



Isaiah 61:1

Volume 1, Issue 2

Matthew 25:36

I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.'

January 2001

Feelings, Challenges and Prayer Request



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*...that foundation
is Jesus Christ.*

—1 Corinthians 3:11

I've been asked by many of you when my second newsletter would be out. This newsletter thing is new to me. But then so is everything else about this ministry. So to all of you that have come along side us please bear with me, while I am learning.

The first newsletter was relatively easy for me to do. I had only been in the job a short time and was riding on the crest of a Spiritual high. Well, like Pastor Jack was recently teaching, the fruit is grown down in the valley and we can't stay on the crest forever. So now I have to try to balance my perspective between the awe of what God has and is doing, with the reality check on the warfare that lies ahead in being a Chaplain. ***I am so very happy that God is the only one who is in control!***

So instead of jumping off into stories of all of the different experiences I am having in the jail, I want first try to express some things on my heart. Feelings of awe that God would even allow me the chance to serve Him in this way. Feelings of gratitude for a Pastor and a Church, who truly have a mission's heart, willing to support me and my family in this ministry. Feeling very humble because I know it is none of me, God's word has been so true in all of it. For He is strong where I am weak and He is using the foolish to confound the wise!

Starting in February I will be the Senior Chaplain of Men's Central Jail. That is amazing

enough in itself! In January 1977, I sat in a cell in that very same jail, facing a life sentence. Now I have a new life in Christ and will serve ***Him*** there. I only did four years, that time. You see there were many times before. I am so blessed they didn't have three strikes in place back then. But the difference is it was my *last* time. I celebrated twenty years 'out on the streets' on December 1st, 2000. I am not proud of my past, but I praise God that He will now use it to His glory.

There will be some real challenges to what is ahead. One being my position requires 24 college units. It's been many years since I have been to school and the idea of going back now is very intimidating! But I know, ***I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.*** (Phil 4:13-14) You just don't know how much I am counting on that. Finding the time to first go and then find study time will be a miracle in itself! I am still very excited at the prospect of being able to learn and equip myself for this ministry.

I said earlier that God was using the foolish things to confound the wise; well one of the Assistant Chaplain's I will be overseeing, is right now completing his Doctorate in Divinity. Many others have degrees of one kind or another. I certainly don't mean to imply that I am confounding their wisdom; many are godly servants who love the Lord. But rather, I am

referring to God using me at all in this position. Not that I do not think I'm called to this ministry. I am convinced that this is where I belong. I've been told all my life that I belong in jail, now I'm feeling that way about it too. I may not have the college education yet, but I know God will use my past to give these men hope. There is a way out of the life they know now.

Another of the challenges ahead is the Men's Central Jail itself. While being trained at Twin Towers Jail, across the street from Central, I was told by my trainer that he wouldn't want the job as Senior Chaplain of Central Jail. He said they are turning it into the 'Alcatraz' of the L.A. County system. By that he meant it is the high security facility of the L.A. County. I remember thinking at the time he was first telling me this, "is he trying to discourage me?" Well instead, I was encouraged; I was excited that God was putting me right where He wanted me to be!

Men's Central Jail was built over a period of time, in stages. The last stage was about twenty-five years ago. They have learned a lot about custody and design of jails since then. Twin Towers on the other hand was opened about four years ago; inmates there are under observation all the time. In Central there are many 'blind spots', where things can't be observed. Central is what was called a movement facility. If a man was called to a visit, he would

get a pass and he would follow a painted line to the visiting room. If men wanted to go to Chapel, they would get a pass and would follow another color to the Chapel. Court, hospital, attorneys and so on, they all had their own color-coded path to follow. They don't even feed in the mess hall anymore; the food is now brought to their cells. Central is no longer a movement facility, if an inmate needs to go somewhere he is escorted by a 'Prowler' Deputy. You see Central is now a 'lock down' and a 'keep away' facility. The high profile cases, the kind you hear about on the evening news, street gangs, the prison gangs, the flamboyant homosexuals, the hard-core inmates, all will be housed there. All have to be kept away from each other. So the days are over, where they used to have the Chapel full of people for worship. We are now going to have to come up with new ways to get the gospel message to these men. Instead of them coming to us, we will probably have to go to them. Or work with Sheriffs to find safe ways to still have services in the Chapel. With 6,500 inmates there is going to be no easy answer for any of the obstacles. But that is all they are, obstacles. **Rom 8:31; if God is for us, who can be against us?** Please pray for us in the Chaplain's office, to have the Lord's wisdom and discernment to find ways to overcome these obstructions.

God's economy is so cool! For about two years I was able to go into one of the facilities at the Chino prison every Tuesday morning. This facility is also called Central and it is also where they house their high security prisoners. We would go in there and walk the tiers. We would pass out Bibles and other religious materials, pray and share with them. It became my favorite part of the prison ministry at that time. Little did I know back then that a few years later I would have to set a similar system in place as

Chaplain. God used that time to train me.

