

Why Exodus?

by Gordon W Brown

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Exodus has existed in facilities for over fifty years. Many ask, “What is Exodus?” Exodus Men met weekly for decades, but now The Exodus New Life Agenda is provided via tablet and email. Nevertheless it is still a life-giving journey. An enduring fellowship developed in our meetings characterized by self-esteem and the mutual respect that the Exodus New Life Agenda nurtures. Personal successes are created by embracing the theoretical tasks (e.g. The Rites, Deep Talks, and Study Papers) and the practical tasks (e.g. The Contract, Practical Projects, and Life-Line) which make up the Exodus method and reflect our principals. Here are a few thoughts of Exodus men from their essays about Exodus and the prison experience:

“In the Exodus Study Group we learn the ‘past is approved.’ Realistically speaking, our stories are made up of acts and deeds that cannot be reversed. Clearing up the past ultimately becomes a motivation for living our present life in a virtuous manner. When the ‘present is received’ with virtue, then the ‘future is open’ for everyone. We can use sincere remorse as a driving force toward redemption and future salvation.” - T.S.

“The prison winner undergoes a soul searching and soul cleansing process. He constantly spirit-checks himself against thoughts that violate universal laws, those of the creator and the rights of his fellow man, which together give life its true harmony. The prison winner’s actions adjust automatically to fit the values, the goals, and the attributes of an intentional, life-giving, human being who has oriented himself toward the future.” - K.I.

“I need to accept responsibility for things that I have done and created. I need to become a ‘man’ and become a hard worker, a caring father, a person that does not dwell on the materialistic version of life. If I accept these challenges I may endure. Whatever the case, it’s time to do some work, to deepen my surrender, to make the principals of acceptance, humility, willingness, honesty, and open-mindedness fundamental parts of my life.” - E.C.

“But how do we rise up from the bottom? First and foremost, you have to come to the realization that you have a problem. Then you have to establish the desire to want to address your problem honestly. Sigmund Freud once said, ‘Being entirely honest with yourself is a good exercise.’ In my view, it helps you to heal the wounds efficiently. Then, you have to find a real friend who can point you in a positive direction. Someone who can assist you in realizing that your life has meaning.” - L. R.

The Exodus Program has, at its root, a story from the Bible. The Jews were held in captivity in Egypt by Pharaoh. When they were finally freed, they were released into the wilderness and searched for the promised land. We define the promised land as the future hope you create for yourself. The wilderness is laden with pit-falls, dangers, tricksters, enemies, and discouragement. The wilderness effectively begins in prison and continues to the street after release. So, if one thinks of the street as the promised land, failure is more likely and so is a return to prison. Preparation for navigating the wilderness is required for a successful journey to the promised land.

I should explain that our members, over the years, have been part of virtually every religion, every belief system. It’s not just a Christian, Jewish, or Muslim thing to be a part of

Exodus. In fact, when it comes to this, it is our diversity that is our strength. Every religious, scientific, or artistic tradition has something to teach us.

Sharing our experiences, in our meetings, or privately with other Exodus Men, is a hallmark of the Exodus family. Yes, in prison, it is difficult to find trusting relationships. But, with the foundation of Exodus beneath, we have a common language to express life's joys and difficulties. One becomes part of a tradition, forging a life-giving path toward true freedom and liberty.