

“Letter From M.O.M.”

The Bi-Monthly newsletter of **Moving On Ministry**

WWW.MovingOnMinistry.com

WWW.PrisonMinistry.net/movingon

Volume 12 – Nov. 2005 / Dec. 2005

“I Can Only Imagine”

You will note the name change of the newsletter from **Free In Deed** to **Letter From M.O.M.** In this 12th **Volume** issue, we are doing final preparations for our mission trip to Swaziland Africa. God continues to bless that which we had first avoided and said “No” to His calling.

Watch our website

www.MovingOnMinistry.com

We have also become affiliated with International Prison Fellowship

www.PrisonMinistry.net/MovingOn

Fellowship

We would like to keep a listing of locations for fellowship that welcomes previous incarcerated individuals. We previously listed 51 churches that are supportive. Please feel free to let us know of those available. We also cherish letters from inmates or relatives to the churches to let us know how we are doing

Intentions & Wishes

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 newsletter as we strive to serve God. We appreciate any articles or input.

Letters that Express it All

Those of you that received Volume 11, our 2nd anniversary issue, noticed about 4 pages of letter excerpts from letters actually received. We like to post real life situation, because God works in real lives and He is the one that gives “Eternal Life.”

My faith remains and I am still headed on my path to leading a life of righteousness in the Lord’s eyes. I have to say it really bugs me sometimes when I see people in here who claim to be in and following the Word but yet and still they are trapped in their sinful ways and desires. They are wrapped up in this gang stuff that goes on, still cursing, still talking about hurting people. But then I remember it is not my place to judge anyone, so I set down my imaginary gavel and take my imaginary black robe off and let the true Lord of Lords, Judge of Judges, to do the judging. It just really gets me sometimes when I see people come in and out of this place and never learn. And here I am in here really, really deep down in my heart ready and willingly ready to make this step to change my life around to follow Christ and they say they want to give me 32 w/life. I feel a little beat down at times. But I have a purpose in this world. God is calling me for some type of ministry. I am not sure exactly what it is. Whether it’s speaking with youth, jail/prison, or anything I will do it. I feel Jesus disciples did not choose to follow Jesus, they were chosen and it was based on their own freewill they decided to follow. I feel God chose me and I plan to follow. **HG**

I’m feeling very helpless. I feel trapped and there is no one there to help. It seems that God Himself is not listening,

maybe because of my sin, but the fact remains I’m alone, and that’s the truth. I want to change, I do, but it seems I don’t have the strength to do it, nor the know-how, so I remain in a miserable existence and not even God can help. What can I do if anything? **JU**

Bob, sir, I remembered that I did say that I would write. So I just thought I’d write to see how you’ve been? And to let you know that I was listening to you that night we all had that church or Bible study. Either way, you really helped me out that night. You said something like we were all blessed by God the Father of our Lord Jesus. Something about how He has blessed us all even before we were born and that we should think about our life, if not for ourselves, at least for the people that love us. So I made one of the most hardest choices I’d ever had to make in my life. Well, I have went and volunteered myself to the A.S.A.T. program for men like myself with the same problems with drugs and anger. Bob, I would like you to pray that I make it! I know it is going to be hard, but with a little inspiration and a lot of your prayers, I think God will give me the strength I’m going to need to make it in this program, not only for myself, but for those people that are waiting for me when I get out in six months from now, like my kids for one, then my mother, grandson, cousins, friend’s and my girl! **OZ**

Well I received your letter and I find it hard at times knowing I have to take this time for something I did not do. But I know that this is not nearly as close to what Christ did for our sins. Knowing that He died for our salvation is just the best feeling in the world. To know that He loved us all so much even when we were still sinners and died on that cross

for our sins in order to save us, just motivates me to keep going. . . . I am on my way to part of my journey in life and know wherever it may be that I go, the Lord will reveal His purpose for me there. I just right now get this strong feeling that He is sending me to go and find some people in prison to fill those seats in the front row (of the church) and help them dedicate their lives to Christ. I think the only way to find these people is to be in here knowing what they are going through and finding the ones ready and willing for that change. In the end I know God will reveal to me what His purpose was for me to go to prison. He has already shown me why I was put in the situation I am in now, and even though it is bad, nothing but good has come out of it. **HG**

NOTE From Bob; Let us each pray for God’s glory in situations like these

**Addresses to contact our
 Ministry Volunteers**

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

Rick
3737 S. Akers
Visalia, CA. 93277

This space available
P.O. Box
Your Town,

Filling the Calling

When God calls us to do something, He is asking for volunteers. A volunteer is someone that is actively involved and makes things happen, not the person that waits for God to make it happen.

God never says “come” and witness to the people, He always says “go” unto the people in all parts of the world. **Matthew 28:19a** “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, . . .” and shows the authority you are sent on, **Matthew 28:19b** “baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:”

How many people come up with the excuse that “I guess it was not God’s will” or “It was not God’s time?” Or how about “We can’t do it”? **Matthew 14:15** says And when it was evening, his disciples came to him, saying, This is a desert place, and the time is now past; send the multitude away, that they may go into the villages, and buy themselves victuals. They were saying, we can’t do it, we can’t take care of so many.

The Bible says, “Now is the accepted time” and does not give a better time for the Lord. **II Corinthians 6:2** (For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now [is] the accepted time; behold, now [is] the day of salvation.) **Romans 13:11** And that, knowing the time, that now [it is] high time to awake out of sleep: for now [is] our salvation nearer than when we believed. (Thought: does salvation get nearer than when we first believed?)

Many “professing” Christians are what we would call “Welfare Christians,” meaning that, they will give if someone else provides something to give.

Does God Really Exist

This is one of the best explanations of why God allows pain and suffering that I have seen. It's an explanation other people will understand.

