

HARVEST USA

A NEWSLETTER OF WORD INTERNATIONAL MINISTRIES USA

Alcoholics Anonymous Bible Study in Salem, Massachusetts

Pastor Raheel Rizvi, Senior Pastor, WIN Massachusetts



So.... One day I was conversing with one of our Bible study group members. I said, "Bro. Matthew, let's establish an AA meeting group in Salem, MA!"

Bro. Matthew, a senior member of an AA group outside Salem, surprised yet eager asked; "Pastor, are you sure?" "Of course, let us plant this seed and see what happens." Our main focus in these sessions will not be about the 12 steps of the "Big Book" study but to teach and provide the necessary tools for willing individuals to create and establish their own Bible Study group for the benefit of other AA members.

In June 6, 2017 at our church fellowship hall, we started this group for newcomers and old-timers alike. We envisioned a group based on and guided by the three AA legacies: Recovery - a clear presentation of the AA program by speakers from all walks of life and cultures of AA fellowship, including the encouragement of sponsorship; Unity - a cohesive fellowship on which nobody has to be alone or excluded, where all are welcome and assistance is available to anyone who wants it; Service - to be an active and informed voice in the AA circles of love and service.

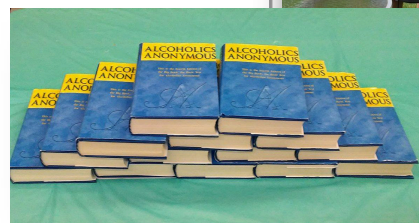
Initially, all the jobs were done by only the two of us, but soon, some of our sponsors and friends began cooperating with us, enhancing our capability of assisting individuals in need exponentially. Because

of their commitments, 27 AA members are now currently attending our Salem group on a regular basis and the numbers will continue to grow from there.

Later, the group was encouraged to join our ongoing Bible study programs (Lighthouses). This portrayed the dramatic change that has taken in place within the zeal of its members to form a relationship with God, to come to Him through Jesus Christ, to study the Bible rather than merely relying on "High Power."

In result, many members were convinced that they needed to be delivered. They need to be inspired to change their life in order for them to

Bro. Matthew



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gain the initiative to “do God’s will.” They need to know the importance of God and His Word to enjoy the abundant life the Creator promised to those who seek Him through His Son Jesus Christ.

In addition, members are encouraged to pray for one another, to engage in prayer and care for one another.

Our prime objective for this ministry is to provide individuals an opportunity for growth in the name of the Lord through fellowship with a community of affable believers who share an intimate personal relationship with Him. As individuals share their troubles with the community, this gives us the opportunity to step in and help change their lives for the better. This ministry resides with a desire for troubled individuals who believes as if their lives are circumscribed by the power of alcoholism and drugs to overcome their addictions and to live a godly and healthy life. An arduous task, indeed, this will be, however, we as a church will humbly place our faith in our redoubtable God.



For more information contact: Dr. Ferdie Melendres at fvmelendres@yahoo.com

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July 26-29, 2018



MURRIETA HOT SPRINGS
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US National Convergence 2018

Murrieta, California



IGNITE A Lifestyle of WORSHIP

AROUND THE US REGION!

In Touch With The Community

WIN San Diego

Word Christian Fellowship, Inc. (WCFI)

Volunteering at the **Jacobs & Cushman San Diego Food Bank.**



APPEAL FOR ASSISTANCE WIN Houston North

WIN Houston North church was flooded out by the historic flooding recently brought about by Typhoon Harvey.

The floodwater rose quickly such that Ptr. Butch Mapeso and his family had no time to save church equipment and their personal belongings. Although they had placed musical and other sensitive equipment on tables, the flood rose all the way to the ceiling. They were able to escape with mostly just the clothes on their back. They are safe, and for that we are thankful.

Currently, they are living with one of the church members, and they plan to hold worship services from house to house while the facility undergoes rehabilitation.

Please send your donation to the WIN US Regional Office: 7101 58th Street Ct W, University Place, WA 98467.

WIN Houston South and the other churches in Texas are well and safe, by the grace of God.

Thank you all for your prayers and concern.

Pastor Gordon Apura
WIN Texas District Coordinator



Heroes of The Faith: Struck Down But Not Destroyed



Serina Dawa, Youth Ministry Head, WIN Seattle/Tacoma

On July 26th through July 30th, WIN-Seattle hosted our annual Youth Camp of 2017 at Lewis and Clark Washington State Park. This year's theme, "**Heroes of the Faith: Struck Down, But Not Destroyed,**" revolved around the stories of nine different Bible heroes that taught campers how to use their faith in the Lord to withstand the highs and lows that come later in life. The camp verse, 2 Corinthians 4:8-9, conveys perseverance through faith, which is a powerful encouragement to our campers to help them continue in their walk as young Christians after camp.