In my last newsletter I talked about the leaders of the Russian prisons coming over here to tour our jails. When Colonel Shevin, the head of the prisons, was asked what he thought of Central, he said the Deputies really had their work cut out for them. They really do, remember to pray for them. There are some who fellowship at our church, if you know one commit to pray for them. If you don't know one, maybe it's time you introduce yourself to someone within the Peace Officer's ministry at our church?

One more challenge has to do with a restriction put on me. I have been told not to share my testimony in the jail. It's definitely God's way of stretching me. For the past five years in our prison ministry, I would give my testimony and say I am proof that Christ can change your life. I would depend on others to do the teaching, saying it was not my gift. Well now I've been pushed into it and it has been nothing but a blessing to me. I'm still not gifted as a teacher, it's totally God doing it through me and that is what makes it so awesome. I'm getting really good responses from the men, good numbers coming out and what is even more amazing is they come back again and again.

The reason I was advised not to give my testimony in the jail was purely a political one. With my past being what it is they don't want the wrong people to know and then use that to get me out of there. But as Pastor Jack said when he heard about it, our God is bigger than that and if He wants me there He will protect me. It isn't like I haven't given my testimony in there, I am just more careful of who is in earshot when I do.

I started this piece off saying I wanted to share some feelings with you. My family and I want to thank all of you for your prayers, encouragement and financial support. The love and encouragement have been more of a blessing than I could ever express.

I've been asked how we could take this chance with seven kids to support and so on. It's really not taking a chance at all. If God is in this and blesses it, then where is the chance? If this were to end tomorrow then I would still have the testimony that He took me from facing a life sentence, to serving Him as a Chaplain. But I don't think it will end tomorrow or any time soon. I have to believe that God has placed me there and I can make a difference only because it is He who enables me.

To take a quote from our new President in his Inauguration: "America, at its best, is compassionate. In the quiet of American conscience, we know that deep, persistent poverty is unworthy of our nation's promise. Whatever our views of its cause, we can agree that children at risk are not at fault. Abandonment and abuse are not acts of God, they are failures of love. The proliferation of prisons, however necessary, is no substitute for hope and order in our souls. Where there is suffering, there is duty. Americans in need are not strangers, they are citizens, not problems, but priorities, and all of us are diminished when any are hopeless.".... "Some needs and hurts are so deep they will only respond to a mentor's touch or a pastor's prayer."

In ending I would like to list some prayer concerns and needs:

- Wisdom and discernment
- Physical and spiritual protection for me and for my family
- Love and compassion for the unlovable
- Anointing for teaching
- Direction concerning college
- Keeping a balance between ministry and family
- Bibles and Christian reading material
- Protection from the politics within the system
- Laptop computer with Bible program to use at the jail (unable to have Bible on County computer)
- Continued financial provision

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Phil 4:6-7

Give Hope To The Hopeless

I was recently asked to counsel a "special case". "Special" because of the man's age, he is 19 years old. And "special" because the man was going to court the following day to receive a 375 year sentence. Think on this for a moment, how do you convince a man that there can still be hope, when he is facing something like that? As you may well guess this man did some terrible things to receive this kind of punishment. And he will admit he deserves to be punished. But that doesn't make any difference when you are looking at your life ending at the age of 19.

For the article I will call this inmate, Joe. So that if you decide to pray for him you can use a name, God knows who he really is.

I was warned ahead of time that he was very depressed and may be suicidal. Joe had assaulted both a Sheriff's Deputy and his lawyer in the past. They wanted to have me try to convince him there was still hope. How do you do that? Well of course I can't but God can. And the message of the Gospel is the only thing with that kind of power. So that is just what I shared with him. I told Joe that our God is a God of second chances. A God who would forgive even him if he would but just ask. (1 John 1:9) *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* Well, he wanted to believe but I think more than anything else Joe was like a man going down for the third time and was desperate to

hold onto anything he could.

There was a lot of concern that he would get violent while he was at court. I talked to him about that. I tried to convince Joe that acting up would only make matters worse, that what he did while at the county would follow him in a report, when it came time for him to be moved to the state prison. We talked about consequences to our actions. There were consequences for what he had done but it didn't mean he had to increase them by doing something foolish. And I put a challenge to him, I told Joe I was going to come back and see him the day after his sentencing. I said I wanted to see him right there in that same cell he was in now. Not down in solitaire where he would have had to do something foolish. Or up in the hospital, where he would have had to do something really foolish. Anyway it went, I was coming to see him.

Two days later I found myself looking forward to talking with Joe. And I was very pleased to see him there in the same cell I had last seen him. I was a little surprised to see Joe smile when he saw me coming. The smile was because he knew something I didn't. Joe actually hadn't been sentenced after all. It had been postponed for a few weeks while his lawyer did some last minute things in his behalf.

While talking with him he told me some of the victims' family members testified regarding his

sentence. One got up and told of how they were praying to God that he is sentenced to life and that he never is allowed out again. Joe said to me that he didn't know what God they were praying to because he was praying to God that he would only get 10 or 15 years!