A man went to a barbershop to have his hair cut and his beard trimmed. As the barber began to work, they began to have a good conversation. They talked about all kinds of things.

When they eventually touched on the subject of God, the barber said: "I don't believe that God exists." "Why do you say that?" asked the customer.

"Well, you just have to go out in the street to realize that God doesn't exist. Tell me, if God exists, would there be so many sick people? Would there be abandoned children? If God existed, there would be neither suffering nor pain. I can't imagine a loving God who would allow all of these things."

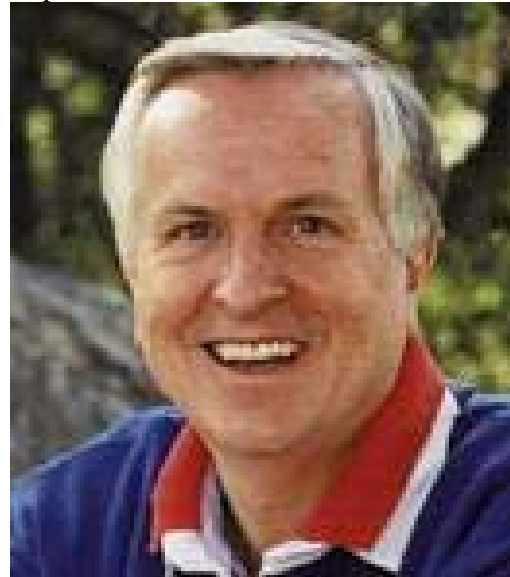
The customer thought for a moment, but didn't respond because he didn't want to start an argument! The barber finished his job and the customer left the shop. Just after he left the barbershop, he saw a man in the street with long, stringy, dirty hair and an untrimmed beard. He looked dirty and unkempt.

The customer turned back and entered the barber shop again and he said to the barber: "You know what? Barbers do not exist." "How can you say that?" asked the surprised barber. "I am here, and I am a barber. And I just worked on you!"

"No!" the customer exclaimed. "Barbers don't exist because if they did, there would be no people with dirty long hair and untrimmed beards, like that man outside."

"Ah, but barbers DO exist! What happens is, people do not come to me." "Exactly!"- Affirmed the customer. "That's the point! God, too, DOES exist! What happens, is, people don't go to Him and do not look for Him. That's why there's so much pain and suffering in the world."

NOTE: For those of you that have read the book "Evidence That Demands a Verdict" by Josh McDowell, know that when he started to write it, he was going to prove that God did not exist.



Josh McDowell

As Josh went deeper into research and writing, he found God to be very real and present.

How many of us question if God is real? We want "proof" and then we will "believe." The amazing thing about God is that if we "believe" with all our heart, mind, and soul, He gives us the proof when he has the Holy Spirit dwell in us. God's Word says we must come to Him with the faith of a child. And as the song says "**Trust and Obey, for there is no Other Way.**"

NOTES and COMMENTS

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.

Need for Change

... Keep doing what you have been doing, and you will get what you have been getting.

Conversion

Conversion is the wiping of the slate clean so a new process can “start.”

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.

Our life Left

As we look at the wasted life we have lived, we can only say, “**Lord, be the Lord of what is left.**”

Bible Study Lessons

SET FREE PRISON MINISTRY
Of Northern California
401 MacArthur Boulevard
San Leandro, CA. 94577-9801

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.

Prayer of Jabez – A truly fine first book from Bruce Wilkerson. This short book will change your mind about being disobedient to God by not taking care of people in need

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

A Story About my Life

My stupid pride wouldn't allow me to ask anyone for any kind of help, even though I really needed it badly. So in the next year and a half, or so, I felt as if I'd died like a hundred times over in my mind. But still didn't tell anyone of my so-called troubles. But by this time everyone just learned to leave me alone.

And "yes" I could really understand just how they may have felt about me at the time, because I was going through a lot of problems, like being addicted to drugs, money, fast cars, and fast women. In other words, the fast life that comes with being a rapper, drug dealer, and hustler.

So anyway, one morning I woke up with a decision to stay my butt in bed all daylong. So when I did finally get up about six or seven o'clock that night, I had noticed that no one seemed to care or even come to see if I was OK! That's when I started to feel desperately afraid, because I started to feel all shaky, which

by the way, I happen to be diabetic type 2 to be exact. Either way, I felt so bad, not only because of my sickness, but because no one cared enough to come to my aid that night, which by the way I was a real mess, kind of like the life I had gotten used to living.

So, that night I ended up in the hospital. I found myself with all kinds of Ivy's in both arms and an oxygen mask over my face. So I went to bed that night up in the hospital. I was so sure I would never be seeing tomorrow or ever get a chance to tell my mother or my kids or friends or family just how much I truly loved and needed them in my life.

I couldn't really see any way out. So by the next morning, I still hadn't slept and it had nothing to do with the drugs, but was because I was so worried that I might just die. So as I was propped up with two or three pillows, I could feel how my heart was pounding, right out of my chest.

Then, it was like "O' God, is this it? Is this the way I'm going to die?" That's when I cried out to God "PLEASE! Don't let me die like this! So instead of me feeling afraid any more or depressed, which by the way was one of the feelings I had gotten used to, then just like that, my next unconscious statement was again, "God thank you for all you've done in my life." So now I'm enjoying my life every hour, minute, second, and moment of every day!

Even if I do happen to be up in jail at the moment, for me that was the most humbling experience in my life. And, yes I am so very thankful that I am still here to show my mother and kids, friends, and family just how much I do truly love and need them all in my life! Thank God, Thank God!!

OZ

The Order of the Armour

Many people are familiar with the text found in Ephesians 6:11 thru 6:18 on the Christian armor. However, how many have really studied each piece, what it represents, and the order they are put on?

Ephesians 6:11 Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

Ephesians 6:12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high [places].

