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News Release

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The College of Biblical Studies-Houston hosts "Restorative Justice Houston 2014"

Houston, TX - May 14, 2014 - The College of Biblical Studies was host to more than 300 pastors and ministry leaders gathering to be informed and inspired to involve their churches and organizations in a movement that is experiencing unparalleled social, economic and spiritual impact upon our state.

Texas has the largest prison system in the country, Houston has one of the largest prisons and the Texas Department of Criminal Justice is the largest single employer in our state. The number of women being incarcerated is skyrocketing and Houston is among the nation's leaders in human trafficking activity. Both the social and economic implications are staggering.

Ironically, most pastors and ministry leaders in the greater Houston area have no real idea how all of this impacts their churches and people. A small number of our churches have some folks involved in prison ministry, but most do not understand the broader idea of "Restorative Justice" which includes everything from prevention methods to re-entry programs.

Restorative Justice Houston (RJH) was birthed out of an interest in creating a college level course on Prison Ministry methods. This grew into a "calling" of prison ministry leaders throughout Greater Houston and led to the first Restorative Justice event in May 2013. The mission of RJH is to "Serve local pastors by informing, educating and involving them in what the Lord is doing in the greater Houston area prison ministry arena."

Restorative Justice Houston 2014 took the RJH mission to a whole new level:

- **Jim Liske**, CEO of Prison Fellowship Ministries, recalled the WWII example

of the "Monuments Men", challenging the local churches to "get out in front of the Battle and restore God's artwork" (precious souls lost in the prison system).

- **Don Waybright**, Pastor, Love & Lead Ministry at Sugar Creek Baptist Church, addressed the impact of the organic house church movement; globally, locally, and in the prison system specifically for developing disciples.
- **Practical Workshops** were led by experienced ministry leaders representing several facets of restorative justice.
- **Powerful Testimonies** were shared by former inmates now living productive lives and giving back to the System that nurtured their freedom in Jesus Christ.
- **Helpful Resources** were made available by representatives of various ministries.

Those in attendance left not only informed and inspired but without excuse for not leading their flocks toward a life-changing involvement in Houston's restorative justice system.

"It was a joy to be with you in Houston and a thrill to see the way God is using [local leaders] to bring restoration. Thank you for your leadership and partnership... Blessings!" Jim Liske, CEO, Prison Fellowship Ministries

"The Restorative Justice event was riveting! Currently, the Spirit is sweeping across our prisons and creating revival. Since the event, my prayer is for that same movement to infiltrate our churches both locally and abroad." Jimmy Burnside, Pastor, The Branch Church

"A great day powered by the Spirit. I believe great things will come and the revival is near." Carol Vance, former Harris County district attorney and Chairperson of the Texas Board of Criminal Justice

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