But, even before camp began, God's provisions and works were very present in each step of the preparation process. For example, few campers were required to pay the full fee due to the generous efforts and donations of our local WIN community. Fundraisers and sponsorships resulted in reduced fees for most campers. In addition, we are especially proud to have seen so many of our resident youth members stepping up to the challenge of leadership and responsibility for the glory of the Lord. Seeing these young and willing souls step out of their comfort zones to lead was truly a blessing. Their efforts and growth was vital to the success of our camp since the summer of 2017 was an especially pivotal point for the WIN-Seattle/Tacoma youth. Camp would be the first youth experience for all the preteens incoming from our church children's ministry. With this increase of newcomers and younger members joining, the contribution of each youth worker was essential. In all things that were accomplished through this camp, all glory goes to God for placing so many willing volunteers and campers in our camp and for opening the hearts of the campers to His Word.

The following paragraphs are quotes from some of the campers. I feel that there is no better way to hear about the fruits of this camp than hearing from the campers themselves. Praise God for His endless and enduring love for His children. Praise Him!

Caitlin Acosta, Age 15

This year's youth camp was very special to me because it was my first time being a cell leader. When I was told that I would be a leader during the camp the first thought that came to mind was that it would be impossible for me to be a good cell leader or even to lead a group on my own. I asked myself, how could I help others become closer to God if I do not even have a good relationship with Him? For me, being a cell leader was a challenge I had to face and the only way to overcome it was with the power of God. Not only was I able to lead my group, I was able to grow in my faith and become closer to my youth group. I am thankful for what the Lord has done for me and for my awesome youth camp coordinator for helping me throughout the week. This year's youth camp is one I will never forget.

Brandon Lockhart, Age 17

This year's youth camp turned out to be so amazing! Each and every heart was touched. The sight of everyone loving God together is truly an experience to remember. This camp adventure has really shown me how to have a strong and firm faith, and with a faith like that, even if we are struck down, God has won the war, He will deliver us from sin and be our salvation.



Heroes of the Faith . . .

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Lisa Smith, Age 12

Youth Camp 2017 was my first youth camp I've ever been to. At first, I expected it to be like a hangout with multiple devotions or some preaching. Yet, it was as if I sat there with my friends and literally got closer to God the more we talked about Him. I came from Sunday School, learning the basics, like taking baby steps, then I was invited to go to Youth Camp. Once we sat in the room and talked more about God, it was like I could feel a stronger connection, like I wanted to be a better person. My friends seemed to be much more interested as we thought deeper about Him during every conversation. After youth camp, we wanted to do greater things and hold ourselves to higher standards rather than taking baby steps. I used to sing rarely during praise and worship, but now I feel more comfortable. I pray every night and thank God for everything, especially thanking him for giving me and my friends the privilege to be loved by Him and have all of these people in my life.

Jeter Arellano, Age 16

What a camp! Truly God has planned this - my invitation and admission happened so fast and unexpectedly that it could only be sourced to God's grace. The camp experience was truly immersive and edifying, especially the sessions. In the end, through a wonderful community, God blessed me with more knowledge of Him, refining me in the action of His will, and with great relations between the brothers and sisters at WIN. I truly hope and believe that God worked through this camp to make me more intimate with Him, and continues to do so with every day of my life. Thank God!

Vito Atienza, Age 12

It was my first time attending youth camp this year. It was exciting to learn about God through other youth members. One memorable lesson was about Daniel when he was in the lion's den, we used him as a model for prayer. I learned to pray with PATIENCE and PERSISTENCE while knowing that there is POWER in prayer. Youth camp is a great way to learn about God's love through the people I met, the lessons we learned, and the games we played together.

Amica Atienza, Age 18

Heroes of the Faith was the seventh youth camp I have attended and my fourth opportunity to serve as a cell leader. I firmly believe that every youth camp is a unique opportunity for young people to experience God in a powerful way that can guide their lives for years to come. This year I was reminded of that wonder and excitement that only comes from studying the Word and worshipping alongside my peers, in a new and refreshing way. It was a privilege to witness hardened hearts open to the gospel being preached and to get to know the members of my group and pray with each of them individually. I can only pray that God will continue to use me in this ministry as I get older, it's truly a blessing.