Ephesians 6:13 Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

Ephesians 6:14 Stand therefore, having your **loins girt** about with **truth**, and having on the **breastplate** of righteousness;

Ephesians 6:15 And your **feet shod** with the preparation of the **gospel of peace**;

Ephesians 6:16 Above all, taking the **shield** of **faith**, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.

Ephesians 6:17 And take the **helmet** of **salvation**, and the **sword** of the Spirit, which is the **word of God**:

Ephesians 6:18 Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;

Verse 14 lists the first piece of armor as a **Belt** around the **loins**. This piece of armor represents **truth** and may be thought of as when we “recognize” our need of a savior. This is the seed when it is planted in our life.

Next piece of armor mentioned in the bottom of verse 14 is the **Breastplate** of **righteousness**. This is the display of protecting the heart. This is where the

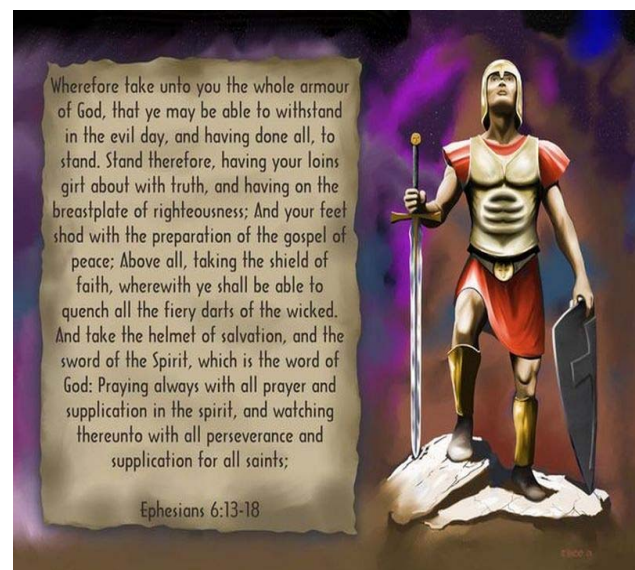
hunger for the things of God is first displayed.

Verse 15 displays the **Feet shod** with the **gospel of peace**. The feet are a symbol of mobility or getting to where we need to be. This is a display of learning and actually is growth from the hunger previously displayed.

Verse 16 brings on the **Shield** of **faith**. This is where the **faith** really starts to grow and be displayed. This is the developing of the individual. The **Shield** actually allows the individual to stand against all that may come his way.

The **Helmet** of **salvation** is actually the 5th piece of armor that is listed. I believe that it is listed in this sequence because **salvation** must come after **faith**. We actually receive **salvation** after we approach on **faith**. **Salvation** only results, after **faith** and standing firm.

The 6th and last part of the armor mentioned is the **Sword** that represents the **Word of God (Bible)**. After study & growth, this is the understanding that comes. Just as someone with a sword must study to use it proper, so must it be with the Word of God.



The following article I have thought about for 35 years and wanted to locate. It was in a newsletter that I used in the Sunday School class that I was teaching in 1971. Yes, those of you that remember my testimony, remember that I tried to make a deal with God that he could have my life in all areas “but” (1) not being a missionary to Africa, (2) not working with youth, and (3) not working with inmates. After extensive searching, I am happy to announce that I have located this story. Just as God located me and refused my “NO” answers to His calling.

My Heart, Christ’s Home

One evening I invited Jesus Christ into my heart. What an entrance He made! It was not a spectacular, emotional thing, but very real. It was at the very center of my life. He came into the darkness of my heart and turned on the light. He built a fire in the cold hearth and banished the chill. He started music where there had been stillness, and He filled the emptiness with His own loving, wonderful fellowship. I have never regretted opening the door to Christ and I never will - not into eternity!

This, of course, is the first step in making the heart Christ's home. He has said, "Behold I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." (**Revelation 3:20**). If you are interested in making your life an abode of the living God, let me encourage you to invite Christ into your heart and He will surely come

After Christ entered my heart and in the joy of this new relationship I said to Him, "Lord, I want this heart of mine to be Yours. I want to have You settle down here and be perfectly at home. Everything I have belongs to You. Let me show You around and introduce you to the various features of the home that you may be more comfortable and that we may have fuller fellowship together."

He was very glad to come, of course, and happier still to be given a place in the heart

The Library

The first room was the study - the library. Let us call it the study of the mind. Now in my home this room of the mind is a very small room with very thick walls. But it is an important room. In a sense, it is the control room of the house. He entered with me and looked around at the books in the bookcase, the magazines upon the table, and the pictures on the walls. As I followed His gaze I became uncomfortable. Strangely enough, I had not felt badly about this before, but now that He was there looking at these things I was embarrassed. There were some books were there that His eyes were too pure to behold. There was a lot of trash and literature on the table that a Christian had no business reading, and as for the pictures on the walls - the imaginations and thoughts of the mind - these were shameful.

I turned to Him and said, "Master, I know that this room needs a radical alteration. Will You help me make it what it ought to be? - to bring every thought into captivity to you?"

"Surely!" He said. "Gladly will I help you. First of all, take all the things that you are reading and looking at which are not helpful, pure, good and true, and throw them out! Now put on the empty shelves the books of the Bible. Fill the library with Scriptures and meditate on them day and night. As for the pictures on the walls, you will have difficulty controlling these images, but here is an aid" He gave me a full-size portrait of Himself. "Hang this centrally," He said, "on the wall of the mind."

I did, and I have discovered through the years that when my thoughts are centered upon Christ Himself, His purity and power cause impure thoughts to back away. So He has helped me to bring my thoughts into captivity.

May I suggest to you if you have difficulty with this little room of the mind, that you bring Christ in there. Pack it full with the Word of God, meditate upon it and keep before it the immediate presence of the Lord Jesus.

