

# MAC

## Greetings from MAC Ministries!

I'm excited for this newsletter to finally come to fruition. It has been a blessing to pause and reflect over the past months how the Ministry has adjusted to a new normal.

As I have shared with many of you, my schedule did not slow down through the quarantine, in one sense, it seemed to increase. Many folks had more available time and willingness to connect virtually. Over the past 60 days, those virtual meetings have started slowly transitioning back to in-person meetings. MAC Ministries is now back at full speed with 4 small groups weekly along with individual meetings (averaging 50+ men a week).

In this newsletter, you'll hear from my friend Hank Manning. Hank and I have known each other most of our lives but it's been the past three years that we have really connected. Reading Hank's story was a reminder to me how God continues to use former relationships in my life to be a catalyst for discipleship. The groups and meetings that we share together really are a time of worship in studying His word and entering into prayer together. This has always been the platform within MAC and an effective tool in making disciples. Hank shares some great insight (especially for me) in how God reaches men who are normally not reached through church.

As one of my board members commented, "a goal of the ministry is to connect individuals to Christ, to develop their own relationship with Christ. Hank's story does a great job focusing on the Ministry and the community it creates." It's through this Bible study community that God has molded and shaped Hank (and 15+ others) to recognize a call in being intentional to share the good news of Jesus Christ.

My focus with men continues to be at the foundational level. Helping men, like Hank, uproot and rebuild their foundation cemented on a growing relationship with Jesus, is the bulk of discipleship.

During this time of covid-19, MAC Ministries reached its 15 year anniversary (September 1). Although, it came and went, it left me grateful

# News

MEN ABIDING IN CHRIST MINISTRIES

modeling + multiplying discipleship

Fall 2020



for what God continues to do daily through this Ministry. In praising Him, I also want to thank you for your continued support, especially over the past 6 months. Your blessings have not gone unnoticed as your donations have enabled me to remain available and accessible.

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Greetings from MAC Ministries!	1
Foundations and Spiritual Maturity	1
Q&A with Hank Manning	2
Mexico Update	3
Chairman's Update	3
A Note From Bridget's Heart	4

## Foundations and Spiritual Maturity

*"Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. <sup>25</sup> The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. <sup>26</sup> But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. <sup>27</sup> The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash."*

— Matthew 7: 24-27 =

**Over the past year,** I have facilitated studies on the Sermon on the Mount with two different groups. Each group spent approximately 4-5 months going through the study and one thing that I have noticed with each group is the intentional focus of discussion in response to Jesus' closing comments to this section in the Bible found in Matthew chapter 7.

If you are familiar with the Scripture found in Matthew chapters 5-7, you will know that Jesus uses chapter 7 to emphasize the importance of application to His teachings from the previous chapters. What makes chapter 7 unique is that within these Scriptures there is an underlying invitation for each person to

be intentional with processing and personalizing what Jesus is saying as not to be guilty of dismissing any part of it. For it is a direct challenge to evaluate your relationship with Jesus.

Jesus is calling for a decision that intentionally reflects the state of the heart as opposed to the state of the moment. I normally navigate the discussion inviting the group to wrestle with their obedience to Jesus using the following questions:

1. Will I apply to my life what Jesus says about what it means to follow Him and be a part of His Kingdom?
2. Is my relationship with Christ reflective of the fruit that is being bared in my life and when I speak "Lord, Lord" does Jesus respond because He knows me through the relationship we have?

The four verses in Matthew 7: 24-27 (captured above) provide some well-known and quotable statements about foundations and spiritual maturity. First, what does a foundation of faith in Jesus Christ look like? And second, how does your foundation reflect your spiritual maturity in Jesus.

The foundation represents the role that Jesus plays in our lives. For the house represents our life, which consists of relationships. All relationships, not just at home (where we tend to equate our house) but at work, *continues next page*

## Q&A with Hank Manning

### How did you meet Pat and get introduced to Men Abiding in Christ (MAC) Ministries?

I have known Pat since we grew up together in church. From Bible Lotto to Explorers, Pat has been and continues to be a down to earth minister for those of us who believe but don't have a dedicated spot on the pews. I reconnected with him and we met for breakfast to catch up and began a dialogue about the various elements of my life which I felt were beyond my control. I accepted his offer to attend a small men's bible study and ended up hosting a handful of business men and friends at my office off the Square. Finding God over coffee and a conference room table was the start of my path towards improving my faith.

### Why did you start attending the Bible study?

One of the primary reasons I wanted to be a part of the Bible study was a desire to reconnect with God and continue my search for some grace in my life. During my divorce and the period after the divorce, I felt alone and lost. Attending Pat's men's group provided me with a group of friends and Christian discussion that allowed me some peace. I had withdrawn from my past social circles

and, although I had a number of "friends"- these friends were not grounded in a desire to improve their lives by sharing time, truths and trials in a meaningful way. A secondary reason for attending is the benefits I have received from the group. Although I didn't know it at the time, Bible study became an intellectual outlet for me. As a believer, discussing the Bible in detail was a discovery of the stories and texts in the book. As a former teacher and literature major in college, the ability to hear other analyses of the verses sparked a forgotten enjoyment of questioning the context of the written word. How does it apply to the time it was written? What does it mean to me today? What is the purpose of the inclusion in the Bible? For whom was it written? Why did this story survive the test of time and what could be a deeper meaning beyond just the surface? Lastly, I really enjoy alternating between Old Testament and New Testament by season. The Old Testament studies refreshed my memory of the biblical stories from my youth. The New Testament, more specifically - the Gospels, opened up a brand new orientation of what it means to be Christian.

