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***We're bringing people together in Rockwood to ensure that no one is invisible and that everyone has access to food, freedom, and forgiveness.***

**This is part of the PREVENTION side of our anti-trafficking efforts, dovetailing nicely with our Integrated Community Transformation mission.**

**We envision Rockwood becoming a community where children are less vulnerable to being trafficked and adults do not want to traffick kids.**



***Communities like Rockwood will not be transformed unless individuals in it are transformed first. Phil and Kristina represent the kind of transformation we pray to happen throughout Rockwood. Because of your partnership, lives like these are being changed!***

*Phil and Kristina are a couple I have grown to know and love. Jesus has really invaded their lives and made them new creatures. I was privileged to do pre-marital counseling with them and marry them in March of this year. For a year-and-a-half, they have been in my adult Sunday School, marriage classes, financial management class, and the Connecting With Jesus discipleship course. Recently, I sat down to interview them, and received their permission to share their story with you.*

**Scott:** How long have you guys been following Jesus?

**Both:** About a year-and-a-half!

**Scott:** You both started at the same time?

**Both:** Yes, since the same day in January 2018.

**Kristina:** Started on our darkest day in our relationship. Phil broke his back and I relapsed (into drug abuse). Everything was super dark and I was thinking, "Something has to change, something has to give. Maybe we need to go to church." When his mom got to the hospital he told her that they wanted to find a church to attend (she is a believer). This was a Friday. That night she told us, "I have the perfect church for you." Sunday we were sitting in As Is Church.

**Phil:** I was an angry hateful man...mad at God and mad at the world in general. When I was in prison I really wanted to kill people. I was doing 9 years in prison, partially for a crime I did not do (and partially for a crime I did--assaulting police officers). I was in prison at 18 and for most of my adult life...I am 30 now. Being in prison just fueled my anger and hate and I wanted to blame it on everyone else but me. My dad was an addict and my parents divorced, and I never really dealt with the things that happened during my childhood. When I went to prison my anger and hatred got worse and I blamed everything on God and the world.

**Scott:** So you had some kind of belief in God?

**Phil:** I was raised religious until my parents got divorced.

**Scott:** You said you wanted to kill people...did you ever kill anyone?

**Phil:** No but I was a violent person. I used to get beat a lot by my dad...with his fists, not a belt or a spoon.

**Scott:** You mentioned your dad was an addict...

**Phil:** Yeah, drugs and alcohol.

**Scott:** Did his addictions influence you to become an addict?

**Phil:** No, I was never an addict. I used drugs from time to time but never became addicted.

**Kristina:** It was all darkness. I was born addicted to heroin. I was either homeless or in and out of foster care until I was in second or third grade. When my mom did get us back she was an alcoholic and abusive, especially to me because I had innocently talked at school about my "daddy" hiding guns under the bed and being a bank robber, and he ended up in prison. So my mom and I were always enemies. She was abusive, her boyfriends were abusive. She sold her body for money and had sex with men in the hotel room where we stayed (right in front of me and my siblings). I was homeless most of my high school years...dropped out my senior year because I had nowhere to live.

At that point I was determined to never be like my mom. I worked hard and went to college and got my Master's Degree and a job, and was really proud of myself that I was not like my mom--I was working hard, taking care of my son, not addicted to drugs, but I was also very angry at God. I remember being 12 or 13, and even younger, and going to church and being told in Sunday School how to live right and I would try so hard to be nice to kids at school or share with my brother and do good things so that God would answer my prayers when I asked him to help my mom stop drinking. When I was 13 I finally decided there must not be a God because why was He letting all this happen in my life? And if there was a God He must hate me, and that was how I continued to think (either there is no God or there is a God that hates me). When I was in my 30's, after being so proud all my life up until then that I was not an addict or alcoholic like my mother (kinda proud and self-righteous like the older brother in the Prodigal Son parable), I began a relationship with a man who was very abusive and daily beat me and exploited me and got me addicted to drugs...6 long years of darkness...I developed a real anger and

Eventually, I got out of the relationship, went to Co Dependents Anonymous and started working two jobs, but my life was so dark and there was no love and I was just accepting that this is my life. Phil and I started dating.

**Scott:** How did you meet?

**Kristina:** Online. He was just out of prison and hurt and not trusting. It was difficult for me to trust people and did not trust him in the beginning.

**Phil:** Especially since I showed up for our first date with an ankle bracelet.

**Kristina:** In some ways my life did begin to change. I quit doing drugs and got sober but there was still so much darkness (that I used to blame on the drugs and alcohol, but now that I was clean and sober I couldn't blame them), and our relationship was so dysfunctional and chaotic.

**Scott:** You mentioned earlier that the turning point for you both came when Phil broke his back. How did he break his back?

**Phil:** We had had a fight because she discovered that I had been cheating on her, and I left the house walking through the snow and ice. I slipped and fell on my back.

**Kristina:** Up to this point I had really been trusting Phil...

**Scott:** And that betrayed your trust?

**Kristina:** Right...at that point I had every reason to never see him

**Phil:** I had actually cheated on her multiple times...

**Kristina:** I relapsed into drug abuse again...Phil was begging me not to leave him...I was thinking, "I can't do this..." So I was sitting in the hospital room and thinking how dark, and difficult, and out-of-control our life was, trying to think what we could do differently and "go to church" is what popped into my mind.