The Dining Room

From the study we went into the dining room, the room of appetites and desires. Now this was a very large room. I spent a good deal of time in the dining room and much effort in satisfying my wants.

I said to Him, "This is a favorite room. I am quite sure You will be pleased with what we serve."

He seated Himself at the table with me and asked, "What is on the menu for dinner?"

"Well," I said, "my favorite dishes: money, academic degrees and stocks,

with newspaper articles of fame and fortune as side dishes." These were the things I liked - worldly fare. I suppose there was nothing radically wrong in any particular item, but it was not the food that should satisfy the life of a real Christian. When the food was placed before Him, He said nothing about it. However, I observed that He did not eat it, and I said to Him, somewhat disturbed, "Master, don't You care for this food? What is the trouble?"

He answered, "I have meat to eat that you do not know of. My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me." He looked at me again and said, "If you want food that really satisfies you, seek the will of the Father, not your own pleasures, not your own desires, and not your own satisfaction. Seek to please Me and that food will satisfy you." And there at the table He gave me a taste of doing God's will. What a flavor! There is no food like it in all the world. It alone satisfies. Everything else is dissatisfying in the end.

Now if Christ is in your heart, and I trust He is, what kind of food are you serving Him and what kind of food are you eating yourself? Are you living for the lust of the flesh and the pride of life - selfishly? Or are you choosing God's will for your meat and drink?

The Living Room

We walked next into the living room. This room was rather intimate and comfortable. I liked it. It had a fireplace, overstuffed chairs, a sofa, and a quiet atmosphere.

He also seemed pleased with it. He said, "This is indeed a delightful room. Let us

come here often. It is secluded and quiet, and we can fellowship together."

Well, naturally as a young Christian I was thrilled. I couldn't think of anything I would rather do than have a few minutes with Christ in intimate companionship.

He promised, "I will be here early every morning. Meet me here, and we will start the day together." So morning after morning, I would come downstairs to the living room and He would take a book of the Bible from the bookcase. He would open it and then we would read together. He would tell me of its riches and unfold to me its truths. He would make my heart warm as He revealed His love and His grace He had toward me. These were wonderful hours together. In fact, we called the living room the "withdrawing room." It was a period when we had our quiet time together.

But, little by little, under the pressure of many responsibilities, this time began to be shortened. Why, I'm don't know, but I thought I was just too busy to spend time with Christ. This was not intentional, you understand; it just happened that way. Finally, not only was the time shortened, but I began to miss a day now and then. It was examination time at the university. Then it was some other urgent emergency. I would miss it two days in a row and often more.

I remember one morning when I was in a hurry, rushing downstairs, eager to be on my way.

As I passed the living room, the door was open. Looking in, I saw a fire in the fireplace and Jesus was sitting there. Suddenly in dismay I thought to myself,

"He was my guest. I invited Him into my heart! He has come as Lord of my home. And yet here I am neglecting Him."

I turned and went in. With downcast glance, I said, "Blessed Master, forgive me. Have You been here all these mornings?"

"Yes," He said, "I told you I would be here every morning to meet with you." Then I was even more ashamed. He had been faithful in spite of my faithfulness. I asked His forgiveness and He readily forgave me as He does when we are truly repentant.

"The trouble with you is this: you have been thinking of the quiet time, of the Bible study and prayer time, as a factor in your own spiritual progress, but you have forgotten that this hour means something to me also. Remember, I love you. I have redeemed you at great cost. I value your fellowship. Now," He said, "do not neglect this hour if only for my sake. Whatever else may be your desire, remember I want your fellowship!"

You know, the truth that Christ desires my companionship, that He loves me, wants me to be with Him, wants to be with me and waits for me, has done more to transform my quiet time with God than any other single fact. Don't let Christ wait alone in the living room of your heart, but every day find some time when, with your Bible and in prayer, you may be together with Him.

The Workroom

Before long, He asked, "Do you have a workroom in your home?" Down in the basement of the home of my heart I had a workbench and some equipment, but I

was not doing much with it. Once in a while I would play around with a few little gadgets, but I wasn't producing anything substantial or worthwhile.

I led Him down there.

He looked over the workbench and what little talents and skills I had. He said, "This is quite well furnished. What are you producing with your life for the Kingdom of God?" He looked at one or two little toys that I had thrown together on the bench and held one up to me. "Are these little toys all that you are doing for others in your Christian life?"

"Well," I said, "Lord, that is the best I can do. I know it isn't much, and I really want to do more, but after all, I have no skill or strength to do more."

"Would you like to do better?" He asked.

"Certainly," I replied.

"All right. Let me have your hands. Now relax in me and let my Spirit work through you. I know that you are unskilled, clumsy and awkward, but the Holy Spirit is the Master-Worker, and if He controls your hands and your heart, He will work through you." And so, stepping around behind me and putting His great, strong hands over mine, controlling the tools with His skilled fingers He began to work through me.

There's much more that I must still learn and I am very far from satisfied with the product that is being turned out, but I do know that whatever has been produced for God has been through His strong hand and through the power of His Spirit in me.

Do not become discouraged because you cannot do much for God. Your ability is not the fundamental condition. It is He who is controlling your fingers and upon whom you are relying. Give your talents and gifts to God and He will do things with them that will surprise you.

The Rec Room

I remember the time He asked me about the playroom. I was hoping He would not ask about that. There were certain associations and friendships, activities and amusements that I wanted to keep for myself. I did not think Christ would enjoy them or approve of them, so I evaded the question.

But there came an evening when I was on my way out with some of my friends, and as I was about to cross the threshold, He stopped me with a glance and asked, "Are you going out?"

I replied, "Yes."

"Good," He said, "I would like to go with you."

"Oh," I answered rather awkwardly. "I don't think, Lord Jesus, that You would really want to go with us. Let's go out tomorrow night. Tomorrow night we will go to prayer meeting, but tonight I have another appointment."

