

A Chance to Change

When Queen S. Mims began Re-Entry Ministry, she struggled with feelings of inadequacy. But she said yes to God anyway.

Although she had been saved only a short while, in December 1978, Queen S. Mims began to sense that the Lord was stirring her to seek Him for a specific purpose. God had a special calling with her name on it—a vision that slowly began materializing as she fasted, prayed and studied the Word.

“I wanted to get close enough to hear His voice clearly,” she said. “In the process, I developed a ‘yes’ in my spirit. I began to get excited about the call I yet had to understand.”

As the Lord began to open up the vision, Queen at first thought He had the wrong person. Indeed, she’d never had any personal experience with addiction. Yet, it became apparent that God was calling her to minister healing to women who were not as fortunate—women who had been ensnared by addiction to drugs and alcohol.

Many of the women she was ministering to were coming to Christ. The problem then was where to send them next in order to complete the process of restoration? She says, “Finally, the thought came to me, take them home.”

In 1980, Re-Entry Ministry Inc., was founded when Queen converted her home and began taking women in. The first resident was Hazel, a woman who had been a heroin addict for nine years. When she was rescued, Hazel weighed only 80 pounds, and her body was badly scarred from using needles to inject the drugs she craved.

Queen trusted God for the tools to bring about Hazel’s deliverance. She recalls: “It was amazing how God gave me Psalms 18 to read to her as she began to hallucinate....The Word

of God calmed her down and she would fall into a peaceful sleep. This went on for about 10 days.”

Hazel was only the first of many women who would come through the doors of Queen’s home. Soon the word was getting around that there was a place in Bridgeport, Connecticut, where women could be helped to overcome their addictions. And they began coming from across the country and other parts of the world to be set free. Queen says, “The police, the fire department, hospitals, everyone referred women to Re-Entry.”

MINISTRY FEATURES

Re-Entry Ministry consists of several components:

1. In the Primary Program, women are taken in and given an opportunity to regain control of their lives, in order to prepare to re-enter society.
2. The AfterCare Program is for those who have finished the initial phase, but are not ready to move on.
3. The Extended AfterCare Program serves to reunite mothers with children, while they continue to live on the ministry property, receiving the support they need for this critical transition.
4. Restoration is the ministry program for those who have been through the various phases, but are still in need of help following a recurrence of addiction.
5. The Youth and Children’s Ministry and the DayCare programs are the beginning phases of the ministry’s plan to establish a home for children in the future.
6. . (Pregnant Addicted Women) is a ministry tailored to the specific physical, emotional and spiritual requirements of these special mothers-to-be. Queen refers to what she does as “ministry, simple ministry.” But the women who are privileged to live at Re-Entry Ministry consider her efforts miraculous. From Hazel, the first resident, to Fontain, who now serves as Queen’s assistant, the change to each woman’s life is amazing.

Fontain Hawkins, the ministry's administrator, battled addiction for 17 years. After serving time in prison and being shot and left for dead, Fontain's life was turned around when she met Queen.

"God picked her up," Queen remembers. "She was at the Walter Hoving Home [in New York] when I met her. We got to be friends, and I asked her to come to my program as my secretary.

"[Fontain] enrolled and finished business school and worked part time. She gave up everything to work for the ministry...She's dedicated and has been an intricate part of the ministry for more than 20 years."

FROM PITY TO POWER

Most of the women have been in prison, and share horrible stories of childhood substance abuse problems and molestation. Many of them turned to drugs and alcohol to mask the rejection they experienced at the hands of parents or others who should have cared for them.

Queen reminds the women: "No matter what they did to you, they didn't kill you. You still have some of yourself left. You can't wallow in self-pity for the rest of your life. You have to talk about it, and then you have to be able to shake it off and place it under your feet because that's where Satan should be."

Queen leads by example, and models what she teaches the other women. Along the way, she has experienced her own miracles. One in particular has to do with her family.

Although she started the ministry along with her husband, Arthur, the couple separated in 1994 and divorced in 1995. Nine years later, their story took an unexpected turn. "The Lord strategically put us back together," she says. "We were remarried on June 5, 2004." Today, Arthur is an active and vital part of the ministry.

EQUIPPED FOR THE CALLING

Queen has seen the provision of God in so many ways. She has been granted an extraordinary gift of compassion beyond her natural leanings. She explains this by saying, "I learned that I could be servant to the people of God, and that God knows how to help me love what I do." She's also been given an ability to cope with change and challenges, such as the kind the ministry is facing at the moment.

Recently, Queen was notified by the city of Bridgeport that the property the ministry has called home for more than 26 years is needed for a new school. Though the ministry has been reimbursed, the amount given them will not be sufficient to retrofit the new facilities without their having to make serious adjustments in the ministry's operations.

"We're in the process of buying property that will need renovating," she says. Modifying the buildings will be a costly undertaking of approximately \$2 million. When she first sensed that change was coming, Queen recalls: "[God] wrapped a cloak of peace around me before I even knew what was happening. When I received the letter, that cloak tightened around me, and now I am walking in peace."

Queen and her staff maintain their trust in the God who has brought them through trials in the past. They believe He is in control and orchestrating the move, positioning them to help even more women find freedom in Christ.

Re-Entry Ministry is sustained by donations. They receive no state or federal funds. "Supporting ourselves has been a faith walk," she says. But it is a price she's willing to pay rather than change what has proven to be an effective outreach. To date, the ministry has housed more than 1,500 residents, with a cure rate of 86 percent.

"I can't run a program without the power of God in operation," says the humble, soft-spoken leader. "God keeps these women,"

she says. "They are the nicest people you ever wanted to meet."

Brenda J. Davis is a former editor of SpiritLed Woman.

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