

We're back with a devotional and our latest news.



turning lives around



*Not by bread alone...*

I'm not sure why I'm so attracted to grammar. Maybe it's because I have always liked things that are mechanical like cars or metal fabrication and grammar is the mechanical side of language. It's how all of the words work together to complete a thought and convey information, so I am always looking at the grammar when I read and especially when I read the Bible. And one thing that never ceases to catch my eye is the little tiny conjunction **but**. It's a small word, but very powerful in many instances across the pages of scripture. The word **but** is used to link two ideas or thoughts together with the second statement being different from the first and sometimes even surprising. And there are a lot of really significant **buts** in the Bible such as in **Romans 6:23**—"For the wages of sin is death, **but** the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" or "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy'. **But** I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. --**Matthew 5:43-44**

Now as we approach Christmas, many of us will spend some time reflecting on the birth of Christ and the events surrounding it, so I thought I'd talk about a really big and even startling **but** in the Christmas story. In **Matthew 1:18** it says, "This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, **but** before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the holy Spirit."

Talk about a shocking **but!** Joseph loved Mary, but to believe and somehow accept that she is now pregnant, and not by him, but by the Holy Spirit had to be heartbreaking and confusing to say the least. After all, who had ever heard of

a woman getting pregnant this way? But there is another important **but** in the next verse—“**But** Joseph was a righteous man and did not want to publicly disgrace her so he resolved to divorce her quietly.”

Now the righteous thing to do, according to both Roman and Jewish Law, would have been to expose her. That could have even meant stoning for Mary. But Joseph had a righteousness that flowed out of compassion and mercy rather than the letter of the law.

As the story continues we learn that God tells him in a dream that it's true that her pregnancy is from the Holy Spirit and he should take Mary as his wife.

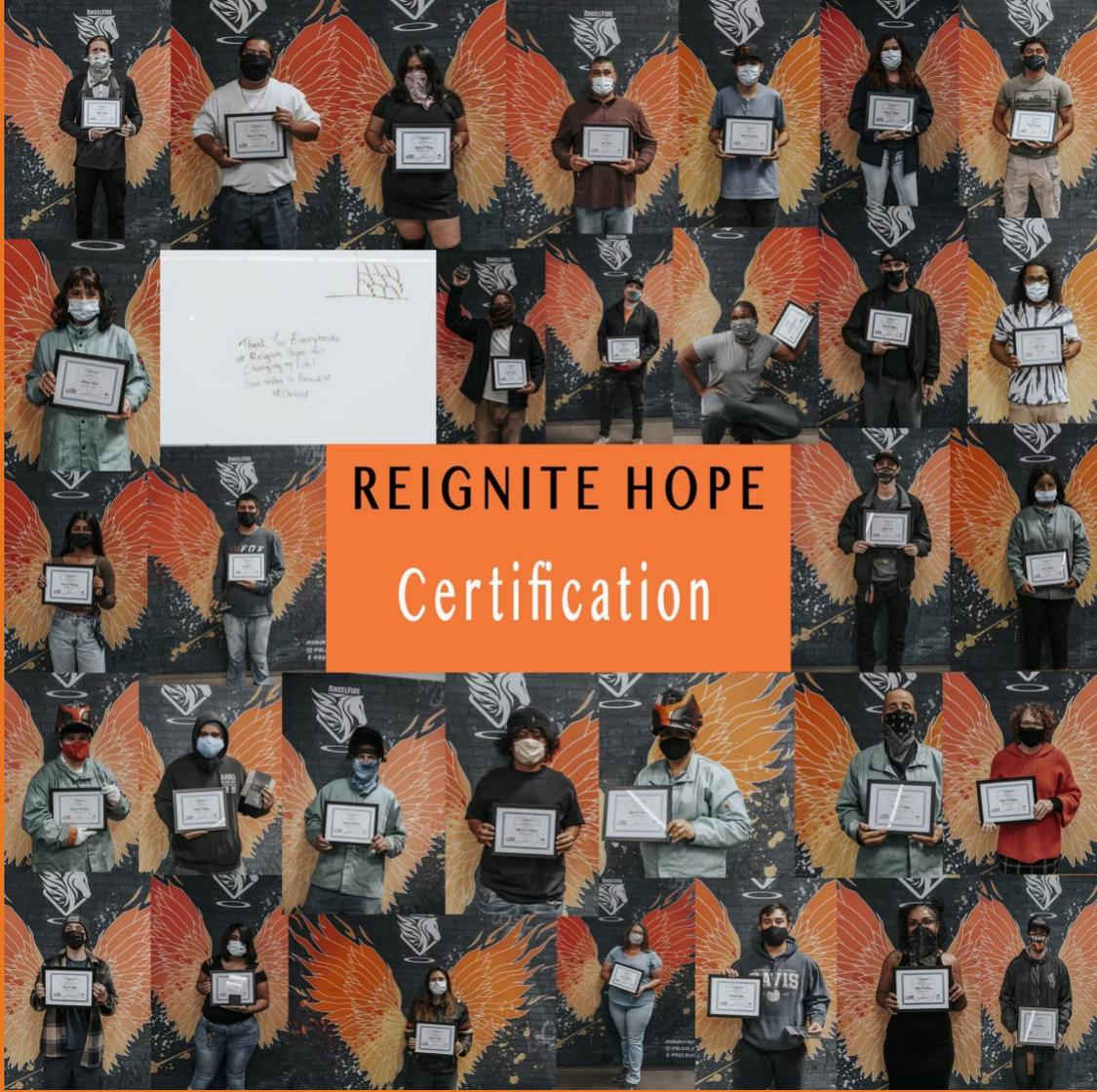
Certainly no one would have blamed him for leaving her at that point, but Joseph was willing to trust God in spite of the circumstances, which has always seemed to me to be a real mark of maturity in a Christian--*embracing God's plan for your life even when it's not the life you expected.*