He said. "That's alright. Only I thought that when I came into your home, we were going to do everything together, to be close companions. I just want you to know that I am willing to go with you."

"Well," I said, "we will go someplace together tomorrow night."

That evening I spent some miserable hours. I felt wretched. What kind of a friend was I to Jesus when I was deliberately leaving Him out of my associations, doing things and going places that I knew very well He would not enjoy? When I returned that evening, there was a light in His room, and I went up to talk it over with Him. I said, "Lord, I have learned my lesson. I can't have a good time without You. From now on we will do everything together."

Then we went down into the playroom of the house and He transformed it. He brought into life real joy, real happiness, real satisfaction, new friends, new excitement, and new joys. Laughter and music have been ringing through the house ever since.

The Hall Closet

There is just one more matter that I might share with you. One day I found Him waiting for me at the door. An arresting look was in His eye. As I entered, He said to me, "There is a peculiar odor in the house. There is something dead around here. It's upstairs. I think it is in the hall closet." As soon as He said this, I knew what He was talking about. Yes, there was a small closet up there on the landing, just a few feet square, and in that closet, behind lock and key, I had one or two little personal things that I did not want anyone to know about and certainly I did not want Christ to see them. I knew they were dead and rotting things left over from the old life. And yet I loved them, and I wanted them so for myself that I was afraid to admit they were there.

Reluctantly, I went up with Him, and as we mounted the stairs the odor became

stronger and stronger. He pointed at the door. "It's in there! Some dead thing!"

I was angry. That's the only way I can put it. I had given Him access to the library, the dining room, the living room, the workroom, the playroom, and now He was asking me about a little two-by-four closet. I said to myself, "This is too much. I am not going to give Him the key."

"Well," He said, reading my thoughts, "if you think I'm going to stay up here on the second floor with this odor, you are mistaken. I will take my bed out on the back porch. I'm certainly not going to put up with that." Then I saw Him start down the stairs.

When you have come to know and love Christ, the worst thing that can happen is to sense His fellowship retreating from you. I had to surrender. "I'll give You the key," I said sadly, "but You'll have to open the closet and clean it out. I haven't the strength to do it."

"I know," He said. "I know you haven't. Just give me the key. Just authorize me to take care of that closet and I will." So with trembling fingers I passed the key to Him. He took it from my hand, walked over to the door, opened it, entered it, took out all the putrefying stuff that was rotting there, and threw it away. Then He cleaned the closet and painted it, fixed it up, doing it all in a moment's time. Oh, what victory and release to have that dead thing out of my life!

Transferring the Title

Then a thought came to me. I said to myself, "I have been trying to keep this

heart of mine clear for Christ. I start on one room and no sooner have I cleaned that then another room is dirty. I begin on the second room and the first room becomes dusty again. I am so tired and weary trying to maintain a clean heart and an obedient life. I am just not up to it!"

So I ventured a question: "Lord, is there any chance that You would take over the responsibility of the whole house and operate it for me and with me just as You did that closet? Would You take the responsibility to keep my heart what it ought to be and my life where it ought to be?"

I could see His face light up as He replied, "Certainly, that is what I came to do. You cannot be a victorious Christian in your own strength. That is impossible. Let me do it through you and for you. That is the way. But," He added slowly, "I am not owner of this house. I am just a guest. I have no authority to proceed, since the property is not mine."

I saw it in a minute and dropping to my knees, I said, "Lord, You have been a guest and I have been the host. From now on I am going to be the servant. You are going to be the owner and Master and Lord."

Running as fast as I could to the strongbox, I took out the title deed to the house describing its assets and liabilities, location and situation and condition. I eagerly signed it over to belong to Him alone for time and eternity. "Here," I said. "Here it is, all that I am and have forever. Now You run the house. I'll just remain with You as a servant and friend."

He took my life that day and I can give you my word, there is no better way to live the Christian life. He knows how to keep it in shape and deep peace settles down on the soul. May Christ settle down and be at home in your heart as Lord of all!

Robert Boyd Munger (1911-2001) was a Presbyterian minister who wrote this timeless work exactly 50 years ago.

God's Word says, John 14:1 Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.

John 14:2 In my Father's house are many mansions: if [it were] not [so], I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

John 14:3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, [there] ye may be also.

John 14:4 And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.

John 14:5 Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?

John 14:6 Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

John 14:7 If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him.

John 14:13 And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

John 14:14 If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do [it].

John 14:15 If ye love me, keep my commandments.

John 14:16 And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;

Lighter But Serious Side

Concentration Camp Letter

O Lord, remember not only the men and woman of good will, but also those of ill will. But do not remember all of the suffering they have inflicted upon us:

Instead remember the fruits we have borne because of this suffering—our fellowship, our loyalty to one another, our humility, our courage, our generosity, the greatness of heart that has grown from this trouble.

When our persecutors come to be judged by you, let all of these fruits that we have borne be their forgiveness.

(Found in the clothing of a dead child at Ravensbruck concentration camp.)

Frayed Friendship

Old Joe was dying. For years he had been at odds with Bill, formerly one of his best friends. Wanting to straighten things out, he sent word for Bill to come and see him.

When Bill arrived, Joe told him that he was afraid to go into eternity with such a bad feeling between them. Then, very reluctantly and with great effort, Joe apologized for things he had said and done. He also assured Bill that he forgave him for his offenses. Everything seemed fine until Bill turned to go. As he walked out of the room, Joe called out after him, "But, remember, if I get better, this doesn't count!"

Our Daily Bread, June 18, 1994.

A Father's Love

There's a Spanish story of a father and son who had become estranged. The son ran away, and the father set off to find him. He searched for months to no avail. Finally, in a last desperate effort to find him, the father put an ad in Madrid newspaper. The ad read: "Dear Paco, meet me in front of this newspaper office at noon on Saturday. All is forgiven. I love you. Your Father."

