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## Faith Put To Action

In the past weeks I have seen faith put to action like I have rarely seen before, from two different sources, with about the only thing they have in common is Jesus Christ.

Most who go to our church have heard by now of what Mary Ellen and Gil Baca are going through. Mary Ellen was recently diagnosed with terminal cancer.

When the doctor came in to give her the news he was amazed to see her smiling! Later when the doctor was telling Gil the results of the biopsy, he told us they would have to explain the seriousness of Mary Ellen's condition to her later. He thought it must be the medication because she obviously didn't

understand what he had told her about her illness. She understood very well, what the doctor failed to understand is the *peace beyond understanding*.

I know this is supposed to be for the prison/chaplain ministries, and I normally wouldn't have written on what has been happening with the Baca's in a newsletter. Yet the kind of faith I have seen demonstrated by them has had its own profound effect on me. Because of that it has had great impact on my ministry as well.

Many times while counseling with someone who feels like they have no hope, I have given the testimony of Mary Ellen and Gil and how the Lord used it with great power. I am sure that the Lord will continue to use and strengthen them for His glory.

I started this off by saying there were two different sources of inspiration in writing this article and the second is what I will spend the most time on.

His name is Mark; I first met him about a year ago at one of the Blythe prisons.

Mark recently was sent back to court for an appeal on his sentencing. One day he showed up in my office looking for a chaplain he had known in the

past. He was very disappointed to find out the chaplain he was looking for was not there. So he had to settle for talking to me instead.

As we started to talk I found out which prison he had come from, I told him how we go out there every month. It was then he looked at me closer, realized who I was and with a look of amazement said, "Ed! I just tried calling you yesterday but the church said you were out." He had no idea I had become a chaplain at the county jail.

Mark had been sentenced under the three-strike law, six years ago. He was given a sentence of sixteen years for a charge most people would do two years for. They had brought him back on appeal to possibly modify his time.

In the past few months I've gotten to know and respect Mark. He came to all the church services he could get out to. And when he couldn't get out he would conduct services of his own.

Every time he would come down for counseling he would bring me slips of paper with the booking numbers of the new men he had been witnessing to, usually with some kind of statement on how close he thought they were to accepting Jesus. It really became a joy to work with him

and I never knew what to expect next.

I spoke to my supervisor at the jail and we were working to try to help Mark get into a Christian men's home operated by Calvary Downey.

The assistant warden from his prison was supposed to send me some paperwork to give to the court on his behalf. Mark had things going for him and in all of it he really is trusting God, giving Him the glory and acknowledging He is in control.

The day before he was supposed to go to court, the paperwork from the assistant warden still hadn't got here. Instead of worrying about it, his response was that God's will would be done. I was really impressed with his attitude in all of it.

When I got home that night there was the paperwork from the prison. They had sent to my home address instead of to the jail where they were supposed to have sent it. I thought to myself, "it should be all things work together for good" not "what can go wrong, will go wrong."

By the time I got to work

the following day Mark would already be on a bus heading to court. Leave it up to my wife to think of dropping it off at the court on my way into work. Sure glad God gave me a helpmate!

The House of Jeremiah from Calvary Downey was supposed be there in court for him too. It all looked like it just might go his way. At least that was my prayer for him.

Normally I wouldn't have gotten this involved with a inmate, but for some reason I sensed something different in Mark and I really wanted to see him get a break.

The day after his court, I didn't even wait to have him called to my office. I went down to his cell to find out what had hap-

pened. As soon as I saw him I knew it had not gone as he had hoped for. I could see he was depressed. So when I asked what had happened I was very surprised at the answer he gave me.

They didn't let him go like everyone thought they would. The court did however reduce his time. He now had 18 months to serve. That is not long compared to the 10 years he did have, but one and a half years is still a long time when you were hoping to be getting out.

Mark's attitude about it was really what impressed me. You see he actually did put his faith to action. He was disappointed when he didn't get what he hoped for. Before the verdict he put

his hope and trust in God. After the sentence was given his response was of disappointment. But the first thing he said was he knew God had some other plan.

Mark started talking about how his custody level would now be dropped. He would probably be sent to another prison. To him, that meant there were new people for him to meet and witness to.

It was when I saw Mark's heart it reminded me of my brother Gil Baca and gave me the idea to try and write about it.

You see Gil was completely devastated when he got the news about Mary Ellen. And yet he was wanting to lift God up in all that he did. Sharing Jesus with all he came in

contact with. Putting faith into action in a very real way.

A different set of circumstances but here I was seeing a inmate putting his faith to action in a similar way. Mark was also devastated yet he wanted to lift God up and give Him the glory.

If you think of Mark, pray for him. And please continue to pray for the Baca's

*Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.*

*1 Tim 6:12*

## Update on Progress in the Jail

I have been asked a number of times for an update on the article I had written in the last issue concerning: "Feelings, Challenges and Prayer Request".

The beginning of February I became the Senior Chaplain of Men's Central Jail. The challenges are many and it is going to take a lot of time to make any significant change in the system. But I am happy to report that changes are starting to take place.

