

“Free In Deed”

The **Bi-Monthly** newsletter of Central California Jail/Prison Ministry

Volume 4 - July 2004 / Aug. 2004

“I Can Only Imagine”

In this 4th issue, we would like thinking on the concept of **Guilty as Charged**. Many people have a fear of being found guilty. However, when looking for forgiveness as offered by Christ, we can only receive forgiveness on those things we confess and repent of.



We must be found “**guilty as charged**” in order to receive forgiveness.

As we look at the empty cell pictured, imagine the empty hearts and hopes of the men and women that occupy or have occupied these facilities.

Now, imagine the emptiness of the cell as the emptiness of the sins in these individuals lives as they have realized guilt, repented, and asked forgiveness. Christ says He is faithful and just to forgive us when we have repented, turned away from our sins and given our lives to Christ.

Intentions & Wishes

We have gone to Bi-Monthly because there is too much to share. The intentions of this newsletter are to allow an understanding of jail & prison ministries. It is our intentions to get input from those incarcerated as well as those “free” to visit. Life experiences of the faith and fellowship from those locked up in the facilities are always desired to let others know of the value of “visitation”. I am certain that each of us have many stories of the miracles God has done in our lives.

Our wishes are that we would have a list of supportive churches that individuals might look forward to attending once released.

A list of services, such as housing, employment, and counseling services, as well as some individuals available for friendly fellowship are also much needed items.

God’s Word says if a man stumbles, how can he continue lest there be another to help him up. **Ecc. 4:10** “For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him [that is] alone when he falleth; for [he hath] not another to help him up.” **Proverbs 24:17** “Rejoice not when thy enemy falleth, and let not thy heart be glad when he stumbleth.” **John 11:10** “But if a man walketh in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him.”

Please help us with input for this news letter as we strive to serve God. We appreciate any articles or input.

Letters that Express it All

These are actual quotes from some of the different incarcerated individuals. The names have been removed

A life Spared

“. . . I know without the Lord I probably wouldn't be alive right now. It is because of the great Lord that I have left the dope game. Because of God, I still have my loving family, and I have two years clean from drugs. I read my Bible every day, I study it, and now I'm not in the gang, my life is great, I've accepted Jesus in my life, and there is nothing better. Now I'm filled with joy and happiness all around me. Thank you Jesus – WOOOOO!!! . . .”

Rededication to the Lord

“If I would not have ended up here, I never would have rededicated my life back to the Lord. There is one person I appreciated a lot. He has wrote to me, and keeps telling me to pray. He attends your church regularly. He is only 12 years or so, but I believe God used him to reach me, the lost. My whole mental aspect is different. I stay in the word daily and in here you see a lot of people that want to make sense of things. There are a couple of us now that help people get through their struggles. I do believe that God never gives you more than you can handle and he puts people in your path for you to help. I never feel alone anymore.

Tuning in on Him

“. . . I've been listening to your service on the radio about 2 or 3 months now. Every week I look so forward for it. Each week I take notes and do Bible studies on them, which are just so powerful to me. I have really grown in your studies and the Holy Spirit leading me. I now realize who I am in Christ and this world is just somewhere we are passing thru. That there is a bigger picture to everything, God's picture. Of course by now you know I'm currently in prison. But I would never change what God has allowed to happen. I put myself here but for God to allow this to happen, has turned to such a blessing. I now have salvation through Christ Jesus. I used to believe just being an OK person was good enough for God. But He desires so much more and gives so much more abundantly. I love God so much and God is so worthy to be praised“

As for me and my House . . .

I was richly blessed this Sunday Morning by your sermon, and I've decided it is time for me to give God my all. The good and the bad, the past and the future, relationships, job, friends, attitude, I mean all. I realize my all isn't much, a big mess, but I am confident that if I seek God first and his righteousness, I'll be OK. It is important for me where my family and I spend eternity. I choose God, in Jesus, in Heaven.