This story of Joseph and Mary also reminds me of a modern-day version which happened back in the 1990s. Darrell Gwynn was a young and famous race car driver who was engaged to be married to a young lady named Lisa Hurst—a former Orange Bowl queen. Life couldn't have seemed better. He had just set a world elapsed time record in Houston Texas and was making some exhibition runs in England when he crashed and suffered a major spinal cord injury which left him paralyzed from the neck down and he would be in a wheelchair for the rest of his life.

So now Lisa is faced with shocking news just like Joseph and also faced with the same dilemma—do I go through with the marriage? She's young, she's beautiful and has her whole life ahead of her. Everyone wondered, can she really give all of that up to spend her life as a full-time caregiver? After all, this wasn't the life she was expecting. What would she decide?

Well, it turns out that she had fallen in love with Darrell and not his body! Her love was the best kind—unconditional. Her love fits the best definition of love I know of--“*Love is an unconditional commitment that I make to an imperfect person in which I surrender myself to bring that relationship to God's intended purpose.*” That's kind of love we all want! That's the kind of love God extends to us (**Romans 5:8**). That's kind of love God wants us to extend to others (**John 13:34**).

So, almost ten years ago God started Reignite Hope and we made a commitment to try and demonstrate God's love to as many lives as possible—loving them with the gospel and loving them with job training. And ten years later, we're now doing that with hundreds of lives each year! So as 2020 comes to an end, I want to thank the dozens of volunteers and those of you who financially support and pray for Reignite Hope. Thank you for living not a self-centered life, **but** an others-centered life. I really like that last **but!**



## Certification Day by the American Welding Society

It was so exciting to see the joy on the faces of our students as all 51 of them passed their welding certification test administered by an inspector from the American Welding Society. The welding lab was filled with happy tears, high-fives and words of gratitude.

We are thrilled that all our students passed their welding certification test. To date, 100% of our students have passed the skills test. This class was no exception even though the class was 6 weeks shorter than our usual class due to our implementation of COVID protocols..

Che Chancy, an American Welding Society inspector, volunteers his time to certify our students. He has been such a blessing to ReIGNITE Hope for so many years. We are so grateful for him.

In light of COVID, we staggered the students throughout the day to make sure we could ensure social distancing and of course everyone was wearing masks.

As each class arrived, Che shared his words of wisdom and answered any questions our students had about cert day and the welding profession. Che owns his own business as well as being a welding instructor at LA Trade Tech so he's a wealth of knowledge

It was so exciting to see the joy on the faces of our students as all 51 of them passed their welding certification test.. The welding lab was filled with happy tears, high-fives and words of gratitude as they realized they passed their skills exam and received their graduation diplomas for completing the class.

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Thank you for all your faithful prayers and support. Please pray for our students as we actively try and place them in good-paying jobs in the weeks ahead. As Steve likes to say, it's better to be saved than certified. Please also pray that the words they heard about our Lord throughout the semester will seep deeply into their hearts and minds and change their lives for eternity.

I'll keep you all updated and if you would like to contact me I can be reached by email at [steve@reignitehope.com](mailto:steve@reignitehope.com) or by phone at (310) [847-0593](tel:847-0593). Please let me know if there is any way that I can be praying for you during these challenging days in which we are living.

Have a Merry Christmas!

Love you All,



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**ReIGNITE Hope**

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