For me, being a cell leader was a challenge I had to face and the only way to overcome it was with the power of God. Not only was I able to lead my group, I was able to grow in my faith and become closer to my youth group.

~ Caitlin



After youth camp, we wanted to do greater things and hold ourselves to higher standards rather than taking baby steps.

~ Lisa



Each and every heart was touched. The sight of everyone loving God together is truly a sight to remember.

~ Brandon



Not My Battle

A mighty general once came before his king to give a report of what went on in the battlefield.

"Your enemies from the north are defeated, O king," he said.

"Very good," said the king.

"And your enemies from the south are defeated," he continued.

"Very good," said the king.

"And your enemies from the west are also defeated," he proudly announced.

"Even better," said the king.

"And finally, your enemies from the east are defeated," he said.

"East? I don't have enemies from the east," said the king.

"Well," said the general, "I guess you do now."

Isn't it interesting how we often get ourselves and others in trouble simply because we go about fighting battles that do not belong to us? Sometimes in life, the best thing to do is to mind your own business and take care of your own responsibilities. Nosiness, as you may have discovered, can be disastrous.

This can be difficult too because conflict surrounds us all the time and it is not easy to determine which ones deserves our attention. Conversely, we may be so unaware of the conflicts other people face that we end up becoming apathetic towards their struggles. Theologian Ian Maclaren wisely said, "Be kind, for everyone you meet is fighting a hard battle."

In 2 Chronicles 20, King Jehoshaphat and his people are met with a challenge. The Moabites, Ammonites, and Meunites have just declared war against them. As a result, Jehoshaphat was "terrified by this news and begged the LORD for guidance" (2 Chron. 20:3). With this, the King called for a solemn assembly, a time for fasting and prayer. It was then that the Spirit of the Lord came upon a Levite named Jahaziel. He spoke with boldness and declared,

Listen, all you people of Judah and Jerusalem! Listen, King Jehoshaphat! This is what the LORD says: Do not be afraid! Don't be discouraged by this mighty army, for the battle is not yours, but God's. Tomorrow, march out against them. You will find them coming up through the ascent of Ziz at the end of the valley that opens into the wilderness of Jeruel. But you will not even need to fight. Take your positions; then stand still and watch the LORD's victory. He is with you, O people of Judah and Jerusalem. Do not be afraid or discouraged. Go out against them tomorrow, for the LORD is with you! (vv. 15-17)

Did you hear that? He said, "The battle is not yours, but God's." So if it was God's, then this battle was not theirs to fight. All they had to do was take their positions, proclaim the greatness of God in worship, and then watch the Lord fight the battle that belonged to Him, and Him alone.

As the people of God stood in worship, something amazing happened,

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The **WORD** on the **STREET**



Make Them Come Back To Your Church

We all have church events and activities that were designed to attract visitors with the hope that they find a community of faith that they can commit to. Whether it's a Vacation Bible School for children – where we invite visiting family and friends to volunteer and enjoy – or, an Easter Cantata that draws them in with prayerful and inspiring musical presentations; or even a Church Anniversary celebration – where they can hopefully find a featured ministry or small group they can be a part of - we design these programs with the goal of inviting them towards involvement and possible commitment to our faith community. If they get involved and commit... that's a "win" (pun intended), at least in our scorecard.

Consider these two surveys (one formal poll and another informal survey) :

- (1) An **April 2017 Gallup Poll** that asked Americans about the major factors *"why they attend church or a place of worship"* ; and,
- (2) A **January 2017 Twitter Survey** by Pastor Thom Rainier (President and CEO of LifeWay Christian Resources) that asked *"what was the singular event that made them desire to return to church"*. The results will delight many pastors and hopefully encourage us to make some necessary adjustments.

The Gallup Poll suggests that three out of four churchgoers in America attend church because of the **content of the sermon** (75% go to church to hear *"sermons relevant to my life"* , also, 76% go to church to hear *"sermons that are based on Scripture"*). This is to the humble delight of any preacher of the Word! While it encourages the preacher to **present sermons that are biblical yet relevant**, it also assures them that their tireless efforts in sermon preparation are valued by churchgoers (whether they say it or not)! If you're a pastor/preacher – way to go! If you're a church-goer, make sure to send a word of encouragement to your pastor/preacher about the impact and importance of what he/she does.

