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remained. As Mark got with the brothers they challenged him to put his addiction before God. Mark was prideful and turned everything back on the brothers.

During Jackie's studies, however, she was so inspired and convicted that she quit smoking that day and shook up the family! It was obvious to her that smoking was defiling her body. Three days later, both Mark and his son were inspired and now they have stopped for over a month. Jackie shared that she had smoked every day for 15 years, since she was a teen. This truly was the last frontier for her in the area of addiction. Thanks be to God for the faith and help from spiritual people in their lives.

As the scripture says in Malachi 4:6, Jesus came to turn the hearts of their children to their parents and their parents to their children. Truly we were seeing this happen before our eyes in God's church. Mark Jr. came out and was instantly in love with God. As he studied the Bible with Aaron Domingo and the rest of the campus ministry, he realized that he needed to let go of his worldly relationship and give everything to God. His baptism on March 15, 2015 was an amazing miracle and moved his dad's heart like nothing else (watch video).

The following day, after seeing the miracle with his son, Mark, Sr., had a breakthrough of heart and a watershed moment that changed everything. Now he wasn't just "doing" the right thing but God had softened his heart and opened his eyes and heart for God, Jesus, and the kingdom.

On March 22, 2015, Mark was restored to the fellowship and had the privilege of baptizing his wife, Jackie Avila (watch video). Mark's oldest daughter Ashley was there and has begun studying the Bible with the campus ministry and is so excited to connect with God. His youngest son, Dylan, was there. He was truly moved by the experience and desires to study the Bible and be connected to the teen ministry. The whole time Mark Sr.'s parents have been watching him, too. His mother came out to the Women's Day event and was there for both baptisms and his restoration.

One of the moments that touched our hearts was the sharing during Jackie's baptism. Mark Jr. and his sister Ashley both called Jackie their "mom." This is such a miracle, and God is so amazing, because she is being a mom to Mark's three children. God is also opening up doors with her three biological children that she had lost due to her abuse of alcohol and drugs. They are so grateful to God and his grace, as well as the disciples in their family group: Abraham & Kelly, Javier, Alfonso & Lulu, Chevi & Vivian, Gabriel, Jasmine, the Desert Cities Campus Ministry, and the whole church!

Please continue to pray for the Avila family to be faithful to the end and to impact many other families for God! Truly this story is what the good news of Jesus is all about! To God be the glory!

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Shine! European Arts Gathering
Bracknell, Berkshire England
May 2-3, 2015

Festival de las Americas 2015
Los Angeles, CA, USA
May 22-24, 2015

2015 Southeast Conference
Greenvilla, South Carolina, USA
September 4-6, 2015

ICOC Delegates Meeting
Montego Bay, Jamaica
October 13-16, 2015

Steps of Jesus & the Apostles
Israel, Greece, Turkey, Italy
October 17-31, 2015

North American Discipleship Summit
St. Louis, Missouri, USA
July 7-10, 2016

CONNECTING DISCIPLES IN CHURCHES AROUND THE WORLD

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KNN@DToday.org
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God Brings Families Together in the Desert Cities Church

Scott Sweeney, Palm Desert, CA



Mark Avila was baptized in the East Region of the Los Angeles Church in October 1997 and faithful for four years, going through Chemical Recovery for alcohol abuse and having a life-changing experience. As time passed however, Satan got in his heart and Mark drifted back into alcohol abuse, which caused him to suffer many spiritual consequences, including leaving God and his church. There were other consequences, too, as he and his wife of nine years were divorced. His kids grew up in the church in Kid's Kingdom for seven years and were no longer close to God's kingdom.

Although this story seems dark, it is amazing how God never gives up on us and continues to bring us back even as we make bad decisions. Mark came back and got restored twice, in 2001 and 2010, but it never seemed to take hold of his heart. Mark stopped drinking in March 2009 as a result of a 12-step program, and started making progress back towards church and God's kingdom.

Mark met Jackie online through a 12-step program fellowship on Facebook in 2012. In July 2012, Jackie stopped drinking and using drugs and moved from Kentucky to Desert Hot Springs, CA for her 12-step recovery program and the start of a changed life. Mark and Jackie were married in December 2014. Mark came to the Desert Cities Church of Christ with Jackie and his family, and something was different this time. As Jackie was introduced to God and his kingdom for the first time she realized that although she had been clean and sober for two-and-a-half years and had gone through a 12 step program, she still felt lonely, isolated, and empty inside without God.

During the Bible studies and fellowship, there was radical honesty, openness, many tears, and much repentance. God opened up their hearts and brought their family back together. The whole family was smoking regularly, and after being able to quit alcohol and drugs, the smoking

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