



SOMEONE CARES PRISON MINISTRY *Newsletter*



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QUIETLY CHANGING LIVES

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**IT IS REALLY TRUE
GOD LOVES YOU.
BECAUSE OF YOU,
SOMEONE CARES.**

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Someone Cares is a faith ministry, supported by God's love and your gifts. It is a non-profit corporation; all donations are tax deductible.

JESUS SAID "COME TO ME ON THE WATER"

Was HE inviting us to take a swim, go fishing, or something else? Often we try to make the Bible say what we wish and some of us hang on our doctrine, which can be misleading. What's the most important thing? Keeping our eyes on Jesus. Leading people, including those in prison, to Jesus. If they happen to join our Church — neat! If they join someone else's church — neat! A Bible Church will lead to the truth as long as it follows the whole Bible.

JESUS ON THE MAIN LINE

In prison all religions share chapels and the things they have to read. We want to share things that will be a help to all. Few volunteers have the access Yvonne and I have in prison. Most are very restricted as to where they go and what they do. The main focus in prison for Christian volunteers is preaching and teaching. When a volunteer arrives at the prison they are searched and escorted to the Chapel or a Classroom, and inmates are released in bunches. When the sermon or study is over, the volunteer says goodbye and is escorted out.

Most volunteers are not allowed in cell blocks or on the yard, and it's a real shame that they are not allowed to visit inmates one to one, which is a real need. Pastors from

the street used to be able to visit one to one by their Ministerial credentials, but not any more. Often we are called and asked if we can get someone to visit an inmate, but this is no longer easy. It takes a clearance by the prison, which involves much paperwork and can take a long time.

PEN FRIENDS ENTER THE BELLY OF THE BEAST

Grab a drink, pull up a chair, paper and pen. Now, from the comfort of your own home you can enter Prison Ministry! You can be a friend to a lonely inmate in need of God's grace, and you don't have to drive, get cleared by security or go through a pat-down search.

In some areas of the prison the heat is terrible and there is no air. But from your desk or easy chair you can share with your Pen Friend through Paper Sunshine. Share your day, what's happening in your life, and talk about friends and family, including your spouse if married. Ask questions to help them have something to write back to you.

IN THE BELLY

Let me give you a rough idea of where these inmates may live. Yvonne and I started this Ministry at San Quentin. Join us as we reminisce about those early days: First, a 1^{1/2} hour ride to the prison. Next, security clearance at

three check-points, going through massive doors each time, then picking up keys to Chapel and the rest of the prison. Then it's off to "C" Section, walking across the yard, listening to the noise from the cell blocks.

We both carried large cases filled with things to hand out; the cases later in the day become our chairs. Arriving at "C" section we would unlock two massive doors--the entrance to Hell on earth, where officers would advise us of any problems going on. Then, one more door and we are there. Looking ahead to the left are five tiers, each holding 50 cells. Some of the rowdy inmates had over-flowed their toilets and water was everywhere. To the right are five gun rails with armed officers.

A normal cell usually consists of a bunk, a toilet/sink combination, and a place for a TV if allowed and if the inmate has money to buy it. But "C" Section has no TVs. Each tier has a shower that inmates use once or twice a week (but from the smell, some never do). Before an inmate can go to the shower he must place his hands behind him, back up to a slot in the cell door and wait for an officer to cuff him.

During the day most inmates sleep, as they spend most of the night talking or yelling. Often we must wake inmates to see if we have anything they need or want, including paper, books, greeting cards, Bibles, tracts, magazines and stamps, if allowed. The guards announce our presence by loud speaker to make sure the inmates are dressed. Some are defiant and do not heed the warning that a woman is on the floor, and so Yvonne has

become a master of eye contact. If an inmate has a problem they would like to talk with us about, we must get a guard to take them to a room where we can talk. In here are the worst of the worst, and they are treated as such.

Because we are among the very few allowed in blocks like this, we are treated with great respect most of the time. When Yvonne and I break for lunch, we try to catch up on each others notes. The inmates usually eat their meals, consisting of a hot breakfast and two sack lunches, in their cells.

