



Talk of the Town

by Steve Matrazzo

Scripture among the spark plugs at auto repair shop

Imagine hanging out at an auto repair shop after closing with a man in grease-stained coveralls, another in shorts and a T-shirt and a third wearing a visor over long dreadlocks.

You might expect to see the caps being twisted off a few beer bottles as the men exchange bawdy jokes and speculate on why that blue Chevy keeps conking out.

Instead, they're sharing chunks of fresh watermelon and talking about psalms and epistles.

At 7 p.m. on Thursday night at J&K Automotive, it's time for Bible study.

When mechanics Billy Johnson and Rick Karol opened their repair shop in February 2008, they asked the Rev. Dred Scott, pastor of St. Matthew's United Methodist Church in Turner Station, to perform a blessing.

Johnson and Karol had met Scott at their previous place of employment, and he was an early patron of their new venture at the corner of North Point Road and Merritt Boulevard.

Shortly after he blessed their opening, the two asked him to lead a weekly Bible study.

Since then, Thursday night Bible study has been a part of J&K's regular



The Rev. Dred Scott (left) leads the Thursday-night Bible study at J&K Automotive, discussing Scripture with (from left) Ava Mantegna, Olga Miller, Billy Johnson, Destiny Karol and Rick Karol.

photo by Steve Matrazzo

"I've learned more of the Bible in this garage than I ever learned in church."

Billy Johnson, co-owner
J&K Automotive

schedule.

"Sometimes we have five people, sometimes we have 15," Karol said. "Some of them are people who don't go to any regular church. This is their church."

He said he had stopped attending church but has returned since the Bible studies renewed his faith. Johnson, too, says he had

her faith and that the small size of the group is an advantage.

"Like the Bible says, wherever there are two or three of us gathered, [Jesus] will be there with us."

Scott called the gatherings "a valuable, vital expression of the love of Christ."

He sees the effects of faith in the way Johnson and Karol run their business, and he thinks it has helped them succeed.

"They started on a foundation of faith, which expressed itself in their readiness to be kind to their customers," he said, and God has blessed their endeavors."

Both Johnson and Karol agreed, noting that, even in these difficult times, their business has grown.

"We had over 1,500 customers in a year and a half," Johnson said. "That can't be a coincidence."

He jokes that he and Karol might have a new venture on the horizon.

"If we can get enough people to start coming to Bible study, maybe we can start a J&K Church!"

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