

“...and **GOD will draw near to you.**” James 4:8.

Over the past two months, I have read a few new books and listened to several popular interviews and broadcasts. And while there were many amazing conversations, about a diversity of topics, two particular talks stood out from among the rest.

In one interview, Brené Brown argued that it becomes relatively easy to dehumanize others when we label them as “other” and create distance between where we are and where they are. Conversely, she added that it is exceedingly difficult to engender contempt for someone when you are in close proximity to them. While speaking at a leadership conference, Bryan Stevenson maintained that in order for any of us to fully embrace and appreciate communal wholeness, we must intentionally move close to the “other.” It is in that proximity, he added, that we can begin to understand the gradations of their circumstances and begin to envision solutions to the critical issues that people are facing.

The points made by these speakers have been particularly moving for me during this holiday season; a time of thanksgiving, reflection and celebration. I am humbled by the fact that God still chooses to use mankind (in all of its brokenness) to reach mankind. I am also grateful that He chooses to use his children to reach those who are unsaved and have been labeled as the “other.”

In God’s greatest demonstration, he sent his son, Jesus the Christ – in the form of a man – so that all mankind could be saved. It is refreshing to know that from the beginning of time God saw US and determined that we had value, even though we were still offenders to him. God sent Jesus to dwell among us and to be with us, i.e. Emmanuel. Moreover, He was able to empathize with our weaknesses and was tempted in every way, just as we were (Heb. 4:15).

As one of the authors noted, it is a good thing “...that each of us is better than the worst thing that we’ve ever done.” However, it is a truly marvelous thing that God chose to redeem us, in spite of our many sins and transgressions, and made all things new! Not only did God see us as precious, move close to us and save us, but he began the entire process by making us in his image. In other words, we were made to be like him; imitators of God, walking in love and giving of ourselves. If at no other time, during both the Thanksgiving and Christmas Holidays, we should be more aware of the great blessings that God has provided us with and be compelled to share the love and joy that we have with others.

Although some have labeled incarcerated people as “others,” and considered them only to be the worst thing that they have ever done, we choose to do something entirely different. We, perhaps more than any other group, realize what it feels like to have someone draw near to us and consider us valuable, even when others refused to do the same.

The incarcerated men and women that we serve are not so distant that we cannot understand them or empathize with them. They are our neighbors, our parents, our children and even our fellow congregants. In essence, they are us...we are them.

May we continue to be Christ-like and be with others (without the label). May we continue to see value where other people cannot, or simply will not.

“Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners...[I] was shown mercy so that in me, Christ Jesus might display his immense patience as an example for those who would believe in Him and receive eternal life.”

1 Timothy 1:15-16.

The staff and board of Life Abundant are grateful for many things during this season.

We are grateful for the support of local officials and administrators:

“It is with sincere appreciation for the 30 years of dedication and service to the individuals incarcerated at the Bucks County Correctional facility and Community Corrections Centers that we thank you” 1987-2017.

Bucks County Warden Paul K. Lagana

“County government can only do so much and with the increases in our prison population over the past several years the resources are more limited than they have ever been. The truth of the matter is that government cannot meet the deep needs of the hearts of these men and women, only the Gospel can. Life Abundant, Inc. is a ministry in our county’s prison system that is able to share the Gospel, and we need more of Life Abundant’s ministry because these men and women are in need of the love of Jesus Christ.”

Bucks County Commissioner Robert G. Loughery

If you would like to help us ‘do more,’ you can consider any of the following ways:

- In-prison Bible study.
- In-prison Chapel Service (i.e. church).
- In-prison 1-on-1 Mentoring.
- Aftercare 1-on-1 Mentoring.
- Mail correspondence.
- Volunteer opportunities with us.
- Purchasing Christian and holistic resources for inmates and ex-offenders.
- Training and assistance for church leaders and volunteers.
- Referrals: counseling, workforce development, housing, employment, legal aid, etc.

Also please consider supporting our efforts to present the Gospel and give hope to those who need it.

- YOU can follow us on FaceBook and donate there!

- YOU can shop on our Amazon Smile page!

- YOU can use Paypal on our secure website!

We are most grateful for the opportunities that we have to present the Gospel.

We are grateful for the men and women who have received salvation.

We are grateful for those who are seeking to know God.

We are grateful for you...the supporter. **THANK YOU!**

In His Service,

Jonathan H. Lewis, *Executive Director*
Regina Bready, *Administrative Assistant*