Addresses to contact our Ministry Volunteers

Rick
3737 S. Akers
Visalia, CA. 93277

Bob
P.O. Box 6667
Visalia, CA. 93290

Good News Jail Ministry Jan 12 – March 27 STATs

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|----------------------------|-----|
| Individuals ministered to: | 490 |
| 24 Group Bible Studies: | 321 |
| Professions of Faith | 50 |
| Recommitments | 23 |

Fellowship

We would like to keep a listing of locations for fellowship that welcomes previous incarcerated individuals. Please feel free to let us know of those available

CHAINBREAKERS

Every Tuesday
Visalia First Assembly
3737 S. Akers
Visalia, CA.
Room 8 – 7:00 p.m.
733-9070 ext. 131

Calvary Chapel Visalia

11720 Avenue 264
Visalia, CA. 93277
687-0220

Visalia First Baptist

1100 S. Sowell
Visalia, CA. 93277
732-4787

Church of the Nazarene

3333 W. Caldwell Avenue
Visalia, CA 93277
734-1117

Praise Center Church

503 N. Floral St.
Visalia, CA. 93291
733-2744

If you would like a church added,
Please contact us.

Employment

A great source of locating jobs is the

Workforce Investment Dept. (WID)
Tulare County Employment Connection
4025 West Noble
Visalia, CA. 93277

A government program designed for the released inmate is **R.E.A.P.** The staff at Employment Connection can direct individuals toward money available in this program.

There is also the “**Ready for Work**” program that has an individual wanting to work, show up at 6:00am and fill the positions available for the day. At the end of the day each person having worked is paid for the days labor.

Many of the churches have outreaches to assist individuals in finding work. One of the local churches is planning on adding such facilities as a dental clinic, a medical clinic, and a counseling center.

Replenishing

God’s Word promises to restore the years of the locust, or more simply the years previously lost.

Joel 2:25 And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the cankerworm, and the caterpillar, and the palmerworm, my great army which I sent among you.

Recommended Reading

For the new Christian, or the individual desiring to know God, we would like to recommend the following reading.

The Gospel of John – This is a great introduction of Christ’s walk on Earth.

The Book of Romans – This gives an introduction of many of the Bible stories shared and helps build familiarity of Christ’s plan for our lives.

The Purpose Driven Life by Rick Warren – 40 chapters will change your life in 40 days

Book of Proverbs – Read one chapter a day with the chapter read being the day of the month. This will allow the book to be read almost 12 times thru the year.

Ephesians 4 – 6 – This gives the pattern for life that we should live. All 7 S’s are displayed in these 3 chapters. We are given the purpose of the gifts, changing our character, husband/wife/family relationships, and the type of life we are to live and display.

Men’s Relational Toolbox – Another fine work by Gary Smalley with both of his sons adding to this book. This book avoids “male bashing” but rather teaches men to use and modify the inner tools they have to improve their relationships.

Needs after Release

Individuals being released from incarceration have the same common needs of all individuals. There is a need of self-respect and self esteem. Many have a need of housing. Most are coming back looking for employment. Some are facing classes for AA, NA, or Domestic Violence. Some need to enroll in educational or vocational programs. Most would appreciate someone to just talk to or have a mentor. Fellowship with the right people is ALWAYS needed. For many these are totally new expectations and experiences.

One inmate expressed wonderfully the problem of being released. He stated that everything is slow to happen while incarcerated. It seems like an eternity as you wait for your next transfer or assignment. You feel like you are running at 5 miles per hour. Then, when released to the world, you are put into an environment that is running at 200 miles per hour. This drastic change of environments tends to overcome individuals and they have a hard time adapting. We hear of transitions from one area to another in each of our lives. Someone to just talk with about the feelings and changes the individuals are going thru is a great healer. The Bible says that each of us should be a “brother” to help the other one up when he falls. Other scripture talks about “sticking closer than a brother” we can often help with sharing life experiences or just listening to someone in need. We don’t always have to solve the problems, but many times need to just “lend an ear” so that someone might share their needs or hurts with us. Many men have heard from their wives “I don’t want you to fix it, just listen”. We need to just listen.

Am I Really Saved?

Reprinted from Walk in the Word

Pastor James MacDonald

“The Spirit of God bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God.” Romans 8:16

I’m kind of fired up because without a doubt, I have the most important subject in the universe to talk to you about today. If you have “it,” you have everything that you need. But without it, you don’t have anything—no matter how much you have. Many people think they have this but they don’t, and sadly many people who *do* have it, take it for granted. Recognized in all of its splendor you would die for it, but ironically unless you have it, you will die.