### What's your take-away from being a part of the Thursday morning Bible study?

I believe that learning and knowing are two different things. For me, "relearning" some of the "black and white" elements of faith was refreshing. However, as Matthew 7: 21-23

says, it is not if I know Jesus- but whether or not he knows me. I think that working with Pat and MAC Ministries has given me the confidence and desire to open up to my faith and let Jesus have a special place in my day to day life. Getting to really "know" God and sharing that with the other men whom I trust keeps me coming back.

### Why does a group, like our Thursday group, make it possible for men to grow in their faith?

I would say that there are two reasons that my faith has grown in our group. The first is the leadership of Pat. He opens our study with chats about everyday things- what team is playing MHS Friday

night, how are the kids, what's going on in the world, how's business, etc. This sets the table for everyone to share and allows the comics in the room a chance to shine. The second reason is that Bible study fellowship is my "church". When one or more of us is together, God is there- without a need for coat and tie. I used to feel guilty for not having a "home" church and attending more regularly (and know that I should), but I have grown to understand that the comradery of our group is my church. This where I feel that my spirit engages with my faith. For me, studying the Bible with MAC Ministries feels more "organic"- like the way that God intended for his word to be shared. This is not a bunch of guys huddled around a table with sleep in their eyes once a week; the group study is the most concentrated and consecrated hall of worship there is.

### As your faith grows, where do you see yourself spiritually in a couple of years? How do you think God is shaping you through knowing Him?

In terms of my Christian growth, I am moving towards both service and giving. I do my best to support MAC Ministries with a place to meet (the group has grown past my office conference room), monetary donations, coffee, donuts- whatever the need may be. This is a physical way for me to give back to the group and help others. Through my time with Pat, my spirit has matured and feels "just right". Not like Goldilocks and the Three Bears, more like a nice suit that has hung in the closet for too long because the coat was too big- my faith is filling out the coat and it feels good to wear it "out and about". Most recently I have felt a call to leadership: to speak out and up for my faith as well as invite others to share in the positive experience that Bible study provides. In the past, I would often keep silent when someone appeared to have a spiritual need. Now, I take the time to share what I think and the benefits of losing sleep to bond with God and the members of our group- thus the reason for my desire to write this article. Lastly, I am filled with gratitude that God, at long last, has given me true friends for life through Pat and the success of the Thursday Morning Traton basement crew. The desire and enjoyment from being a part of these moments has changed me. I would expect that change to continue for as long as I can limp, wheel, Zoom my way into Bible study.



## Mexico Update

**As you can guess,** I have been unable to travel to Mexico in 2020. However, we have stayed closely connected through Zoom calls happening about every three weeks.

Early on, Renacimiento and Casa Samuel were not directly affected by the pandemic. That changed in September. I am sad to share that Marina Sandoval Espinosa died in mid-September from complications with Covid-19. Marina was a long-time member of the Casa Samuel team who was a constant presence with all of our trips. Since her passing, Pastor Eva and Pastor Aldo have both tested positive and recovered from Covid-19. I share this news so you can join us in keeping our friends in prayer during these trying times.

Each June, my home church collects funds to provide backpacks to each graduating fifth

grader in the local elementary school in Renacimiento. We partner with Casa Samuel to share our congratulations along with encouragement as they transition to middle school. One of the challenges in this community is keeping kids engaged with school which gets tougher through the middle school years.

Similar to the States, graduation ceremonies were canceled in June which also canceled the backpack distribution. As we talked with Casa Samuel, they mentioned that one of the ways they could support the students this Fall during virtual learning was to purchase a copy machine and tablets. Many of the children in the community faced a lack of technical



Marina Sandoval Espinosa

infrastructure in their own homes. A copy machine(s) would allow the team at Casa Samuel to print out daily assignments and lesson plans and distribute to all the kids. The tablets would allow for the kids to connect with their teachers through tutoring sessions provided in the Casa Samuel center.

I am excited to share that we were able to send triple the expected amount of donations in September. This

brought a much needed material blessing along with an abundant spiritual blessing for this team in a small community outside Monterrey, MX to experience the love and sovereignty of God's grace in helping equip them for ministry. To God be the glory!