Five tiers with 50 cells per 250 men makes for a lot of hate in "C" Section. Some try to make it all go away by getting "high." Yes, they do have access to drugs, but the price is high and sometimes includes death. They also make something called "pruno" in plastic bags from bread, fruit and sugar, and then shove it down their toilet to ferment. Most of the inmates have a shank (prison knife) made in their cell or bought, which they hide somewhere in the prison or yard.

DO THE CRIME, DO THE TIME

There have been many stories of men released from prison after serving years for crimes they did not commit. What if their sentence was death? I read about twenty men who were executed and later found not guilty. Our system of justice does not always work. Even sentencing is not always just. I read about eight men and two women who committed the same crime, but they received ten different sentences. Some of the problems with the system are due to laws that

were made years ago and should be revised, but are still intact. Another reason is that corruption at the top is a bad problem. A book to read on that topic is "The Rich Get Richer, The Poor Get Prison."

TIPS FOR PEN FRIENDS

While some in prison are not guilty, many are guilty but will claim that they are NOT. Remember that most inmates' letters are read by prison staff, so they are very careful about what they say. As your friendship grows they may open up and reveal more about themselves. Ask lots of questions, but please be sensitive and do not ask why they are in prison. Also, remember that they do not always have the things we take for granted, such as pens, pencils, paper and envelopes. Inmates often trade meals for those items just to write you! That's how much your Paper Sunshine means to them!

REHABILITATION OR REGENERATION

People are sent to prison to be rehabilitated, but very little of that takes place. Massive over-crowding and severe budget cuts make beneficial programs, such as school and jobs, almost impossible. If this is the case, and your Pen Friend has a desire in this area, perhaps you can help by providing them with educational material. If you are not able, then we will try to help.

With so many cut-backs inmates have to do with less and less, so they sometimes ask for more. This should not cause a problem between Pen Friends, but it sometimes does. If your Pen Friend asks for things that you are okay

with, go ahead. If you are unable to fill their requests, you should say no. If they are continually asking for things, or you feel their requests are unreasonable or they make you uncomfortable, be sure to let us know. We can always match you with a new inmate, and we'll handle the old one. Whatever you do, please do not just stop writing without letting us know.

YVONNE'S CORNER

A Look Inside Women's Prison

When we were in Michigan I volunteered as Chaplain at a women's prison, as they did not have their own Chaplain. We normally arrive at prisons by 9:00 a.m. and put in a full day's work--sometimes more. When I asked Don if he would like to help me with this job he said no, not at a women's prison, and I soon found out why.

I had an inmate clerk who was a hard worker and very good Christian. She had been charged with first degree murder, but was not guilty. She and her husband got into a fight which became very physical. He reached for a gun and said he was going to shoot her, so she also reached for a gun and shot him in self defense, but the court charged her with murder.

A women's prison is much different than a men's prison. There are dorms with bunks, and all belongings are usually kept in a box under the bunks, but some lucky ones have a small locker. There was an older woman who was serving a life sentence, and because she was older and sometimes wet the bed, they made her sleep in the laundry room. Each dorm has at least one dorm officer, either male or female.

Each dorm's restrooms and showers are in a separate area they must walk to, something like a camp meeting, except there is always an officer watching them as they shower. They don't have cosmetics or access to them, and sometimes color their hair with tea. The language is very rough and very racial. They really have no one to talk to, and it is a very lonely place.

SPECIAL THANKS

We wish to thank all who are helping us to get our daughter, Ronna and our grandson, Jake here to start expanding Someone Cares. We are also very grateful for the donated car and laptop computer, which will help a whole lot. Praise God for filling our requests!

*"Ask and it will be given to you...
For everyone who asks receives..."
Matthew 7:7-8b.*

THANKS AGAIN TO VOICE OF PROPHECY

Someone Cares Prison Ministry, along with Yvonne and I, will be featured for five days around the world on the Voice of Prophecy (VOP) radio program. If you do not have access to their program, you can listen to their current and archived broadcasts 24 hours a day through the internet. To learn more about VOP, or to listen to their excellent broadcasts and see the many other worthwhile services they provide, including free bible studies, visit their website at www.vop.com.

MARK THESE DATES!!!

