



Pathway To Freedom, Inc.

May, 2016

Group 12 - Completes 18-Month Pre-Release Phase



Fourteen Group 12 members (shown with their Program Counselor, James Dalton) worked hard, persevered, and encouraged one another in order to complete PTF's 18-month pre-release phase. We celebrated with them on Wednesday, April 6, 2016. Congratulations to each one!

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A Vital and Pressing Task

Attorney General Loretta E. Lynch said in March, 2016, "Addressing the challenges that formerly incarcerated individuals experience is a vital and pressing task." Federal and State Governments, including Arkansas, are now focused on the "vital and pressing task" to do whatever is necessary to reduce the rate in which ex-offenders commit new crimes and become re-incarcerated (the "recidivism rate"). According to Sheila Sharp, the Arkansas Community Corrections Director, "57 percent of those on parole who were released from prison commit a new crime [in the next three years]...our recidivism rate for the coming years is going to look more like 55, 60 percent." Translating this into something that is very easy to understand: within three years of their release, about 60 of every 100 offenders who are released will commit a new crime, be arrested, convicted, and return to prison.

For nearly five years, Pathway To Freedom (PTF) staff and volunteers have focused on this *vital and pressing task* to help address the problem of recidivism in Arkansas. But our roots go back to 1974 when Chuck Colson, a former top aide to President Nixon, voluntarily pled guilty to obstruction of justice on Watergate-related charges and served seven months as a new Christian in Alabama's Maxwell Prison. In his best-selling memoir, *Born Again*, Chuck wrote, "I found myself increasingly drawn to the idea that God had put me in prison for a purpose and that I should do something for those I had left behind." He emerged from prison with a new mission: mobilizing the Christian Church to minister to prisoners. He founded Prison Fellowship in 1976, which has become the world's largest outreach to prisoners, ex-prisoners and their families.

Prison Fellowship launched the first InnerChange Freedom Initiative (IFI) Program in 1997 through a contract with the State of Texas. Scott McLean, PTF's Founder, started working as the Re-Entry Manager for IFI-Kansas in August, 2000, and, in 2006, worked with Prison Fellowship to launch IFI-Arkansas, where he served as the Director.

In June, 2011, Prison Fellowship decided to shut IFI-Arkansas down due to budgetary constraints and gave the State of Arkansas 90 days' notice. After much prayer and consultation with Arkansas stakeholders, Scott formed PTF, a new 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, to continue the contractual arrangement with the Arkansas Department of Correction (ADC) to provide program services to male inmates. Even though PTF is a separate non-profit, we share the same mission and vision as Chuck Colson had when he started Prison Fellowship 40 years ago.

Our Program is Christ-centered and emphasizes six core values based on the life and teaching of Jesus: Integrity, Responsibility, Community, Productivity, Affirmation, and Restoration. Inmates of all faiths, or no faith, are encouraged to apply.

Once an inmate applies to and is accepted into the Program, for the first twelve months, he must participate in classes, prepare and submit homework, perform his job duties as assigned by the ADC, and learn how to get along with 199 other inmates in community. Classes include anger management,

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today. Thank you!*

A Vital and Pressing Task (continued from page 1)

substance abuse education, corrective thinking process, parenting, boundaries, character development, victim impact, and computer training.

After completing the first 12 months, he enters the next six months during which he begins to plan for his release. This includes mentoring, transition interview, managing finances, developing action plans and goals, life skills, and job preparedness.

The reality is the PTF Program is not a cake-walk and many who start are not able to complete the pre-release phase. The one who does complete, upon his release by the ADC, will receive up to 12 months of re-entry/aftercare. If he meets all stated Program goals, including being consistently employed, meeting parole obligations, meeting with his mentor, and participating in a pro-social group/church, he will become a Program Graduate. Many Program Graduates come back and serve as volunteer teachers and mentors.

We believe the way to restore those affected by crime and incarceration is by introducing them to a new hope available through Jesus Christ. Community involvement is vital; so we train and inspire churches and communities to support the restoration of our members. We want our members to become law-abiding citizens and experience success in every area of their lives—to thrive. We agree with Ms. Lynch: **this is a vital and pressing task, and so we continue working.** We need your support: prayers, finances, and volunteer service, either inside the prison or out in the community.

Charlie Walker: Bouncing Back



I grew up in Wynne, Arkansas. I had a stay-at-home Mom and a Dad who worked a lot, driving an 18-wheeler for farmers, and five sisters. The whole family went to church often and I always looked forward to going. When I was 16, we moved to Elaine, Arkansas where I graduated. I then moved to Pine Bluff and

started working and living my own life. I had stopped going to church and began dealing with the wrong people. Even though I was married, with a daughter and a step-son, I made wrong choices, which, in 1996, led to my being sentenced to 33 years in prison.

I was divorced and served my time as if nothing mattered. Then, when my daughter was 13, I learned that her mother had died. Something clicked and my thinking changed. My daughter was young; I was incarcerated; and her mom had now passed. Who would take care of her? I began to pray and asked God for help because I didn't know what to do. I heard about the IFI Program and I talked to the Chaplain, but fear kept me from applying. A year later I went to the Principle Applications of Life (PAL) Program. I began to read and study the Bible again. My Dad had passed in 2011 and I still longed for something that I knew was missing. I submitted an application to PTF in 2012 and again in 2013, but was denied both times because I had too much time left to serve. I continued to go to church services and to trust God. Since I thought there was no way possible for me to get into the PTF Program, I determined to make the best of my life where I was. Then in April, 2014, I was told I was being transferred, but didn't know where I was going. I ended up at the Hawkins Unit – Pathway To Freedom!

It was truly a culture shock and I was ready to leave. But, after talking to Scott, I challenged myself to “go through” this Program and complete it. I have learned things about myself that I didn't know before. One of the main things was how I had allowed anger to control and destroy my life. Now I am able to recognize and deal with my own thinking barriers and to consider and respect other people's opinions. I no longer *react* to what others do, but *respond* in such a way that I can actually help them see things more clearly.

In January 2016, I completed the 18 month pre-release phase! I have learned skills that I am sure will help me live a productive and successful life. I thank God for the opportunity to be part of the PTF family that is like nothing else I've experienced. It's great to be around loving and caring people in an environment where I can be myself. Also, it is great knowing that I have mentors and a PTF family that I can go to when I need help to think through things I don't understand. I have bounced back!

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