## Chairman's Update. by Scott McLain

**I pray that as you read** this newsletter you find yourself safe and healthy as the COVID-19 pandemic continues to wreak havoc. Many find the current divisive political and social unrest, combined with a worldwide viral outbreak, to be very unsettling. I hope the articles in this newsletter updating you on some of the work of the ministry help to serve as a reminder that our God is in control and our task is to continue the work that He has prepared in advance for us! Through the update on our Mexico partnership, an article on small group study

participation from Hank Manning, and Pat's article on building foundations I hope you will see Hebrews 10:24-25 in action, which tells us to "consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another..."

Thank you to all our prayer partners that continue to lift up the ministry, and I want you to know that as a Board we are lifting you up in prayer as well.



We are also grateful for the continued financial support, particularly in this most difficult financial time. While we have seen some changes in giving and are aware of some partners whose income has suffered considerably this year, we are thankful for the continued support we are receiving. This December we will once again conduct our annual matching fundraiser, which provides a significant portion of our annual budget. I hope that if you are able you will prayerfully consider participating with us in the matching fundraiser this year.

Yours in Christ,  
Scott McLain, MAC Ministries Board Chairman

## Spiritual Maturity

*continued from cover*

neighborhood, school, church, extended family. All these relationships make up one's life. While the rains and the winds represent hard times that each of us encounter daily, this also includes spiritual attacks that try to weaken our foundation (relationship and dependency on Jesus).

There are two types of people, those who hear and apply His teachings and those who don't. Jesus says one person is regarded as wise based only upon the existence of a relationship with Him (He doesn't seem to elaborate on any other aspect of one's life affluence or success, etc). Jesus equates it with one who builds his house (life) on a

rock (on a definitive relationship with Jesus) as opposed to one who builds it upon sand (one that does not include this relationship or one that includes this relationship along with other priorities...i.e. one with two masters).

As you read, Jesus' focus is not on the appearance, or even, their worth, but their foundation. Jesus is most concerned with one's heart and mind and not the outside because it's the heart and mind that tends to be one's driver. Ask yourself "where do you go for insight; where do you turn when seeking answers or guidance, knocking, and opening doors?"

Just like where a branch connects to a vine, there must not be any breaks, cracks, or soft

spots in the foundation. In fact, the house must be intricately intertwined onto the foundation as this enables the foundation to completely support and enable growth in one's life.

I'm reminded right now of the parable of the four seeds (Matthew 13: 1-9). Each is the same or identical seed sown by the one farmer. The difference is the soil (or foundation). Three of the seeds encounter foundational problems. That's 75% for you numbers minded folk! Foundational work is the bulk of discipleship and with those high percentages, the work is great!

First seek to build upon a foundation of truth that cannot be moved. How is your foundation?

PMB #104  
1000 Whitlock Avenue, Suite 320  
Marietta, GA 30064

## Will you help us multiply disciples?

*MAC Ministries is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization funded by individuals and churches who value this ministry in the community.*

We invite you to participate in supporting this ministry through your financial contributions:

- Online through Paypal at [www.macministries.net](http://www.macministries.net)
- Send a check payable to MAC Ministries at the address above

## A Note From Bridget's Heart by Bridget MacPherson

*And on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.*

— Matthew 16:18

**Some of you** may know that for the past three years I taught a "Sunday School" like class of 3rd-5th graders on Wednesday afternoons. I always enjoyed being with the kids and watching them begin to understand their faith. The class is structured so that parents drop off their kids and pick them up an hour later. I did so with our kids. My parents did it with me and my siblings. It's just the way it was done. As a parent and as a teacher, I couldn't help but think that something was lost in this format of kids only.

This Fall I've been given the opportunity to facilitate a new class. The class gathers online through Zoom, but includes the entire family. Each month explores a different topic of the faith and provides opportunities for families to incorporate practices of faith in their homes and daily lives. The foundation of the class is built on the idea that the family is the domestic church and that parents have the

primary responsibility to share their faith with their children.

For those of us who grew up in a household where faith was shared with love and authenticity, this concept is natural. I am blessed to have parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins who modeled their faith in ways that were easy for me to understand as a child. As an adult, I feel very comfortable sharing my faith with my children. I also understand that this is not always the case. Many of my friends grew up going to church every Sunday, maybe occasionally, maybe at Christmas and Easter and still feel uncomfortable that they are not "doing it right." It can be intimidating. Especially when you're in a group of other adults who seem to be so much more "spiritually mature." Therefore, when it comes time to pass the faith on to the next generation, it may seem easier to let the experts take over.

In His plan for salvation of the world, God sent His Son to be born and live in a family. Jesus learned the Bible Stories at the feet of Mary and Joseph. Through the examples of His parents, Jesus learned what it was like to hear God and obey. Can you imagine what

it felt like to be Mary, the Mother of God, raising her son to listen and obey? Just as God chose parents for Jesus, He chose parents for each one of us. He chose Pat and I to be parents of our children. God has confidence in us because we have the Holy Spirit. Because we depend on God, we are able to share our faith with our children.

Please be encouraged by the role you have in the lives of your children, grandchildren or any children that you have a relationship with. Remember that God has chosen you for a holy purpose. God believes in you and the gates of Hades will not prevail against you.



Mary, Liam, Rose, Sean, James at Camden County HS