What is it that I’m talking about? It is the story of Scripture. It is the miracle of the age. It is the reason that Jesus came, died, and rose again. Sinners call it *conversion*; theologians call it *justification*. Children call it, *asking Jesus into their hearts*, and Jesus called it, *being born again*. Most frequently the Bible calls it **salvation**.

Rightly understood, salvation is the crown jewel of Christianity and the constant comfort of the Lord’s people. But it can also cause much confusion. In fact, surprisingly even in churches that preach the biblical message of salvation, a lot of people are confused about exactly what salvation is and how it works.

This week on the broadcast, I’ll clear up three crucial issues about salvation:

1. How is a person saved? How does it happen?
2. How do you know if you’ve been saved?
3. Can you lose your salvation?

Right now, we’ll focus on the second issue, *how can you be absolutely sure that you’ve been saved?*

If you’re saved, you belong to God. God has made a mark on you. He has sealed you. What is that assurance that you belong to Him? Look at Ephesians 1:13: **“Having believed you were sealed with the Holy Spirit.”** So here it is—if you’ve been saved, you have the Holy Spirit. If you’re not saved, you don’t have the Holy Spirit. So the question then is, *how do I know if I have the Holy Spirit?*

We’re gonna get this settled right now. Are you saved? **If you’re saved, the Holy Spirit is doing these six things in your life.** There’s many more things we could have included on this list but I chose what I thought were the six main ones.

1. The Holy Spirit is growing you. (Galatians 5:22) If you’re saved, you’re more godly than you used to be. You’re changing. You might have symptoms of your old problems but you don’t give into them like you used to. You’re being set free from addictions. Your character is growing. When you are saved, the Spirit is developing in you “... love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, self-control”—fruit of His character.

I’ll use myself as an example here. I’ve got problems; I’m not perfect. But the people who know me best, my family, my close

friends, the people that I work with, all would say in unison, “James is not who he was five years ago. God’s growing and changing him.” Is God growing and changing you? That’s a work of His Spirit.

2. The Holy Spirit has gifted you. (1

Corinthians 12) When the Spirit of God comes into your life He gives you the desire and the ability to serve God. If you’re saved, He has gifted you with a specific way you can serve the body of Christ. You are prompted to get beyond selfish consumer Christianity and into the center of what He is doing to build His kingdom.

3. The Holy Spirit convicts you of sin.

(John 16:8) You’re like, “It’s the craziest thing, man. Before I knew Christ I could lie, and steal, and be mean to my sister-in-law, but never even felt bad about it. Since I got saved, every time I do anything wrong this siren goes off inside me.” That’s the Spirit at work, convicting you of sin. If you can sin and not be grieved, ask yourself if you’re really saved.

4. Hunger for truth. (John 16:13)

Was there a time when you couldn’t have cared less about the Bible? If somebody said to you, ‘Are you reading the Bible?’ you would have been, ‘No, I’m reading Louie L’Amour right now.’ But when you got saved, your desire to learn this book exploded in your heart. If that’s going on in your life, that’s a very good sign.

5. The Holy Spirit leads you.

(Romans 8:14) What does *that* mean? God’s Spirit prompts you to make things right with others, to respond to the message

that you hear at church, to want to do the thing that honors Him. When you’re being led by the Spirit, you know there’s something going on in your heart. **“As many as are led by the Spirit of God these are the children of God.”**

6. The Holy Spirit comforts you. (John

14:16) Has there ever been a time in your life when you struggled with just about everything? But since you came to know Christ, things don’t bother you as much. The Spirit supplies strength that you didn’t have before and you’re now able to get through things that you couldn’t before. God Himself bears you along and helps you get through the tough stuff. That’s one of the things the Spirit of God does—He comforts us.

God wants you to know that you’re His child, and if you’re wondering about it, read Romans 8:16, **“the Spirit of God bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God.”** If you’re wondering, *“God, am I your child?”* do this: get alone, read the Scriptures that I’ve mentioned above and pray, “God, do I really know you?” The Spirit Himself will either bear witness, “Yes” or “No.” You don’t have to wonder anymore.