**Phil:** On the first day in church, Eldridge (our family pastor) was sharing his testimony about how he was a womanizer and a drug addict and about how Jesus changed his life. This was the week Kristina had caught me cheating on her, and she was addicted to drugs.

**Kristina:** It was like Eldridge was speaking directly to Phil. I was not moved the first day. I just wanted to get it over with and get out of there, but I looked over and Phil was just weeping. I guess that's what softened my heart to come back. The next week Jason (one of the pastors) shared his testimony about all the foster homes he grew up in and the struggles he had--it was like he was talking just to me. And I cried! And every week for that whole series it was like God was speaking directly to us! We hadn't talked together about following Jesus yet but we were talking about what each of us thought about the church service each week. And then we started going to your Bible study on the book of Acts, and our lives just started to change.

**Scott:** How *has* your life changed since you started following Jesus?

**Phil:** I would say in every aspect. I can't think of a way that it is the same.

**Phil:** Well, I don't want to hurt people anymore.

**Scott:** And what I know is, not only do you NOT want to hurt people anymore, you want to...

**Phil:** Help people

**Scott:** Yes! And I have seen that through you volunteering with the youth group, inviting people to church, giving to the mission trip fund, and other ways too.

**Kristina:** And even his attitude about people, like the way he thinks about addicts and homeless people has really changed.

**Phil:** Yeah, I used to hate the homeless people.

**Kristina:** Now he goes and buys cheeseburgers for them! So much has changed for us. The more we know God the more we can trust Him and trust people. In our finances, I was always good at making money but not managing it. Now I know that everything is God's and I am just a manager of HIS money... (crying)...

**Phil:** My trust in God is growing...there are times when I don't have appointments set up for clients, and if I don't work I don't make money, and for a few seconds I might worry about it but mostly instead of worrying that we won't have enough money (like I used to) I just pray. I know that the worry I start to feel is the devil attacking me and I push that out and pray. It's weird because usually whenever that happens, then right afterward I get multiple clients THAT day! No matter what happens, though, it is just a



**Kristina:** I pray really hard when he is out riding his bike because he does crazy stuff and could really get hurt....another way I have changed is I have never really liked myself--I never have, and I have always been judgmental toward others--maybe to make myself feel better about me. But that is changing and now I am learning to find good in every person. Every day God is breaking down walls and helping soften my heart.

**Scott:** You guys were baptized in April on Easter Sunday, right?

**Both:** Right.

**Kristina:** I just want to say thank you because I think you were the 3rd or 4th preacher we heard at church and then we started attending your Acts Bible study. I don't think I would have come to faith or be following the Lord as fast without the classes and things you have taught us.

**Phil:** Yeah, all the different classes and...

**Kristina:** There has been so much shame in my life...so many dirty things...I never thought I could belong at church...not good enough...not worthy. Something you've done that I want to thank you for is helping me see that it is DONE. Jesus loves me and it doesn't matter. There is so much light and joy and love in our life now.

**Scott:** You guys are such a big encouragement to me just because of the way I see you follow Jesus. You guys are beautiful people and amongst my very favorite people to be with. When I think about you guys (crying) I think about Jesus because

through it. Thank you for sharing your story and giving me permission to share it with others.

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## **PRAISE AND PRAYER REQUESTS**

- \* Praise God that even though we recently lost \$350/month in support, God stepped in and GOBSMACKED us with a very generous gift from long-time supporters/friends, and then just today a generous donation from someone we don't even know. GOD IS OUR SOURCE! We praise Him for His provision, and we thank those of you who allow Him to meet our needs through YOU.
  
  - \* Our son Kyle will be visiting us from Greece for a few weeks, starting at the end of this month! He is finishing up his Master's Degree, so will be working hard on that every day, but we are grateful for whatever time we can spend together.
  
  - \* Vicki and I were privileged to teach a 6-hour seminar on parenting to a group of women from a local residential treatment center.
  
  - \* Our short-term mission team is raising the last of the support we need to bless the ministries and missionaries we will serve in September. In May, 2 of our 5 team members needed knee surgery. Please pray for their speedy healing.
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updates, or feel free to click "unsubscribe" at the bottom of this page.

\*\* Team Ministry (<https://onecollective.org/community/rockwood-usa>)

**THANKS AGAIN FOR PARTNERING WITH US IN THE GOSPEL THROUGH YOUR PRAYERS AND/OR FINANCIAL INVESTMENTS! WE APPRECIATE YOU!**

**Tax-deductible donations may be made to "One Collective" (with an enclosed note expressing your intended designation--i.e., "for Scott and Vicki McCracken's account"), and sent to:**

**One Collective**

2155 Point Boulevard, Suite 200  
Elgin, IL 60123

**For online giving, go to: <https://give.onecollective.org/>**

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As you know from previous communication, the Lord has led us to put together **a small team** from our church to go **serve at the refugee ministry in Austria** that Vicki and I helped start in 1987. ***The Lord has already provided ALL the finances we need for air travel, meals, accommodations, and One Collective's portion!*** We are trusting Him to bring in the remainder of what we need for some cross-cultural training and ministry supplies for the missionaries we will visit. Thank you for your prayers for us as we prepare our hearts, minds, and relationships.

***If the Lord would lead you to invest in this opportunity, you can make a tax-deductible donation to "As Is Church" with an indication it is for the Missions Trip Offering. You can mail to:***

***As Is Church***

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Portland, Oregon 97206

***Or for online giving, click [here](#)***

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