

The Nature of the Exodus New Life Agenda Contract

by Gordon W Brown

Several years ago Peter C., a man incarcerated in the county jail, sent me his contract and asked for comment. I can't share his actual contract with you, but you may draw some inferences from my comments about the particulars, and I hope get a flavor of what Peter was up-against and what his hopes were.

Here is my letter to Peter C.

Peter,

This response to your contract may seem a little disjointed, but I will attempt to give you some basic guidance. As you explore this new way of thinking and planning you will eventually discover other resources that were not in your view prior to stepping onto this new part of your journey.

Family Ties — This area of the Contract allows the member to set goals to maintain close family relationships, improve them, or attempt to repair estrangements. —

You identify the problems that need to be addressed but now consider in specific terms what the steps are, one by one, to achieve reunion with your children. Move from hope to action.

Education — Education is the process of acquiring general knowledge, developing the powers of reasoning and judgment, and preparing oneself for mature life. This Contract area may be used to set goals of formal education (GED-General Education Diploma, College, ASL-American Sign Language, etc.) or for less formal forms of self-study or classes for gaining understanding and skills in a particular field or an area of personal interest (music, arts, writing) etc.. —

You indicate you have GED, if you don't, get it in jail if possible. More specifics are needed here. By optical field I presume you mean making glasses or becoming a vision specialist. There are technical jobs in the field that may not require a bachelors degree, but

certainly to become an Optician or Optometrist requires much more than that. Determine what it is about this field that attracts you, find out what the educational requirements are, and determine your first steps in your broader plan.

Physical Fitness and Health — This area of the Contract provides an avenue to increase our awareness that we can surely influence our own well being, prevent disease, adopt better habits, reject poor habits and track our progress. —

Eat what? How much? Work out how long? Doing what? Weight goal is more specific, but perhaps still a bit unclear. 15 pounds is a wide range, it could be the difference between a healthy range and overweight.

Community Involvement — A Contract category meant to help the Exodus member reconnect with the community in which he lives, lived, or hopes to go to. —

Simplify. Again, be more specific. Consider ways to assist and get involved with existing entities in the community you hope to return to. This area is intended to generate an attitude of service, of giving back to the communities that reared us. Your goal is too lofty now to be of any real service to anyone currently, nor to provide any sense of accomplishment for yourself. Find something more easily achievable and life-giving to begin with.

Spiritual Growth — This Contract area can lead to discovery, examination, or enhancement of our belief systems. Goals regarding those experiences or rituals that will help us to have a rewarding inner life are essential to our long term success and our metaphysical connection to others. —

Certainly art can be a foundation of life-giving spirituality and Ai Wei Wei is inspiring for his art and his sense of justice. Who you read, listen to, or repeat indicates the inner style you have either achieved or desire. The Exodus Rites, too, are a guide to finding and keeping a satisfying Spiritual condition.

Vocation, Work, Money Management — This Contract area can be used to plan for getting or increasing skills for potential employment or to develop contacts with potential employers. Bookkeeping, saving money, learning about banking and investing, understanding insurance and other types of agreements may be developed here. —

Interesting that you have a resource to invest in an income property, and you indicate you have the ability to maintain such a place. This could be very workable in the long run. In the short term consider what your employment goals/needs are upon release in order to become stable before taking the risks involved in such an investment (this is also important in terms of your family reunion plan). Be sure to look at all costs and expenses e.g. property and income taxes, realtor fees, repair costs, location, rental market, and the stresses of being a landlord when tenants are unpredictable.

Three Future Events that will improve the quality of my life — This part of the Contract identifies our hope in real terms. A future event is something we begin to work for and realize by our actions now; a milestone that one plans for. —

1 and 3 are really the same, redo # 3 with specificity, i.e. helping with my son's education is still vague. Watching my son receive his high school diploma is distinct. Emphasize events that you can imagine and are very specific. Allow these future hopes to help you build a contract that will contribute to their realization.

Practical Project — A way to put the theory and thought generated by Exodus Study Group into some tangible form and/or to simply find a special, or repeated, task which is life-giving for ourselves and others. —

This is not something we think about doing someday. This is something we engage in now. This project is tangible in a way that it will be of some benefit to others and encourage our life-giving spirit. Practical projects don't have to be complex or grand, they can be as simple as using your unique skills to help others in some way. Practical projects have structure.

Primary Issue — There are various ways of describing this, but is substantially as Bama Battle stated, “It is that thing that if you do not deal with it will bring you back to prison.” It has also been described as: what it is you are compensating for. Discovering and addressing one’s Primary Issue is essential to change and recovery. The Primary Issue interferes with the emergence of the True Self. —

No, you went to jail for a specific crime. Your attractions reflect your desires or your emptiness. Primary Issue is hard to unearth but the digging must go on to discover the New Man we seek. It is hard to discuss without doing it in person. Primary Issue is not a justification for our behavior but it is that core reason the behavior was allowed to flourish.

You may not think so from the above, but your Contract is a very good beginning. Remember to keep your goals and methods S.M.A.R.T. This acronym helps to guide goal and project making. The letters represent Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant , and Time Framed.