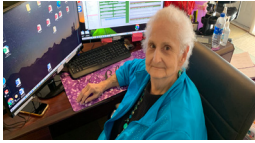


From Betty, our Office Manager



Wow! It is hard to believe we are halfway through the month of February already. We are so excited in the office as more and more of our volunteers are busy with their ministry for FIT. This past week we shipped 80 books to various volunteers. We are so Blessed that we can see our volunteers reaping the harvest that God has called them to be a vital part of.

When we plant the seeds of unconditional love and compassion for those we come in contact with, a lot of time we don't get to see the awesome changes that God completes in them. But I truly believe when we reach Heaven God will say well done. We are not doing what we do for rewards, but because we truly care and are being obedient to the call God has given each of us.

I would like to give a huge welcome to all our new volunteers that have just completed training these past two weeks. One class was online and one was held at the Live Oak Church of God. As you start your classes, remember we are in the office from 9AM-2PM every Monday thru Friday to help you any way we can. If you leave a message at 941-799-4975 or an email after those hours we will call you back the next day.

From the President's Desk

We are able and pleased to say that FIT is alive and well as we progress through 2023. COVID presented us with many challenges over the past few years, but recovery has been healthy so far. During the COVID years, we lost most of our program as nearly all of the institutions in which we were serving were shut down. On the positive side, though, our financial reserves actually increased during that time due to the continued support of our most loyal members as well as the dramatic downturn in program expenses. This would prove to be helpful to where we find ourselves now. Demand has increased dramatically for our free course books that we provide to our volunteers and their classes. At the same time, we continue to rebuild from the large losses of facilitators, members and donors which were lost.



Demand for books for our classes was particularly high in January as our most loyal facilitators returned to service. Also, the number of people taking our leader training course has increased, giving us hope for the future. Finally, our board is more active than ever in supporting the ministry, both with individual financial support and being active as board members.



Training Update

Two February trainings added 13 facilitators to our ranks. One occurred in Live Oak, Florida, and the second was our quarterly online event.

Chris Cash, a pastor in Live Oak, wanted to host a FIT facilitator training. Norine Hodder traveled to Live Oak to train members of his Messianic Jewish congregation. The class members were encouraged to volunteer at Mayo C.I. The three trained men are considering volunteering there.

Another seven individuals took the online class on the first Saturday in February. We would like to congratulate the following: Arlene Borland, Richard Glombowski, Reuben Lash, Marianne McCall, Carlos Ramirez, Susan Shannon, Natalie Anderson, Karen Campbell, Lakesha Henry, Ana Mitchell, Lynda Sauls, Sandy Spannagle and Arkira Williams.

Training Benefits of the *Dating and Marriage* Course



Family Integrity Training (FIT) has answers to the problem of divorce. A staggering 50% of all marriages in the United States end in divorce or separation. These broken relationships result in emotional pain, traumatized children, custody and child support battles, and many other problems. The nuclear, two-parent family is the healthiest way to raise a child. With the prevalence of single-parent homes, children have less protection and supervision. Children of divorced parents are more likely to have mental health issues, substance abuse problems, and medical issues than children living with both parents. The high percentage of children being affected by divorce causes great damage to society.

Taking to heart the instruction of the *Dating and Marriage* course helps to stabilize marriages, break off unhealthy dating relationships so that a marriage does not take place and discourage cohabitation outside of marriage. The course directs participants to evaluate the consequences of sexual relations outside marriage and provides Scriptures regarding sexual immorality. The discussion questions guide participants to evaluate ways to be aware of warning signs that a dating relationship is unhealthy and end it if necessary. Avoiding a marital union with an incompatible person saves much grief and reduces the prospect of divorce.

For those already married, the FIT course uses Bible verses to show what God intends for marriage. Marriage partners who learn to follow the Bible's instructions can find healing of their relationships. *Dating and Marriage* covers vital topics such as communication, healthy submission, and dealing with conflict. Facilitators who have shared the book or its principles with couples troubled by marital problems have seen the restoration of relationships.

Concerning the *Dating and Marriage* course, an inmate said that after being isolated from society, men tend to latch onto a woman soon after release. The course helped the men realize their need to be attentive and listen to a prospective partner for signs of compatibility before marrying her. The men preferred *Dating and Marriage* over other courses they had taken on the subject because it is "more hands-on."

The following are comments from a class of women about what they learned in the class. "Dating is a two-way street." "You have to care as much about your partner as about yourself." A woman said the *Dating and Marriage* course "gave me insight on guidelines for . . . a Christian marriage. It taught me a different way to deal with my husband. I don't always have to be the boss. It taught me how to be a better wife."

A Note From John



Early one morning, I woke up and was unable to go back to sleep. So as not to disturb my wife, I closed the bedroom door, turned on a reading light in the living room, and went through my Bible readings and prayers. I then retrieved a book that my friend had recommended, looked at the pictures, read the Prologue and Epilogue only to become hooked on a story of a living miracle. The book, entitled, *What are the Odds?*, is about Mike Lindell, the CEO of My Pillow.

I read in fascination about a person who had gambling, alcohol, and drug (crack) addictions, arrests, imprisonment and failed drug tests. I read how his addictions controlled him. He escaped death, bankruptcies, hostile takeovers. At times he lived from fix to fix. I could not see any redeeming value in a person who was certainly going to crash and burn.

One day at Lake Tahoe, he saw that he had been saved from ruination and death by the God who knew who he would become. That was when Mike surrendered his heart and life to Jesus Christ and his life took God's course.

There is so much encouragement in his story. We fail repeatedly, yet God's love is unending. Never believe that there is no hope. In fact, God's hope is just around the corner, no matter how many times we fail. When we serve our clients, we are a reflection of that hope.