On Saturday 800 Pacos showed up, looking for forgiveness and love from their fathers.

Bits & Pieces, October 15, 1992, p. 13

What's Good for the Soul

Forgive and forget. Easier said than done, right? Well, now studies are showing forgiveness is not only good theology, but good medicine as well. According to the latest medical and psychological research, forgiving is good for our souls—and our bodies. People who forgive:

- benefit from better immune functioning and lower blood pressure.
- have better mental health than people who do not forgive.
- feel better physically.
- have lower amounts of anger and fewer symptoms of anxiety and depression.
- maintain more satisfying and long-lasting relationships.

"When we allow ourselves to feel like victims or sit around dreaming up how to retaliate against people who have hurt us, these thought patterns take a toll on our minds and bodies," says Michael McCullough, director of research for the National Institute for Healthcare Research and a co-author of *To Forgive is Human: How to Put Your Past in the Past* (IVP, 1997).

Death Row Inmate

A young man cowered in the corner of a dirty, roach-infested death row cell in a South Carolina prison. His body curled in a fetal position, he seemed oblivious to the filth and stench around him. His name was Rusty, and he was sentenced to die for the murder of a Myrtle Beach woman in a crime spree that left four people dead.

Police arrested twenty-three-year-old Rusty Welborn from Point Pleasant, West Virginia in 1979, following one of the most brutal slayings in South Carolina history. Rusty was tried for murder and received the death penalty for his crime. Bob McAlister, deputy chief of staff to South Carolina's governor, became acquainted with Rusty on death row. Bob had become a Christian a year or so earlier and felt a strong call from God to minister to the state's inmates—especially those spending their last days on death row.

Bob's first look at Rusty revealed a pitiful sight. Rusty was lying on the floor when he arrived, a pathetic picture of a man who believed he mattered to no one. The only signs of life in the cell were the roaches who scurried over everything, including Rusty himself. He made no effort to move or even to brush the insects away. He stared blankly at Bob as he began to talk, but did not respond.

During visit after visit, Bob tried to reach Rusty, telling him of the love Jesus had for him and of his opportunity—even on death row—to

start a new life in Christ. He talked and prayed continuously, and finally Rusty began to respond to the stranger who kept invading his cell. Little by little, he opened up, until one day he began to weep as Bob was sharing with him. On that day, Rusty Welborn, a pitiful man with murder and darkness behind him and his own death closing in ahead of him, gave his heart to Jesus Christ.

When Bob returned to Rusty's cell a few days later, he found a new man. The cell was clean and so was Rusty. He had renewed energy and a positive outlook on life. McAlister continued to visit him regularly, studying the Bible and praying with him. The two men became close friends over the next five years. In fact, McAlister said that Rusty grew into the son he never had, and as for Rusty, he had taken to calling McAlister "Pap."

Bob learned that Rusty's childhood in West Virginia had been anything but "almost heaven." His family was destitute, and Rusty was neglected and abused as a youngster. School was an ordeal both for him and for his teachers. Throughout his junior high years he wore the same two pair of pants and two ragged shirts. Out of shame, frustration, and a lack of adult guidance, Rusty quit school in his ninth grade year, a decision that was to be just the beginning of his troubles. His teenage years were full of turmoil as he was kicked out of his home many times and ran away countless others. He spent the better part of his youth living under bridges and in public rest rooms.

Bob taught Rusty the Bible, but Rusty was the teacher when it came to love and forgiveness. This young man who had never known real love was amazed and thrilled about the love of God. He never ceased to be surprised that other people could actually love someone like him through Jesus Christ. Rusty's childlike enthusiasm was a breath of fresh air to Bob, who came to realize how much he had taken for granted, especially with regard to the love of his family and friends.

In time Rusty became extremely bothered by the devastating pain he had caused the family and friends of his victim. Knowing that God had forgiven him, he desperately wanted the forgiveness of those he had wronged. Then a most significant thing happened: the brother of the woman Rusty had murdered became a Christian. God had dealt with him for two years about his need to forgive his sister's killer. Finally, he wrote Rusty a letter that offered not only forgiveness but love in Christ.

Not long before his scheduled execution, this brother and his wife came to visit Rusty. Bob was present when the two men met and tearfully embraced like long-lost brothers finally reunited. Rusty's senseless crime ten years earlier had constructed an enormous barrier between himself and the brother. The love of Christ obliterated that barrier and enabled both men to realize that, because of Him, they truly were brothers reunited on that day. It was a lesson Bob would not forget.

Not only did Rusty teach Bob McAlister how to love and forgive, he also taught him a powerful lesson about how to die. As the appointed day approached, Rusty exhibited a calm and assurance like Bob had never seen. Only his final day, with only hours remaining before his 1:00 A.M. execution, Rusty asked McAlister to read to him from the Bible. After an hour or so of listening, Rusty sat up on the side of his cot and said, "You know, the only thing I ever wanted was a home, Pap. Now I'm going to get one."

Bob continued his reading, and after a few minutes Rusty grew very still. Thinking he had fallen asleep, Bob placed a blanket over him and closed the Bible. As he turned to leave he felt a strong compulsion to lean over and kiss Rusty on the forehead. A short time later, Rusty Welborn was executed for murder. A woman assisting Rusty in his last moments shared this postscript to his story: As he was being prepared for his death, Rusty looked at her and said, "What a shame that a man's gotta wait 'til his last night alive to be kissed and tucked in for the very first time."

From *Bad Beginnings to Happy Endings*, by Ed Young, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publ., 1994), pp. 3-5.

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Outreach – Prayer of Jabez

1 Chronicles 4:10 And Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and that thine hand might be with me, and that thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me! And God granted him that which he requested."

