

From the President's Desk

FIT and Living Free



You may have noticed that some of our course books have the Living Free label and some have the FIT label. The organizations are separate, but share a common tradition and outlook. Both have roots in David Wilkerson's work with the street gangs of New York City and the formation of Teen Challenge in the middle of the twentieth century. All three organizations have both a practical and a spiritual basis.

Teen Challenge was a type of missionary effort. David Wilkerson was a small-town pastor in rural Pennsylvania and his clients were violent gang members in the most urban environment in the country - New York City. The ministry grew and grew and eventually became world wide. The centers focused on drug addiction because gang members had turned to drugs to cope with their identity and personal problems.

Later on, Jimmy Rae Lee and some other former Teen Challenge directors formed what would become Living Free because church people and their families also faced some of the same kinds of challenges in dealing with life-controlling problems and developing spiritual maturity.

FIT started out by extending this idea to prisons and quickly expanded it to jails and recovery houses. It featured the same basic formula of addressing practical ways of successful living as well as fostering spiritual development. Being "born again" is the start, but newborns are babies and need help to mature. We call this discipleship. Living Free and FIT are now partners. We use some of their authors and they use some of ours.

Announcements

Dr. Don Pratt is serving on the Living Free Advisory Board for the 2023 and 2024 calendar years. He advises the board on matters concerning joint FIT/Living Free projects as well as on curriculum issues.

We are having a clearance sale on our FIT T-Shirts! The cost is \$10 with no shipping fees. There are just a few in each size left! [Click on this link to find out more.](#)

A Kind Note...

July 2023,

Dear FIT Staff,

With heartfelt appreciation for the good work you all do for the glory of God!

Love in Christ Jesus,

Donna Noble
797 Instructor
Polk County Jail

Graduations

June 137

Jan - June - 687

Another Input ...

I have completed my 8th session of the FIT Dating and Marriage course at the Manatee County Jail working with the recovery pod. My experience has been spiritually satisfying and enjoyable. I found the inmates accepting of me, becoming more interested as the weeks go by and engaging with questions. I spend one to two hours each week preparing for the upcoming lesson and enjoy this time of preparation because I am reminded of what I need to do to keep my own marriage running smoothly. I also have a personal time of thanksgiving, praise and worship as I leave the jail and walk to my car, thanking God for my freedom and blessings. But for God directing my path, I could likely have been where these guys are.

Harry Farrar

St. Peter Claver Prison Ministry

While attending a prison volunteer appreciation banquet, I met a person from this ministry. The ministry is a faith-based mentorship program whose aim is to empower the incarcerated, ex-offenders and their families, to obtain self-sufficiency and reduce recidivism. This group is part of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, which was founded in 1833. The worldwide organization consists of lay Catholics following Christ's call to serve the poor, the suffering and the deprived.

Besides the ministry to inmates, they have programs such as disaster relief, job training and placement, thrift stores, food pantries, housing programs, medical services and others seeking longer-term pathways out of poverty and towards the full flourishing of every person.

The Orlando group works with men and women re-entering society from incarceration and provides spiritual mentorship, fellowship, practical support, guidance in life skills in order that re-entry into the community can be maintained.

For further information, you can click on this link to the [Society of St. Vincent de Paul](#) website. You may use this link to reach the [Orlando chapter](#). Their office number is 407-614-2355.

What Do We Need to Do this Ministry? Part 2 Compassion

For me, this was the first bridge to cross. Turning off my "judger" was hard. In my self evaluation, I found myself judging others, many times out of my own insecurities. I found that through my limited knowledge and self protectionism, I took the path I wanted to take, not realizing that God had a new path for me. I found that God's path meant new visions and locations as well. It meant putting my prejudging down, along with my instincts and defenses. I had to look past my senses and look at others as God sees them. I found out that it wasn't any different than He saw me. That revelation was very sobering. After that, I realized I had been living in a "forgiven" state in which I had let very few people on my level. I needed to forgive as He forgave me. I needed to love as He loved me. I couldn't have real compassion for others until I passed this litmus test. That brought me into a new revelation of John 3:17. Probably you have seen unexpected reactions from others when you tell them that you go into prisons, rehabilitation centers and community centers for the poor, sharing with them new life skills. I have.

Next month I will talk about another "C" word, Courage.