

Newsletter Number 7

Greetings to all in the precious and Holy name of our Savior and Lord Jesus Christ. Our prayer for you all is that the blessings of our Living God and Father will be poured out to you in abundance each and every day.

Our God has been so very good to the work and staff of Living Hope Ministry. We are excited and encouraged by all that has taken place over the past few months, and by what the future holds for us should our Lord tarry.

The last Ministry to Ministers was a blessing for all who attended. We shared in the heart work of the “Wounded – Weak – and Weary.” I know those words apply to every one of us at certain times in our lives, but they are equally true for those who labor to help other people every day.

This newsletter will update you on plans we have for the future, about a new Bible Study opportunity coming your way, the constant need for support (sorry), and some specific direction for working in the kingdom of our Savior and Lord Jesus Christ.

Allow me to say here and now: thank you for taking the time to read this letter, thank you for your continued prayers, and thank you for taking of your resources to support Living Hope Ministry. It is truly amazing how God has used so many to reach out in such a very special and unique way!

“Regional Sites Needed!”

Our last Ministry to Ministers was held at the Driftwood Christian Church just outside of Vallonia, Indiana. We had a wonderful morning with about 40 ministers and leaders sharing together. It was during this time that several suggested we have more frequent meetings to encourage and offer help. As is my usual way I said, “send more money and we will do them more frequently.” Well, as you know our God owns the cattle on a thousand hills and the silver and gold are His; so the money issue really isn’t an issue at all. What we need to do is to find key regional locations for the next year. This way we can let all the ministers know when and where we will meet in advance.

Here is what we need to make this happen.

1. We need four regional sites to be established.

a. January – March – The Christian Church of Jasper has agreed to host this meeting.

- b. April – June –*
- c. July – September –*
- d. October – December –*

- 2. Once the regional sites are established then each minister will hopefully have a nearby. location to come and be a part of this ministry.*
- 3. The other side of the coin holds for us four sites a minister or leader can come to throughout the year to be encouraged and recharged to fulfill the calling God has laid on their heart.*
- 4. What does the church provide? A breakfast to start the day. This can be simple or complicated it just depends on who does the cooking. The meeting will end with lunch. Once again your limitations are held only to your ability to dream.*
- 5. What does Living Hope provide? Mailings to all the area churches informing them of the meeting times and places. The program. This program will be generated from discussions with preachers in the area as to the types of things we need to talk about. Guests who are well versed in the areas we will be discussing.*
- 6. The cost? My dream is to make this all free, so far it isn't. However, as we have learned people are very cautious of things that are too free. The minimal registration cost of \$15 will be used as a guide to help offset the expenses of Living Hope Ministry. Now if there is a struggling leader who needs help, money is a non issue.*
- 7. The benefits! Friends who will pray for you. Accountability partners who will encourage you. Strength in numbers. Answers to some troubling problems. The advice of people who have, "been there and done that."*

If you would like to be involved this year as one of the regional sites please give me a call soon. 812-752-2634 or 812-595-3893. Thanks in advance for all you are doing.

"Bible Study Times are coming"

We have been asked to formulate Bible Studies on DVD which can be used by others to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Savior and Lord Jesus Christ. During the months of January and February, our Lord willing, we are going to video these studies at the home of Bill and Becky Snowden in Austin, Indiana. We will be meeting on Tuesday nights during those months from 7:00 to 8:00 p.m. We are

going to begin with a series entitled: "Questions that keep people out of Church." We will follow up this series with a book study from the New Testament. If you would like to be a part of this time please call Bill and Becky and let them know. (812-794-2592) Space will be somewhat limited so make your plans for next year soon.

"The Church"

"Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood." (Acts 20:28, NIV)

"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her" (Ephesians 5:25, NIV)

" Now I rejoice in what was suffered for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church." (Colossians 1:24, NIV)

Could it be possible that we have somehow forgotten just how precious the blood bought bride of Christ really is? When Jesus Christ shed His blood to establish the Church, isn't it reasonable that all who claim the name "Christian" would hold the church in high esteem?

The beginning lines from the book, A Tale of Two Cities, might best summarize the condition of the church today.

"It was the best of times..."

"It was the worst of times..."

"It was the age of wisdom..."

"It was the age of foolishness..."

For a large number of churches today, things just couldn't be better. They are blessed with a Christ-like vision for their community and the world. They are growing both in spirit and numbers. They are filled with the Spirit of power greater than themselves. They are compassionate and meeting the needs of all those around them. They are effective in ministry and generous beyond all imaginations. They are truly exciting places to be.

But sadly, for an even greater number of churches things just couldn't be worse! They are suffering from low morale. Declining attendance and financial problems plague every meeting. There is constant turmoil and in-fighting. There is no vision for the fields that are white unto the harvest. Hopelessness fills the pews. Little people are struggling for power and control. Personalities are clashing and the world is laughing. Who would want to be a part of such a dysfunctional body?

A lukewarm church is a scary place to try and worship.

What can we do to encourage the body of believers we are associated with to be all that God intends for us to be? How can we lift up the Christ so that He may draw all people to Himself?

Do you remember Acts 2:42-47?

" They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved." (Acts 2:42-47, NIV)

One writer suggests five things we need to be sure we are doing in the body of Christ.

- 1. We need teaching that is life changing.**
- 2. We need fellowship that goes well below the surface.**
- 3. We need to be seeking and saving those who are lost.**
- 4. We need to meet the needs of those around us.**
- 5. We need to love one another just like Jesus loves us.**

When we love the church just like Christ loves the church the world will want to know what's going on where we worship.

"Support"

"Phil, what is the hardest part of the ministry you are involved in now?" You might be surprised to know this is an easy question for me to answer. However, words have a tendency to get stuck in my throat from time to time. God has blessed us with the opportunity to talk, teach, work with, and encourage over 450 preachers thus far. We have also reached out to another 300 through mailings and publicity. God has been so very good to Living Hope Ministry.

The hardest part of the ministry that is easy: it is asking for money from people like you. Raising support is such a necessary part of survival, but I know how hard times are now, and I know how churches are struggling, and I know how people hate to be asked for money. The simple fact is that money necessary to carry on this work.

Donna Faris has been a great blessing in caring for the financial aspects of this work. If you are a financial supporter of this work you can ask her any question and she can tell you exactly what's going on with the money receive.

But that doesn't end my need to ask for your help in this work.

God is opening some amazing doors of service. Our Lord willing we will be in the states of Maryland and Idaho this coming year. Churches are still seeking our help and in many instances they are having trouble making ends meet. We are striving to help as many preachers as possible and be the very best steward's of all God has given to us.

As this year comes to an end would you consider a gift to Living Hope Ministry? Would you pray about a monthly gift to sustain the work as we continue on? Would you please not let a day go by that you don't lift up this work as we labor to encourage and support God's laborers in the field?

I have trouble asking, but I know that without your help we can only go so far. Thank you in advance for all you are doing to reach out in this wonderful work.