Four things Jabez prayed for.

1. That God would bless him indeed.

Spiritual blessings are the best blessings: God's blessings are real things, and produce real effects.

2. That He would enlarge his coast. That God would enlarge our hearts, and so enlarge our portion in himself, and in the heavenly Canaan, ought to be our desire and prayer.

3. That God's hand might be with him. God's hand with us, to lead us, protect us, strengthen us, and to work all our works in us and for us, is a hand all-sufficient for us.

4. That he would keep him from evil, the evil of sin, the evil of trouble, all the evil designs of his enemies, that they might not hurt, nor make him a Jabez indeed, a man of sorrow. God granted that which he requested. God is ever ready to hear prayer: his ear is not now heavy.

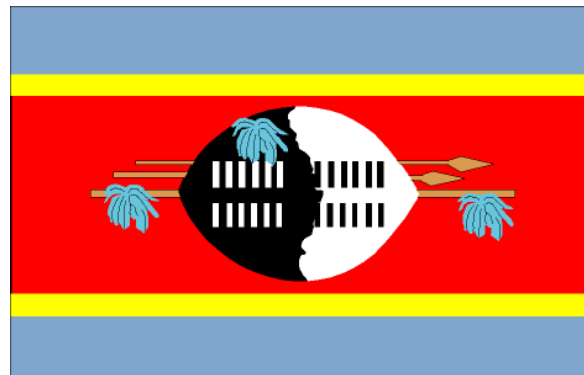
Here am I Lord, Send Me . . .

Many have read my testimony of "**God I accept you but . . .**" (Volume 10 - article on "The Path Inspired") and asked about where I am with my Africa trip. Well, Praise God, the wife and I will be going for 10 days the beginning of 2006. We have stepped out on faith and will be raising support for the trip. Destination is Swaziland near the southern tip of Africa. The thoughts are joy, fear, love, release, faith, unknown, newness, commitment, release, following, calling, and a million others. I think the wife and I may feel much like Jonah did when asked to go to Nineveh. We also know that the only answer you can give is "Yes Lord, here am I." Please pray that we raise support for our calling. We believe that "where God guides, He provides."

So, what is Swaziland like?

The time of year that we will be down there will be summer, with summer being November to March – opposite seasons with southern hemisphere. Also backwards from the northern hemisphere is that most rain falls in the summer months temperatures will be **HOT!!** This will be no vacation – we will be working in the hot sun for long extended days and hiking into the "bush" to reach remote huts and orphans.

The country (poorest in the world) consists of 6,641 sq. miles. This land is divided into 4 districts of (1) Hhohho, (2) Lubombo, (3) Manzini, and (4) Shiselweni. The population of 1,096,000 people speaks as their official languages Siswati and English. The general population is 45-85% H.I.V. positive. The main currency is the Lilangeni, but the African Rand is acceptable with a rate of exchange of \$1 USD = 6.64229 Rand.



Yes, we are going to Africa. This is an amazing opportunity to be part of the answer to devastating hunger among millions of people in Africa. My trip is with Bruce Wilkinson's faith based humanitarian organization called **Dream for Africa**. Our flight will be about 18 hours and then followed by a 5 hour bus trip to our destination in Swaziland. If you would like more specifics on what we will be doing during our 10 day trip please visit the

Dream for Africa website at www.dreamforafrica.com

I would like to ask each of you to consider partnering with me by praying and giving. The total cost of the trip is \$3,395.00 each for the wife and me. This covers everything plane fare, food, lodging, in country travel, and gardening necessities. I would love for you to be part of my "prayer and giving" team during this trip.

Please keep in mind that donations must be received by November 30th. Your gift will be applied towards our trip and you will receive a tax receipt. Please use the following participant codes;

3228236 for Bob

3226677 for Linda

Donations can be given 3 ways:

(1) by calling 1-800-901-7585,

(2) mailing checks made out to

Dream For Africa

send to;

Dream for Africa,

PO Box 470650,

Tulsa OK. 74147-0650

(3) donating online at www.dreamforafrica.com

and applying to code;

3228236 for Bob

3226677 for Linda

Looking forward to sharing with each of you our adventure when we return. We will be taking lots of digital pictures and burning them to CD on a laptop we hope to take.

The Cost of Incarceration

The numbers and figures quoted will be for the **California** state prisons, the nation's largest state prison system only. Although California is #1 of the states in cost, realize that there are another 49 states with the same dilemma. The LA Times reported in March 13, 2005 that **"the number of men and women in state lockups soared to 165,000 – a record number that jammed prisons to twice their intended capacity."**

On February 23, 2005, the number of inmates was 162,276. At CSP Solano, a system designed for 2,600, was housing nearly 6,000. Mule Creek State Prison in Ion, California houses about 10,000 inmates.

July saw the opening in Kern County of prison #33, for the state of California with the dedication of Delano II, designed to house 5,000 inmates with a construction cost of \$380 million.

So, what makes up the residents of the nations largest prison system? Note the following figures

Sex

Males: 93%
Females: 7%

Race/ethnicity

Hispanics: 37%
Whites: 29%
Blacks: 29%
Other: 6%

Average age – 36

Average sentence – 53 months

Average time served – 26 months

And with these 165,000 +/- individuals, what is the real expense of their "stay?"

