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PENIEL

RESIDENTIAL TREATMENT CENTER
MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

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BUILDING A STRONGER COMMUNITY

Greetings Peniel Alumni and Community! Welcome to the third issue of the Peniel monthly newsletter. This issue is a combined edition that features content for the months of February and March. We want to thank you again for your decision to be a part of the Peniel mailing list, and we encourage any feedback or suggestions you may have to offer for the monthly newsletter. We are always happy to receive updates from Peniel graduates, so we have featured the various ways you can stay connected with us here at Peniel on the final page of this newsletter. Please know that your continued support is invaluable to us, whether it be through prayers, donations, or volunteering. As sons and daughters of the ministry, remember that you are always welcome here at Peniel.

Newsletter Written and Edited by Whitney N. Botts, B.S.

DEVOTIONAL ON LOVE

John 21: 15-19 reads, "After breakfast Jesus asked Simon Peter, 'Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?' 'Yes, Lord,' Peter replied, 'you know I love you.' 'Then feed my lambs,' Jesus told him. Jesus repeated the question: 'Simon son of John, do you love me?' 'Yes, Lord,' Peter said, 'you know I love you.' 'Then take care of my sheep,' Jesus said. A third time he asked him, 'Simon son of John, do you love me?' Peter was hurt that Jesus asked the question a third time. He said, 'Lord, you know everything. You know that I love you.' Jesus said, 'Then feed my sheep.' 'I tell you the truth, when you were young, you were able to do as you liked; you dressed yourself and went wherever you wanted to go. But when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and others will dress you and take you where you don't want to go.' Jesus said this to let him know by what kind of death he would glorify God. Then Jesus told him, 'Follow me.'

To better understand this Scripture, let's consider what *type* of love is being discussed here. In the original Greek translation of this Scripture, we see that Jesus Christ and Simon Peter are actually using two different words for "love" in their conversation. Jesus is using the word *agape*, which indicates a godly, unconditional love, whereas Simon Peter is using the word *phileo* which is a word commonly referred to as "brotherly love"

The distinction being made here between these two different types of love is important. It is important to understand that Christ is asking each of us, not just to love him in the same way you love a brother or a dear friend, but more than that--that you love him wholly, radically, unconditionally, and unreservedly. This *agape* love is what Christians are commanded to demonstrate in Matthew 22:36-40, which says, "Teacher, which is the most important commandment in the law of Moses?' Jesus replied, 'You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. A second is equally important: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' The entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments."

This month, take time to reflect on the *ultimate* type of love--*agape*. A love that God lavishes on us, and through him, we are able to share with everyone--without limit and without conditions. Anytime of the year.

There is Hope: A Testimony

When Zachary entered Peniel in April of 2010, he did not yet have a sense of identity. Growing up, everyone in Zachary's immediate family abused drugs and alcohol on some level, so he was introduced to that lifestyle early on. Without the presence of meaningful guidance or involvement in his life from his parents, Zachary began using drugs and alcohol at the age of 12. For 13 years, Zachary's identity would remain tied to his addiction to drugs and alcohol.

After graduating from high school, Zachary spent many years traveling around the United States following musicians and attending their concerts. With one band in particular, he made it a point to attend every show possible, and he became heavily involved with the community of people that did the same. For a time, he felt like he was a part of a family-like community of people that were counter-culture and passionate about the many social injustices plaguing the country. Eventually, however, he became aware that many in the community had purely been part of this community for the sake of partying and postponing their responsibilities as adults, and they had not made the same sacrifices for a greater cause in the way Zachary felt he had been doing.

Upon reaching the realization that he was essentially throwing away his future, Zachary decided to move back to his hometown of Cleveland, Tennessee in an attempt to obtain a fresh start and a much needed change of scenery. What happened, however, was quite the opposite of what he intended. Zachary's life of partying and traveling was exchanged for one of isolation and increased substance abuse. Zachary's life had shrunk to a five block radius in which he went to work, came home, did drugs, and repeated the cycle the next day. The longer he spent in this cycle, the heavier his substance abuse became. While he was primarily addicted to opiates and alcohol, as he says, his drug use "led to [him] trying all types of drugs, and using whatever drug was available when [his] wasn't around." After many years in this miserable cycle, Zachary became aware that he was living a self-destructive lifestyle that would ultimately lead to his death. In an attempt to get help, he reached out to a family he had befriended that was highly active in the Church of God. One phone call became the catalyst for Zach to receive treatment, and ultimately, to receive salvation. This family helped connect him with Peniel and assisted him in walking through the steps of admission.

At Peniel, Zach discovered the truth about God's unconditional love. "Through the love, consistency, and honesty of my counselors, the staff, and all of the leadership here at Peniel, I began to believe in hope and grace in my life and relationship with God." Because of his sincere gratitude for everything Peniel did to change his life, Zachary returned to Peniel in 2020 with his family in order to join the Peniel staff as the Culinary Director. Now he tries to use his experiences to pour into the lives of other men in the program, and to demonstrate the love he has for people through his gift of cooking.

