

# Titus House Newsletter

Titus House Ministries, PO Box 2376, Tijeras, NM 87059

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## Sex Offender Treatment Class: Four Years, \$10,000 and No End in Sight by Filter JEFF NOLAND

Recently, my wife and I were having a quiet dinner at home when armed officers arrived without warning. They ordered me to stand against the wall so they could take a mug shot. While my wife and I sat on the couch, they looked through my phone, photo albums, computer, car—whatever they wanted.

These shakedowns occur once a month without warning. The mug shot was to keep the [Tennessee Sex Offender Registry](#) (SOR) up to date.

In 2009 I took a plea deal and spent the next 10 years in prison. I knew I had hurt people I loved, and accepted my punishment. During my decade behind bars, I held a steady job and had no disciplinary write-ups. I knew that upon release I'd have to register as a sex offender. But I thought my pound of flesh was paid, and that I could move forward with rebuilding my life.

Once a week, I attend my community-based sex offender group treatment class: a program sort of like Alcoholics Anonymous or Narcotics Anonymous. Participants are legally mandated to attend the classes, and your treatment provider can say the word and make your life miserable or possibly get you sent back to prison, so no one wants to upset them. So nobody asks the questions we're all thinking, but are afraid to ask: Does anyone assigned to this treatment program ever complete it? Do the classes ever end?

Every week for nearly four years, I've walked into class and handed \$50 cash to the treatment provider. This has cost about \$10,000 to date, but in my experience there's little to no feedback about how we're progressing, or what we should work on if we're not progressing. No one really knows if there's an end in sight, or if we're staying in the same place and will be doing this forever. Treatment varies from person to person and from state to state, but often these programs are expected to take a year or two.

If your treatment provider and parole officer agree, you can progress to Level 2.

"Sex offending cannot be cured and at best, can only be controlled," [states](#) Tennessee Sex Offender Treatment Board (TSOB) policy. "Treatment is to be stressed as lifelong. Completion of a treatment program does not cure sexual deviance." But if there's a way to complete treatment, it hasn't been explained to us. The TSOB did not answer *Filter's* inquiry about progression of treatment.

I'm in the Level 1 groups, which meet weekly. Treatment is supposed to restructure our thinking and eliminate any "deviant" sexual urges. When we walk in, the first thing that happens is always roll call and having our money collected.

We're instructed to talk openly about any new stressors in our lives, but if anyone mentions anything that could be considered a high-risk situation—[like drinking alcohol](#)—their treatment provider will report it to their parole officer. Those two stay in close contact.

If your treatment provider and parole officer agree you've completed significant portions of the treatment, you can be moved to Level 2 and meet every other week. After an estimated two years at Level 2, you can be moved to Level 3, the maintenance program that just meets once per month. There's no suggested time period for how long people stay at Level 1.

Every six months, we pay \$250 to take a polygraph test. The TSOB [philosophy](#) of sex offender treatment states that we are "master manipulators," who are fundamentally "secretive." So even if we're open about our pasts and appear to be taking accountability, providers are told not to believe us, especially in this first phase of treatment. If we look like we're making progress, providers are supposed to assume that we're just trying to deceive them by "attempting to 'act normal,'" or that we're trying "to become the best client to avoid dealing with [our] problems."

"As the saying goes," the policy [states](#), "'You are only as sick as your secrets.'"

Without knowing whether or not we're making progress, we're unsure of what more we could be doing.

It doesn't seem like the providers have any reason to advance us to Level 2 or 3. We pay more money the more frequently we attend the classes, and the process never gets questioned. No one wants to give anyone a reason to say we're in denial about needing treatment.

"[C]onvicted offenders who deny should be considered high risk," the policy states, "and eventually returned to the court authorities if denial persists beyond a reasonable limit."

I do agree that when someone who has caused harm hasn't accepted responsibility for it, they should be ([continue on page 4](#))



## Teaching an introductory psychology class in jail.

by Don Ratcliff

I met a young African American man in jail, who impressed me as eager to learn. I told him I had been a psychology teacher for quite a few years. If he was interested, we could work on an introductory class together. Of course, we had no textbook or notes. But I had taught the class for so many years that I knew I could remember most everything without a book or lecture notes. He agreed to give it a try, probably in part because he (and we) needed to pass the time in some way.