Get this settled right now. If you have more questions, listen to this complete message online. No one should be confused about this issue. *Know* that you *know* that you *know*. It’s that important.

Tools of Ministry

Many of us ask ourselves, “What can I do in Ministry?” I don’t have the training or the tools of ministry.

The training is something that helps in some situations. But, there are lay ministers that lead souls to Christ just as effective as the pastor with a doctorate degree in theology. As we look at the disciples of Christ, we realize the training they had was that of fishing. But Christ stated to them that “I will make you fishers of men.” The disciples jumped in and started doing what needed to be done, instead of having some training program finished.

So what about the “tools of the trade?” Are they such items as the Bible, a concordance, a Bible dictionary, a pulpit, a baptismal? Let me explain some of the tools of the trade I have seen used or personally used.



Python Boots

Walking into a facility, my boots were noticed immediately by an inmate across the block. He called for me to come to his cell. When I got to his door, he said “Nice boots.” I said “Thank you. I am here to share the Word as a volunteer chaplain.” He again said, “Nice boots.” I said, “Thanks, you said that.” He then said, “You’re lucky I’m

not out on program.” I said, “You’d take my boots?” It was a nice time of talking and over the next 4 weeks of visiting sessions, we were able to talk and have a good time.



Car – Fierro 600

This car has a license plate saying “**NO LIE**” and that alone starts a conversation. The fact that it is the only one like it in the world gives the opportunity to witness to each individual, because everyone is in reality a “one of a kind.” The car was recently shown at the Association of Handcrafted Automobiles (AHA) car show at Knott’s Berry Farm in California. During the show many were attracted to the vehicle. My wife would tell the individuals that her husband used the car in his chaplain ministry. This allowed her to make “cold contacts” with strangers and start to witness to them. She even passed out a Bible to one family. Many individuals stated that they were regenerated with the desire to get back involved in church and their relationship with God.

How many other “tools” really are usable for ministry that God has entrusted us with? We will try to follow up with other examples in future newsletters.

Sharing Your Testimony

There are 4 parts to an individual's testimony;

1. What my life was like before I met Jesus
2. How I realized I needed Jesus
3. How I committed my life to Jesus
4. The difference Jesus has made in my life.

But in reality, those who believe in Jesus have the testimony of God in them; Each of us needs to periodically share our testimony with others. The importance is not what you have done, but what God is doing.

1. Your testimony;
2. Your life lessons
3. Your godly passions
4. the Good News

When Satan reminds you of your past, remind him of his future.

God accepts you where you are, but loves you too much to leave you there.

Testimonies

(Following is from an inmate released from Corcoran State Prison)

At the age of 14 I first drank and smoked weed. By 15 I started meth and by 16 I had done everything but heroin, ecstasy, and pyote. Meth quickly became my drug of choice and I was deeply addicted and strung out. In 1995, at the age of 16, I got locked up for my first time and have either been on the run, probation, or locked up since. I spent my 17th, 18th, 21st, and 24th birthdays incarcerated. In 1997 I became the proud parent of a son and daughter. Gabriella Rose in September and David Michael in December . . . by February of '98 I had lost them both because of drugs and was back here in California; strung out again, this time on crack cocaine as well as meth, and homeless on the streets of Exeter.

Life had lost its meaning and I couldn't enjoy the high anymore. I wanted change but didn't know how to bring it about, didn't know where to go . . . to turn. I wanted, needed help at all cost and became desperate to get it. The problem was . . . where to find it.

While at my worst . . . my lowest, weakest point, God called me to Him and His house. A small church on Maple and G street pastured by Pastor Mayabb. On August 28th of 1998 at the age of 19, I gave my life to Christ. It took 5 years of molding and shaping as well as 2 years of purification while in prison; but finally I became a new creature, transformed by the renewing of my mind through Christ Jesus, "my" Lord. I went from "being" a strung-out dope-fiend-thief; to "becoming" an aspiring Doctor of Apologetics, currently taking Berean University classes, intent on receiving credentials. I even work full-time for the church I'm a member of . . . Visalia First Assembly of God. I now belong to the Lord I serve