Annual Budget (2004-2005) **\$6.25 Billion**

Average yearly inmate cost - **\$30,929**

Number of State Prisons – **33**

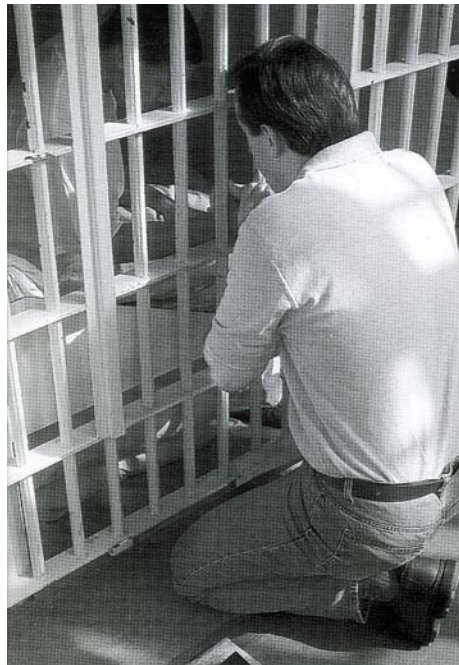
Number of firefighter camps – **40**

of community correction facilities – **12**

We would like to note that California's prison population is growing at a pace that could fill two new prisons every year. These prisons had a cost on an average of \$280 million to build and \$80 million a year to operate (Little Hoover Commission Report, Jan. 1998).

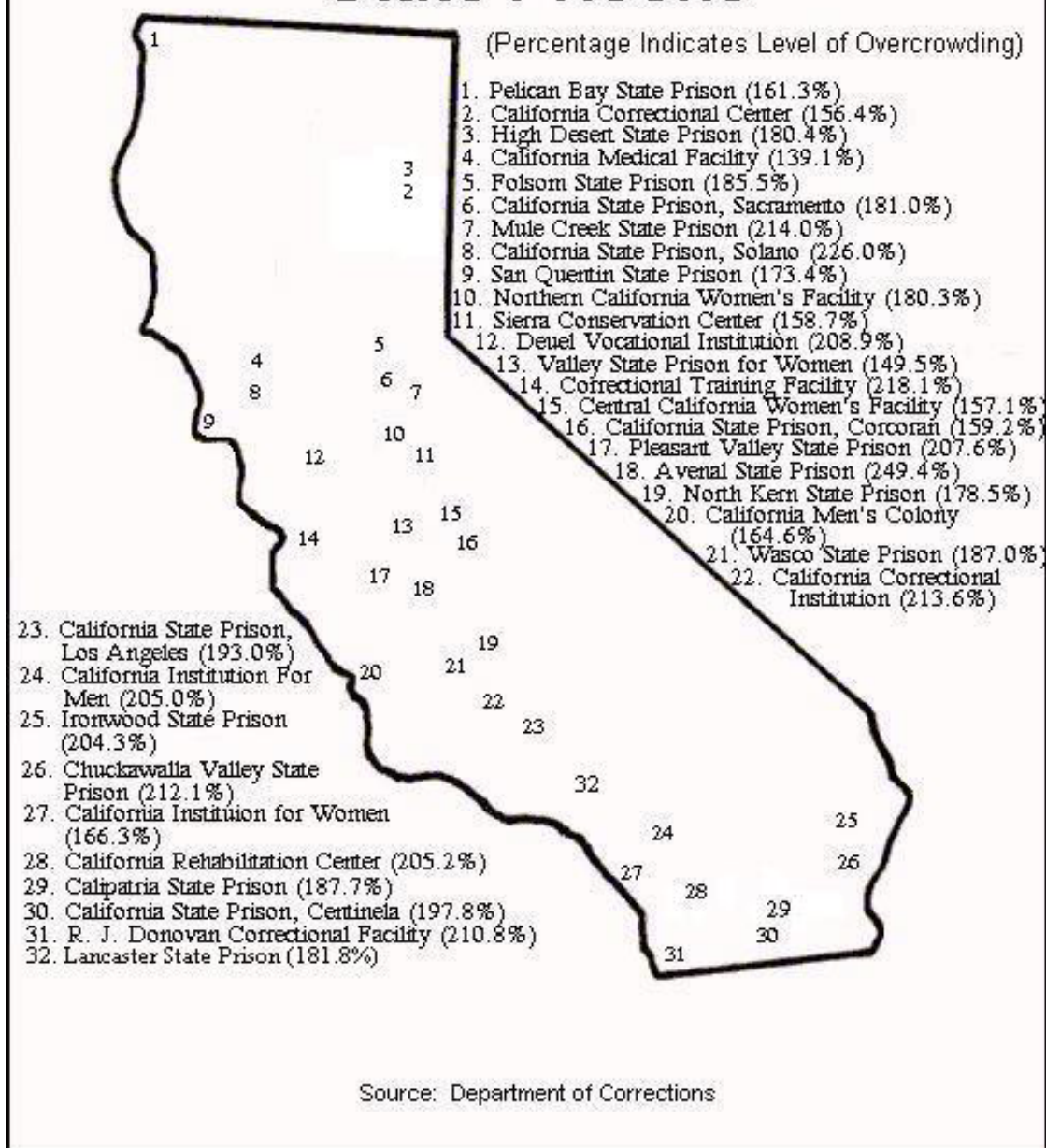
In June 1996, it was predicted that 17 new prisons will be needed by the year 2006 with the projected prison population growing to 240,000 inmates. Realize that the projected cost of incarcerating offenders with a minimum 20 year sentence is \$500,000. \$25,000 operational cost to house a prisoner in California for a year, not taking into account the fixed costs. A county jail bed costs \$19,700 per year. Elderly inmates typically cost up to \$65,000 annually, primarily because of their greater medical needs.

Cost of visitation of the inmates ?



This cost was paid by Jesus Christ and is continually carried by volunteers. Help curb these expenses by showing these individuals the Love of Christ.

California State Prisons



NOTE: 33. Delano 2 opened this year

The average overcrowding of the 32 listed facilities (#33 – Delano II of North Kern State Prison, not included) is **187.929%**. The message needs to get to the inmates that we do not need returning customers, we get lots of new ones each day. **Wouldn't it be nice if churches were this overcrowded!! Prisons would then be down for business!!**