



October 2017 Newsletter

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Tito Gonzalez - In Prison for 36 Years, Now Free

Tito Gonzalez went to prison at age 16 and was sentenced to three 50-year sentences. He was set free on July 17, 2017 at the age of 50 as a result of a Florida Supreme Court ruling that his sentence was excessive. Behind those 36 years of incarceration is an amazing story of faith, character, restoration, and growth. FIT had a significant part in the process.



Born into a violent family, he was led to the Lord by his father while in jail on May 27, 1967. He was waiting for sentencing and his father had just turned to God himself. His father died two weeks later.

For 36 years, Tito told everyone around him that God had shown him that he would someday be free. Nobody seemed to believe him, not even the Chaplains and Christian leaders around him. Tito was a model prisoner. He had volunteers teach him to play the piano for chapel services. Tito learned all styles of Christian music. In the FIT program, he assisted facilitators and leaders in bringing in and encouraging those around him.

Tito was mentored by FIT facilitator Beverly Shatterly since 2010 at the Okaloosa Correctional Institution. Tito had become lax in his Christian walk and came to the first session because he thought it was an exercise class. He was so impressed with the class and facilitator that he rededicated his life to Christ. He was very influenced by FIT's emphasis on group interaction and hearing and learning from his associates. On November 16, 2011, Tito completed the complete FIT program and was awarded his certificate. From then until his release, he was a non-assuming helper to Beverly Shatterly with a passion for helping in any way he could. He had an excellent reputation among all who really knew him.

How is he doing now? His hard work and extremely positive attitude has ingratiated him with those around him. He is now a temporary worker with Hobby Lobby and has already been promoted to responsible jobs in that organization. He is anticipating being asked to stay on as a regular employee. Tito is a mature Christian and his positive attitude rubs off on everyone around him. When asked what his favorite courses were, he says "Insight" and "Dating and Marriage". "Insight" helped him understand himself and "Dating and Marriage" gave him a basis for establishing relationships now that he is free.

2017 Fundraiser raises \$11,025

Thanks to the \$5,475 from individual donations, \$550 in pledges, and \$5,000 in matching funds from the the Baycross Christian Family Foundation, we were able to get through a difficult fundraising year. For the first time in several years, we did not have the matching funds that we had received from the Patterson Foundation that we had previously enjoyed. There was no Giving Challenge this year. Next year's Giving Challenge has been set for May 1-2 and FIT will participate. We are expecting at least some degree of support from the Baycross Foundation at that time as well. Earlier this year we also received a \$10,000 grant from the Light for the Lost literature program. Everyones' support is so appreciated.

NEW! Change of Heart Course now Available

Change of Heart focuses on the processes involved in changing behavior from destructive patterns to constructive ones. This can apply to persons suffering from addictions, involved with criminal lifestyles, or people who just seek a deeper spiritual experience - or all of the above. Past destructive thought patterns must be addressed first before emotions and actions can be changed. A conscious choice to change is the starting point which is followed up by the related decision-making.

This course book features practical examples for both making better citizens and better Christians. The topics emphasize corrective thinking that leads to more purpose, better relationships, better parenting, a more fulfilling lifestyle, more respect for others, better personal identity and fulfillment, and more responsibility for personal actions. Many people know they need to address their shortcomings but need a little help in understanding the process and benefits of the process.

This facilitator book is intended for leading small groups in give-and-take discussions on a variety of topics and contexts. Numerous scenarios are provided throughout which are both relevant and practical. The lessons are divided into two major parts: Love and Forgiveness and Reconciliation. Topics include Changing My Mind, What the World Needs Now, Change of Heart, My Need for Forgiveness, My Need to Give and Request Forgiveness, My Need to Forgive Myself, My Need to Make Restitution, A New Heart for My Family and in Choosing Friends, and A New Heart in My Community. Worksheets included in the appendix include Change of Heart Worksheet, The Plan of Salvation, Change of Heart Facilitator Tally Sheet, Condition of My Heart Self Assessment, and several others.

The Change of Heart course title, front and back covers, lesson content and sequencing are intended to depict and present the goal of a life changed from the inside out. The key objectives are that class members will come to believe that they can and must change if they are to experience a transformation of their relationships in their homes and community. For our sponsors, the course is a contract to provide training in life skills to that end.

This involves patterns and habits, sometimes deep-seated and deeply ingrained, which need to be identified and changed. That is where our small-group discussion group approach comes in. Change of behavior must start with change in thought. Clients must learn to problem solve and apply key principles in terms of their own experiences before change can occur. You will help them to construct their understanding through the structured approach in this book. You will get them to explain to you how all these principles apply in their situation.

Authored by Joseph Sheehan, Ph.D. 2017. 89 pages. 9 two-hour lessons.

Written by Joseph Sheehan, Ph.D. Order at familyintegrity.org

