Good to hear from you. I am doing well and so is the rest of family. On September 26th, I turned 50 years old. WOW! I am in good health and feeling optimistic about the future. I went to Mom and Dads for a birthday steak dinner. Everyone was there and we had a great time. After dinner Dad told me to follow him upstairs and that he had something for me. We went upstairs and he stopped in front of my Grandfather's antique toolbox. It is made from oak and bound in leather. Of course it's worn and weathered from years of use, but full of the precision instruments that "Granpappy" used to provide for his family. My Grandfather was a tool and die maker with extraordinary skills, who had a spirit of excellence that was second to none. He worked as a tool and die maker and retired in the early 60's having earned a 50 year union gold card. As a boy I loved playing in his shop learning to use tools with his instruction. He taught me to use the micrometers, and calipers and things that the old toolbox is full of. He passed away in the early 80's and my father and uncle were left everything as they were the only children. My cousins and brother and sister were allowed to get whatever furniture and mementos they wanted. Tommy missed out for the most part as he was living on the streets and running wild. Over the years I have had occasion to seek my Father's help with various projects that required the use of my Grandfather's tools and would use them with my Fathers supervision at his home. These last few years I have been allowed to borrow a few of these tools and take them home, use them, and return them. When I went upstairs with my father and we stopped in front of the old tool box my heart started pounding. The tears started as my Father began to speak. He told me that I was the only one in the family that had any interest in these old machinist tools anymore, and he knew Granpappy would want me to have them. These are more than tools to me. They are a family legacy that has been passed down to me that a monetary value cannot be placed on. Without telling me in words, my father was telling me how much he loves me and trusts me with one of the few things he had left that belonged to his father. We sat in the floor together and pulled them all out one by one and dad explained to me what each one was used for. There are even little tools he made for repairing clocks and doo-dads I will probably never use, but they were my Grandfather's and I treasure them. This gift from my father to me was the ultimate act of forgiveness and displays a deep restoration between us. My heart is full again and the tears are flowing as I write even now. I am so thankful for the many, many, blessings in my life. Pastor Rocky, I want to tell you THANK YOU! Thank you for being obedient to God and being a funnel for His mercy and Grace to pour thru to me. My life truly began when I met you and Sister Debbie. I love you with all my heart. Tommy



Tommy DeShazo Jr.

Please be in prayer with us for the following:

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