The VOP program about Someone Cares will air September 28 through October 2, 2009. We ask that you pass this information on to

your entire address book, and have your pastors put it in the Church bulletin so God will be blessed.

During the program we are going to cover in detail the Pen Friend Program and "Paper Sunshine", which will be a real blessing to all. We may discuss some of my background, and will definitely share the many blessings caused by the work you all do for this MINISTRY. It's a shame that only we receive the credit for the work that is really done by all of you, including all the funding you supply.

I do pray that as many as are able will join us on these dates to hear firsthand about this important Ministry you are a part of. Last time we were on the air some women's and men's groups got together to listen during "computer radio parties." Many e-mailers joined us, and the snow ball, becoming as big as Mt. Everest, kept growing. It's very exciting the ways in which we can serve God and bring others to HIM.

WHERE THE RUBBER HITS THE ROAD

Many years ago, there was a common phrase relating to the use of drugs: "No, not my kid." Over the last few years we've received many calls or letters from people telling us the same kind of story, going something like this: "When you spoke at our Church and told us about the kind of people you minister to, I thought I never wanted those kinds of people in my Church, much less did I want to minister to them myself. But now my son is one of those people, and I beg you to try to help him."

Of course we will help—that's what this Ministry is all about.

STORIES FROM THE INSIDE

Second Chance. Here's a surprising confession from one of our Pen Friends: "I have been writing to inmates through Someone Cares for years.

When you were Chaplains at Soledad I was visiting several inmates and smuggling drugs to them. I am so blessed that I wasn't caught and was given the chance to make up for the harm I did."

Reaching Out. Perhaps you will recall a story we wrote awhile back about a time we were leaving the Soledad prison, and a little boy in the parking lot near our car yelled, "Daddy when are you coming home?" Yvonne spent time with the boy and his mother, and I looked up the inmate. He found a way through Jesus to get out of prison. That young boy is now a young man and a teacher, and his parents are Church members.

Falsely Accused. There was a good Christian man named John who married a woman with two teen-aged daughters. The wife and girls had never gone to Church before, so the man changed that. The woman loved it, but the girls did not, and so they made up stories that their step-father molested them, and he was sent to prison. Afterwards, the girls regretted what they had done and told the truth, but it took five years to get the man released. Forgiveness is a huge blessing — all are now going to church.

One Bad Decision. Here's another story I've told before, but it's worth repeating. Peter (not his real name) was a good kid. He was a pastor's son and a straight "A" student, but he wanted badly to belong to the "in" crowd. At a party he was pushed hard to take a hit off a joint (a puff of a doped cigarette). He said no, but eventually gave in, thinking "Just one puff and then I'm in with the kids." That cigarette was loaded with PCP, and while driving home under the influence he hit a car, killing several people.

At the age of 17, Peter was arrested and in put in jail, where he was gang raped. Going to court, no one expected the long sentence he received, or that he would be going to San Quentin. His family and friends stood by him, and Peter kept his faith in God and joined a Christian group in prison. However, he could not rid himself of the humiliation and hurt he suffered, and could not pray it away. Once again he was raped, and then he killed himself.

Many people are still living with the pain caused by these actions. Imagine Peter, his family and close friends. Imagine those whose deaths he caused, all of their many family members and friends. But what about the kids Peter wanted to be a part of, the ones who offered him the PCP-laced cigarette and pushed him into making that one bad decision? Do they know the pain

and suffering they caused?

Our prayer is that these kids will belong to the family of God.

"Even so it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish."
Matthew 18:14

GOD NEEDS YOU, AND SO DO WE

As we move forward, it has become obvious that this Ministry is NOT going to get smaller, but will only continue to grow. The size has caused us to make an error or two, and we are sorry. (This is another reason we are eagerly anticipating the arrival of our helpers, Ronna and Jake.) We never imagined we would be averaging 50-plus applications daily from inmates wanting a Pen Friend.

Make Paper Sunshine a part of your and your family's Christian walk. We cannot fully describe to you how much it means to those whose lives you touch through this Ministry, but we do know that you will surely be blessed for your faithful service to God.

"Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. Then you will win favor and a good name in the sight of God and man."

Proverbs 3:3-4 (NIV)