



December 2015 Newsletter

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Margie Castle

My walk with the Lord started by going to a church outreach meeting to get something to eat and ended up turning my life over to the Lord. That was a whole lot better! At that time I was homeless with a warrant out for my arrest. I started going to church and God started telling me through the sermons that I needed turn myself in. When I did that, I was told I could not a reprieve through drug court, but after a lot of prayer and Bible reading, I just left it up to God. After two months I was actually given the drug court option. I did this, continued attending church, and started attending FIT classes. Two days after graduating from drug I became a FIT facilitator. I started teaching classes and have been drug-free for 5 ½ years. This happened due to God and FIT teaching me how to live a drug-free life. I have also been happily married for over five years. I had four children before but had never been married. When I took the Dating and Marriage course, it caused to realize that the man is the head of the house and I needed to back off and let my husband lead.

One of the things we were taught was that we should live separately before marriage and we did this. We note that everyone that we knew who got married at the same time are no longer together, and we still are. I feel that we are together because we did what God wanted us to do. The separation also helped us to be even stronger in our commitment to each other. If it weren't for God and FIT, I wouldn't be where I am today.

Editor's note: the FIT ministry involves more than just going to class, conducting it, and going home. We first encountered Margie in Bradenton, FL through the House of Hope, an outreach church of Journey Assembly of God where I am care pastor. After she was comfortable with that setting, we invited her to our FIT classes. We visited and encouraged her while in jail. We were officiants at her wedding, and we trained her to be a FIT leader. She has co-facilitated the dating and marriage class with us and is currently helping us with the Financial Success from Scratch class. She is valuable asset to us there because most of our clients are dealing with homelessness, poverty, and jail and/or prison time. FIT is not a stand-alone ministry. We have our niche and we play an important part. Some sow the seed, some water, some cultivate, but God brings the increase.

a message from President Don Pratt ...

?????? What is FIT's recidivism rate? ??????

Recidivism is the rate to which people who are released from incarceration reoffend. I am often asked what FIT's rate is and people seem put off by my frank answer "I don't know". It is an honest answer but a little elaboration will go a long way toward clarifying both the place that FIT stands as to effectiveness and the quality of its program. We never stop working at improving our materials, support, and training. We strive to put the best tools in the hands of our selfless workers so that they can accomplish their mission. As can be seen by the testimony above, we can certainly count some good results from our programs, and our programs reach where our clients are: incarcerated, homeless, addicted, or whatever.

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FIT's recidivism rate continued ...

Recidivism is complicated. Note that even with our example of Margie, who is a wonderful example of a life turned around with no more return to jail or addiction, FIT was only one of several players. There was the out-reach church that got her started, the court system that gave her a chance, and the FIT courses which helped her better manage her life and later gave her



an outlet to give back. And let's not leave God out of the picture - *So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow* (1 Corinthians 3:7).

“Recidivism” depends on the type of trouble or offense. Some of the figures I have seen are re-offense rates of 30-60% for the general prison population, a lesser amount than that for sex offenders, and a 94% relapse rate for drug addicts.



What we do know. In a statistical study done by the Living Free ministry two years ago, FIT respondents reported very positively as to the effectiveness in both the FIT materials and Living Free materials (both are part of the FIT curriculum). We do know that our materials focus on relevant issues that our targeted audiences are dealing with and the goals and objectives of our course sequence, and individual courses and lessons are being met.

It takes a village. The photo at the top shows a Christmas party put on for the clients of the Bradenton Character Development program. Most of the clients are bused in from the Jim Russo ministry across town. What difference does this make? Will this “cure” the recidivism problem? We don't know, but we do know that at least two of the clients said that this was best Christmas they have ever had. That in itself is reason enough for the caring people who put it on. Part of what our clients need is encouragement and love. Now, let's get back to our point. These men and women, some from Jim Russo, some from court referrals, all are in need of all the kind assistance given from everyone who touch their lives. We also thank Journey Church for supplying the building, for chef Greg Baewer, shown in the bottom photo, for their support in making our event a meaningful one in the lives of our clients.