And thus we worked on the subject, primarily by one-to-one discussion and my drawing some diagrams I recalled from class. I personalized the class for him, and he personalized it as well. Soon we were having discussions for two or more hours each day. In the pod, with other inmates sitting at the table, listening in and sometimes making comments. I offered to let them join us, but they quickly backed off. They feigned disinterest. But I knew the likely truth—they had not done well in classrooms of the past. But I welcomed even their limited involvement.

My student was particularly interested in a section on the human brain. Thus I went into considerably greater detail on that subject. I wanted to help him map the brain, and one of the others present, a rather unpleasant fellow who complained and criticized almost everything and everyone, agreed to let me use his head to help locate sections of the brain. I told him it might get painful when we got to the middle of the brain. And we all laughed.

Eventually, my student and I worked our way through the standard topics to abnormal psy-

chology. As we surveyed the various disorders, my student quietly said, "Bipolar sounds like what he has," pointing to the cell of my previous brain-mapping volunteer. Others nearby said he spent almost every day, all day, sleeping. Then he would arise and be a real pain in the \_\_\_\_.

It did appear that their assessment fit the man, but I told them only a clinical psychologist could be certain of such a diagnosis. I confess that my main motivation for saying that was that I did not want him to hear that I was talking about him. But the implied warning of giving a too-quick diagnosis was also an important message to hear.

As we came to the end of the class, I decided to give my student a "final exam" that was as personalized as the entire class had been. I asked him to walk to a wall of the pod, then pause to touch the wall. He did so, and returned to our table.

Then I asked him to describe what had happened in his legs, his arms and his brain to make those things happen. We had never talked about those particular actions as they related to the brain, so I knew it was a challenging question. He then began to describe nearly everything involved in those actions in relation to both the brain and related activities of neurons in arms, legs, and eyes, using our earlier discussions. I was very impressed that he was able to connect our sometimes abstract dialogue to that specific example. It revealed that he had learned the principles well, as well as the difficult task of connecting principles to specific experience. I expressed my delight with his performance, and I believe the others in the pod con-

gratulated him as well. We did not have a graduation ceremony.

I knew I could not give him academic credit for the class, yet I wondered if there was some way to concretely give him some token of his accomplishment. I asked him if his mother lived nearby, and he told me that she resided in a distant state. Had they kept in contact? He nodded his head slowly. I then began to write a letter to her, as he looked on, expressing my appreciation for his hard work. I told her that he had performed very well on the "final exam." I also said that I would have been proud to have him as a student at the college where I worked. It was a college that is highly esteemed. I was sure she was acquainted with it, as she was a high school teacher. I concluded the letter with the comment that she could be proud of her son and that he held excellent academic promise. He had the potential to make it in a real class.

I gave him the letter and suggested that he share it with his mother. He thanked me profusely and asked me if I was up for teaching another class! This time we worked on a sociology class, and I tried to personalize it as I had psychology.

Soon after we completed the second class, he was released from jail. Of course I was glad to see he was released. But I also missed having such a great student.

I thought it might happen again a few months later. I was now in prison where college classes were offered, and one of them was a psychology class. When the teacher of that class became unable to teach, I offered to help. I was told I was not qualified .



## For God so Loved the World by Sandy Z.

I'm sure that most of us who have been around Christendom for too long have heard this scripture, "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only son, so that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3:16

God gave His one and only son to die a horrible death on a cross to give us everlasting life. In John 19:30 Jesus' last words before He took His last breath were, "it is finished."

What exactly was it that Jesus finished that day on the cross? He became our salvation; He overcame sin and death. He would also send us the Holy Spirit so He could live in our hearts. We became the temple of the Holy Spirit. It no longer dwelled in only one place and that was the Temple in Jerusalem.

He became our salvation. Most of us have heard the word salvation and know its meaning. Salvation means, "deliverance from sin and its consequences." But there are other aspects of salvation that Jesus did on the cross that we may not be as familiar to us.

One is Justification. In Roman 4:25 (NIV) the Bible says, "He was delivered over to death for our sins and raised to life for our justifica-

tion." Justification is a legal word which means to "to be declared righteous before God." In other words, our sentence of death no longer applies because Jesus took that sentence for us and made us right before God. This is immediate.