***In order to maintain confidentiality, only first names will be included in Peniel testimonies**

GOD HAS A PLAN

A STAFF SPOTLIGHT

When Dr. Henry Davis was 5 years old he began playing the piano on his grandmother's high back piano. He had never anticipated when he joined the church at the age of 5 the gift that God had prepared for him and the plans he had designed for him. This gift would be used in different ministries in the years to come. Initially this gift was used in his local church and then it was used to support the ministries of Morris Cerullo and Billy Graham. This gift took Dr. Davis on a journey to become a world-renowned pianist, and for 20 years he was the personal pianist for the late Revered Archie Dennis Jr. While Dr. Davis traveled all over the world, eventually the instability in his life led him to take a path towards substance abuse.

Some years into his ministry, Revered Archie Dennis was considering starting a church, and he asked Dr. Davis to serve as the Minister of Music. Eventually, as Dr. Davis' addiction worsened, Reverend Dennis gave Dr. Davis an ultimatum to seek treatment or to surrender his position as the Music Minister. He told Dr. Davis "I love you like a son, but I can't continue to let you continue to minister here. But, if you are willing to get help, I will go with you all the way. I will support you 100%. If not, I will have to release you from your position." Dr. Davis says that he will always respect and love Pastor Dennis because "he proved that he cared more about [his] soul than [his] talent." As a result, Dr. Davis entered into the treatment program at Peniel in 1989. It was in treatment that Dr. Davis began to discover who he truly was and to tune into the voice of God and His plan for his life.

One year after completing treatment, Dr. Davis began serving at Peniel as a staff member, eventually serving as a counselor, the Minister of Music, and as the Assistant Pastor. Dr. Davis states that, "While being in the program I saw a need for music. I knew what gifts I had and knew that I had something to give to the program. I also wanted to give back for everything Peniel had done for me." While Dr. Davis loves seeing the ways God works through him to help other people, he admits that being on staff at Peniel is "first for [him]." Dr. Davis says that, "God uses the counsel I give to others as a maintenance in my life. I can present something to a client and God will say, 'Now where are you at with this?'" God is continually helping him grow as a person and grow in his faith, and he has put him in a position of leadership that helps hold him accountable. Dr. Davis says, "It's my privilege to serve here at Peniel with the awesome staff and the visionary leadership of Dr. Marion Spellman and Pastor Harold Spellman. We see lives miraculously changed each day through the power of God."

SAINT PATRICK

THE SHAMROCK AND THE HOLY TRINITY



Saint Patrick's Day is a holiday associated with the color green, shamrocks, and all things Irish, but many people do not know the origin of Saint Patrick's Day and the holiday's connection to the history of the Christian church.

Saint Patrick was born in Roman Britain in the 4th century A.D. to an aristocratic family. When he was 16, Saint Patrick was captured by a group of Irish pirates and was sold into slavery in Ireland, where he remained enslaved for 6 years. Saint Patrick's time in captivity was a critical period in his spiritual development, because while he worked as a shepherd, he developed a dedicated life of prayer and a strengthened relationship with God.

After six years in captivity, Saint Patrick claims the voice of God spoke to him and guided him in his escape from enslavement. Upon fleeing from his master, he took passage upon a ship sailing to Britain, where he was eventually reconnected with his family. After returning home, Saint Patrick delved deeper into his studies of Christianity and was ultimately appointed as a bishop of the Christian church.

Upon his appointment, Saint Patrick returned to Ireland as a missionary in order to spread the Christian faith and convert those of pagan faith. Because of the strong influence and connection between nature and the ancient Celtic religions, historians have reported that Saint Patrick used the Shamrock as a symbol to explain the concept of the Trinity to those of pagan faith.

The Druids, or the religious leaders of the ancient Celtic religions, considered the shamrock to be a sacred plant. Saint Patrick wisely used this symbol as a tool to explain that much like the shamrock, which has three separate leaves and is yet one plant, so to does the Trinity consist of three separate entities and is yet one God.

Following the death of Saint Patrick, which is widely considered to be March the 17th, Saint Patrick's Day was established as a day to honor the mission work of Saint Patrick and his role in bringing Christianity to Ireland. With the arrival of Irish immigrants to the United States, so to came the tradition of Saint Patrick's Day.

BLESSINGS OF COMFORT

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COLENE ROSE MERCER

It is hope that says tomorrow will come no matter what today holds. Hope says that God is still able to bless me, no matter what disaster I encounter. Hope helps us survive the difficult things in life.

If you hope for good health, you must do all that is within your power to obtain it. The hope for health must be grounded in working for it. No, I didn't want chemo; no, I didn't want radiation. But I followed my doctor's treatment advice. I became more conscious of my diet and the need for more rest. I did the things I knew I needed to do.

The problem with the diagnosis of cancer is that it brings with it such a high level of fear that enjoying life becomes difficult. I can't imagine going through this battle with cancer without Jesus. When you struggle with those fears and sleepless nights, your dreams begin to fade.

To the unsaved, hope is nothing more than wishful thinking. But to those of us who are born again, we have a promise--a living hope through His resurrection. Hope is the ingredient that says, "Life is not going to get worse, it's going to get better!" Hope is the ingredient that says "The Spirit is greater than the body, and the Spirit can participate in what happens."

Let your faith face the future with hope beyond the moment. What you are going through is not the end, it's simply life. As Robert Schuller said, "Life is tough, but God is good."

Let us never forget the hope that we have through Jesus Christ. Let Him replenish your heart with comfort today.

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"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Peter 1:3, NASB)