Secondly, Rainier's Twitter survey developed around nine (9) factors that answered the question *"What made you come back to church?"*. He summarizes each factor with a quote that best illustrates each: (comments in red are mine)

1. *"Someone had an umbrella waiting for me in inclement weather."*(an ushering/greeting/valet-parking ministry that is outside the church building!)
2. *"A member actually invited me to lunch."* (someone befriended them and was genuinely interested in them!)
3. *"The kids area had leaders who were friendly and helpful."* (highlighting the importance of a children's program and child-friendly facility)

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Pastor Vino B. Atienza,
Senior Pastor, WIN Seattle/Tacoma





PKEF Student Graduates with a Major in Industrial Engineering



Frances Noelle Y. Alfonso graduated from Mapua Institute of Technology (Malayan Colleges Laguna) majoring in Industrial Engineering. She is the daughter of Pastor Moises and Jenny Alfonso, pastors of WIN Binan, Laguna, Philippines. Frances is a beneficiary of the Pastors Kids Education Fund (PKEF), which help support children of pastors who need assistance to send their children to college.

Frances writes: "One of the quotes which inspired me early on was Romans 8:18: *"I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us."* That verse was always in my heart. And so, with head-on determination, even if this meant being alone oftentimes, skipping lunch, walking a distance to save the fare, or not having to be with the barkadas' trip to the cafeteria or Starbucks, I tried my best to excel in the academics, while balancing extra-curricular activities, social life, as well as family and church responsibilities.

I thank our Lord God Almighty. He was, as always will be - my strength and refuge. I would not have achieved this if it wasn't for Him! I give all the honor and praises and thanksgiving to God.

My heartfelt thanks to everyone I crossed paths with during this long journey. You made an impact on who I am now. My deepest gratitude also goes out to my family, who always had my back covered through ups and downs. Without their guidance and love, I wonder where would I be.

Lastly, but definitely not the least, thank you Center for Sowing Seeds of Hope, both staff and sponsors, for your unwavering support. I dedicate this success to you. I hope and pray that in due time, I will also be able to plant seeds of hope to others as you did to me. It has been *our* journey together. I am presently in my review for the PIIE Certification Examinations. Please continue to pray for me too in this direction.

"Because of God, my family, and you, this little girl is now on to face up the real world ahead."

Thank you Sponsors for making this happen. Your partnership is so valuable to the children you sponsor. It's the best investment you will make because it will give a child hope and a bright future. God bless you!

*When you think unselfishly and invest in others, you gain the opportunity to create a legacy that will outlive you.
~ John Maxwell ~ Thinking for a Change*



Not My Battle . . .

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At the very moment they began to sing and give praise, the LORD caused the armies of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir to start fighting among themselves. The armies of Moab and Ammon turned against their allies from Mount Seir and killed every one of them. After they had destroyed the army of Seir, they began attacking each other. So when the army of Judah arrived at the lookout point in the wilderness, all they saw were dead bodies lying on the ground as far as they could see. Not a single one of the enemy had escaped. (vv.22-24)

Everyday we are tempted to fight battles. But could it be that we are needlessly fighting battles that don't belong us? Our King Jesus fought and won the ultimate battle over sin and death through Calvary's Cross. In him, we are given the grace to live in victory and the freedom to declare his praises among the nations.

Make Them Come Back . . .

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4. ***"There was a time of meaningful prayer."*** (the importance of leading people to a time of connecting to God in prayer)
5. ***"Someone walked us where we were supposed to go."*** (guests and first-timers need to be gently guided into where they should go, it lessens stress!)
6. ***"There was genuine friendliness outside of the stand and greet time."*** (they were properly introduced to others, helps overcome the awkwardness)
7. ***"People followed up with my prayer requests the next day."*** (they will feel genuinely cared for, and an opportunity to follow-up as well!)
8. ***"I loved having the opportunity to speak with the pastor."*** (whether before or after the service or even during the greeting portion of the service)
9. ***"I received a gift at the end of the service."*** (Don't we all just love receiving gifts!)

So before your core-group or your leadership community launches into another "back-to-church" campaign this Fall, consider these survey responses first. I am sure that many of our WIN-USA churches are practicing most, if not all, of these already (*including the biblically-centered, relevant preaching!*). But, just in case there are those two or three areas of improvement that you observe in your church, then I would've done my part for this article.

Poll and Survey sources:

- *Sermon Content Is What Appeals Most to Churchgoers*

By **Gallup** (April 14, 2017)

- *9 Surprises in Worship Services That Made Guests Return*

By **Thom Rainer** (January 29, 2017)

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