He also sanctified us. Paul said that we should be sanctified. (I Thessalonians 4:3 NIV)

It literally means "to set apart for special use or purpose." Sanctification is not immediate like justification. It is a process of being set apart or "made holy" because we are full of the Holy Spirit.

He is our propitiation. Propitiation means, "to satisfy the wrath of God against sin or to appease God's just judgment and righteous anger against us and our sin." Romans 3:24-25 says, "being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God

set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed." In other words, Jesus stepped in the middle to appease God's wrath for us.

And finally, we are glorified. Glorification means, "to give weight to or honor." Roman 8:30 (NIV) says, "moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified." When we are saved, we are of great importance to Jesus.

I realize that there are a lot of what a friend of mine calls two-dollar words to describe what Jesus did on the cross for us and how much he loves us. All we need to remember that no matter who we are on earth or where we live, the work of the cross is finished, and Jesus loved us enough to stand in the gap for us so we can enjoy the fruits of His love here on earth and forever in heaven one day.



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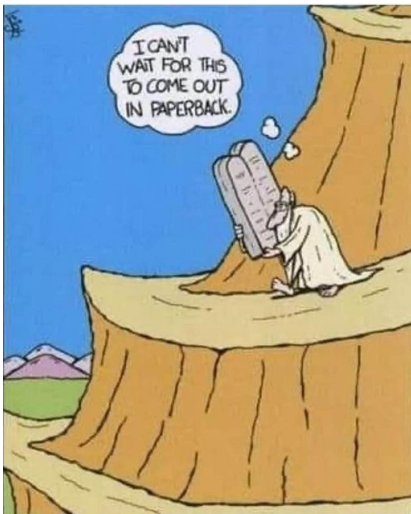
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Hebrew 13:3 - Continue to remember those in prison as if you were together with them in prison, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering.

Remember if you change your address you need to let us know if you want to continue to receive this newsletter



## Sex Offender Treatment Class: Four Years, \$10,000 and No End in Sight

considered high-risk for causing harm again. But part of accepting that responsibility is doing the best job we can at the treatment. Without knowing whether or not we're making progress, we're unsure of what more we could be doing.

Parole for people on an SOR is very different from parole for everyone else. Instead of [re-integrating into our communities](#), we're kept apart from them. Many of us have accepted and worked hard at the treatment assigned to us because we want to once again be contributing members of society, as they say. We know that the public perception of everyone on SOR is that

we're predators who are sick and deserve to pay for our crimes, even though that stereotype is **much narrower** than what SOR look like in real life.

So no one really wants to hear us complain. But this isn't about wanting to avoid treatment—it's about wanting to be able to complete it successfully.

If we've been actively participating in treatment, without violating any of the restrictions placed on us and without any polygraph issues, after how many years is it reasonable to ask if we're supposed to be doing something differently?

## Message From Don

I hope everyone had a good Mother's Day. I hope you called her or wrote her a letter or card. Alice's birthday is one day apart and receive calls from her kids. Alice wants to thank you all for the birthday cards and wishes for her. I hope you call your dad for Father's Day this month.

I know we have written in the past about our morning devotional of *Our Daily Bread*. Again I would like to ask you to join us. The call in number is 605-475-4092, access code 278954#

Our group of our prayer warriors join all together at 7 am Mountain Standard Time. Call in and join us.



**Circle of Concern** has gone **ZOOM**

Circle of Concern is aimed at breaking down isolation and fear by providing a safe place for registrants and their loved ones to get together, build community, and learn ways to step out and take charge of their lives and overcome the stigma they face. The Circle of Concern is a group of concerned registered citizens, family and friends that meet together on the 3rd Sunday of each month. We are meeting this month on **June 16, 202** at 3 pm—4 p.m. MST (Mountain Standard Time). We will meet on Zoom. We encourage and try to help each other. It is a safe place to share our strengths and struggles. We hope you will join us. If you are planning to attend call Don at (505) 315-7940.. He will send you the link to join by computer or phone. You can contact him at the number above or email him at [donmagicjohnston@gmail.com](mailto:donmagicjohnston@gmail.com)