It would be funny if it weren't for it being so sad. As I heard Joe mock the tears shed by the victims' families, I realized how hard his heart really is. It was the perfect example to me of how selfish and self centered we can be. He doesn't care about the pain and suffering he has caused. All Joe cares about is himself and if he can make a deal with God to get out, that is really all he is interested in. I guess he is looking for the positive confession, cheap grace, that will buy him out of his sins. The tragedy when it comes to him is that he could take *the free gift* that really would set him free no matter what happens in court.

Dealing with people like Joe is what I was talking about when I asked for prayer, to be able to love the unlovable. For me to always remember all God has forgiven me. To stay mindful of the expression, "but for the grace of God, there go I". Not to give up on him, God surely hasn't. Praise God for verses like: 2 Peter 3:9; *The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.*

A few days ago I went to see Joe again. He had some thing interesting to say. Joe said he felt like God wasn't listening to his prayers. What an opening! John 9:31; *Now we know that God does not*

hear sinners; but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does His will, He hears him. And I know what the Word says about not throwing pearls after swine. But it also says: James 5:20; *'...he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.* I told Joe the only way that he will hear from God is to get into His Word. At his point I do not know what else there is to say to him? I will keep going down to see him. Try to be encouraging without compromising the Gospel message in doing it.

I was sent to try to give Joe hope, in a hopeless situation. There will be no hope for him outside of finding the peace that goes beyond understanding that only Jesus will give. I pray that Joe finds it before its too late for him. But then that is the fate of us all without Christ.

In the time ahead I am sure that there will be many other Joes in my future. I pray for the right words, the wisdom, I surely don't possess on my own. To be able to share with these men God's love for us all, if we would only turn to Him. To convince ones like Joe that:

Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Rom 8:37-39

Praise Report

"Abba, Father, all things are possible for You. Take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will."



Picture drawn by a 'lifer' at Ironwood

I want to give an update on some of the things I had shared in the first newsletter. Actually a praise report really. It is awesome to see God work!

The Russians came and as I already mentioned, they were very impressed with The L.A. County Jail. But we were also able to take them to the Chino State Prison where they were given a tour. I got to learn some interesting things I never knew about the history of the place and I lived there for about two years!

We were not able to tour Heman G. Stark Youth Authority as they had hoped. But the Lord has still opened a door there. On February the 10th Pastor Jack has been asked to give a message. Be sure to keep

that in prayer. Pastor Jack will be ministering to some of the most hard-core youth in the state. We are in hopes of establishing a ministry in there, through the prison ministry in the near future. Something else to keep in prayer.

In the first newsletter I said that I had hoped to someday go over to the prisons in Russia. I have wanted to do that ever since I was there with our church in 1994. Well Colonel Shevvin has extended the invitation to come and I would love to do that some day. It is just for now I think my plate is more than full with what the Lord has for me to do right here.

The Christmas dinner our Church was involved with at Fred C. Nelles Youth Authority turned out very well. Around 175 people from five

different Calvary Chapels participated. Both Pastor Joey Roper and Cameron Pourhassanian did fine jobs of giving out the Gospel message. And what made it even better in my opinion is that the youth heard the Gospel from people very close to their own ages. There were many commitments and rededications to Christ that night and our church got to be a part of it.

Some long term fruit may develop out of it as well. Pastor Joey had the first in a series of meetings with the Chaplain from Fred C. Nelles. The end result will prayerfully be Joey teaching a regular Bible study. Just think of the experience he will get in working with youth. This would be a great training ground for a Youth Pastor.

A New Ministry Is Needed

refuses to believe at all.

At one point the convict stopped answering his letters for nearly a year and a half. Yet the man continued to write the inmate anyway and finally won his trust. Here the modeling of commitment was really demonstrated!

This particular inmate may never come to accept the Lord but this man has been faithful to the call he received.

This is a faithful saying: For if we died with Him, We shall also live with Him. If we endure, We shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us. If we

are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself.

2 Tim 2:11-13

We are getting requests from the prisons for pen-pals mainly from Chuckawalla and Ironwood State Prisons. The administration really doesn't want the volunteers that go out here to minister writing the inmates.

It is time to consider a new extension of the prison ministry. I realize that not all are called to go out to the prisons to minister. In a different kind of way, it is like when Pastor Jack talks about there are senders and goers when it comes to missions. It is my hope that there would be some

of you men at this church who would pray and see if the Lord would have you be a spiritual mentor to a convict. To help water the seeds that are being planted by your brothers and sisters who are going out to give the Gospel.

The inmate would not have your home address, in fact that is against the rules. The inmates would write to a P.O Box for the church. It would be something that would only take a few hours a month and yet could be of significant impact in a man's eternal life.

If you are interested please fill out a ministry request form. And when you see me at church please feel free to come talk to me about it.

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• All Chaplains associated with the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department jail system, work on a strictly volunteer basis. There is a complete adherence to the separation of Church and State. So as a form of disclaimer, I wish to clearly state this newsletter in no way represents the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department. I work with the Sheriff's Department in the spirit of cooperation for the purpose of serving the men and women incarcerated in the Los Angeles County Jail system. The county in no way compensates us for what we do as Chaplains. My support comes solely from donations made to send me as a missionary to the incarcerated.
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