I was speaking with my immediate supervisor recently about how things were going, he said there has already been a 300% improvement. I don't know if I would go that far in my description of the progress but it is starting to get better.

When I first started in there I was lucky to get out a half a dozen men a day for counseling. After

getting the counseling program organized, I have counseled as many as twenty-two in one day.

It is a good first start but we still have a long way to go. There is still the areas of getting attendance numbers up for both Bible studies and Chapel Services.

Then there is the even bigger task of getting some kind of effective program in place for the men who can not come to services because of their custody level. We will instead have to bring the service to them.

At this time there are twenty-one chaplains that I oversee at Men's Central. They include a Buddhist, a Jewish Rabbi, a Christian Science teacher a Islamic Chaplain and then all the different kinds

of Chaplains who fall into the category of Protestant. They in turn have somewhere in the range of eight hundred volunteers that they bring in each month to the two Chapels in Men's Central.

It is my responsibility to make sure they are have the opportunity to have a time and place to conduct their services. It is the kind of balancing act I never imagined I would have to learn.

With the religious freedom we still enjoy in this country, everyone has the right to practice their own faith.

I just turned in my monthly report and I will include some of its statistics here. For it's you who support this ministry that helped to make it all possible...

**Number of Bible Studies 53**  
**Number in attendance 2,430**

**Number of Services 30**  
**Number in attendance 743**

**Special Programs 13**  
**Number in attendance 1,878**

**Number of inmates counseled**  
**1,026**

**New Testaments given out**  
**1,016**

**Bibles given out**  
**693**

**Other religious material given**  
**2,020**

## Back to the yard Again!

This past month we finished the last two of five yards in having another of our yard outreaches, as most of you heard from Justin Alfred the following day when he did Sunday service at Calvary Chapel Chino Hills.

But how many of you heard Pastor Justin the following Wednesday on *To Every Man An Answer?* He sent his regards to the men in Chuckawalla & Ironwood Prisons. That is so cool! The men listen to Calvary Satellite Network and hear the show every day.

Our own worship team got everything started. We are blessed with so much talent at our church. The men just loved the worship. Standing off to the side I wondered to myself how many of these guys were hearing something like this for the first time? From the looks on many of their faces I know they were blessed.

The Kry came on to do their music and as it turned out a number of the inmates knew who they were and put in requests for their favorite songs.

If the mail is any indicator, this may well have been the best outreach yet. ( Now I am starting to sound like Pastor Jack in how he says that after getting back from a mission trip.) Well the prison is truly a mission trip of its own. And judging by what some of these letters are saying I think there are some seeds being deeply planted. I am excited to think of what God is going to do in the future planned outreaches.

This coming month, from May 18th to the 20th, I will be going with a team that will include Pastor Bob Hoekstra. San Quentin, Northern California Women's Facility (NCWF) in Stockton and Central California Women's Facility (CCWF) in Chowchilla.

Both San Quentin and CCWF have people on Death Row. There are eight women at CCWF and four hundred at San Quentin. The last three times at San Quentin we were only able to go to the Chapel for services. I am praying we will be able to go to the cell blocks this time. But what I would really love to be able to do is to go to the "row" and be able to share the gospel with the condemned.

*There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according*

*to the Spirit. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.*  
*Rom 8:1-2*

Pastor Hoekstra hopes to bring back the prison ministry his late father "Chaplain Ray" Hoekstra had for over fifty years. This trip will be the kick off of it for him.

Please remember to pray for the fruit of this upcoming trip. And thank you for all your prayers!

*So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*  
*Rom 10:17*

Have you ever noticed the bulletin board on the right as you come in the main entrance at church? Well if you haven't, I want to draw your attention to it and in particular a poster way up in the upper left hand corner. It is a poster that announces the Prison Ministry is in need of Bibles and other sound Christian books.

Let me tell you something that happened a few

weeks ago. It underscores both the need and the blessing these Bibles and books can be.

I was in my office at the jail one afternoon. I was finishing up my paperwork, getting ready to go home for the day, when in walks an inmate who had just come back from court. Normally they come to our offices after being sent a pass. But in this case the guy came in on his own accord. I could tell he was really upset so when he asked to speak to me, I said he could come in anyway.

He sat down and started off his conversation by saying he wanted to die. Some people threaten suicide just for attention, you could tell this man was not one of them. He was really depressed and for awhile there it seemed like

nothing I could say helped him feel any better.

He had been raised by a grandmother who had taught him about God. But the witness had been compromised to the point he thought all Christians were hypocrites and wanted no part of it. Yet in the state of mind he was in he instinctively knew he needed God like never before.

He was someone who had been raised to be a good kid. Been to college and by the world's standards should have had it made. But instead he found himself in a place he never thought he would be, facing the real possibility of going to prison.

We ended up talking for a long while, about his life, how he saw things and a lot about his fears.

That is what is so cool about the Word, it really doesn't come back void! It speaks to our fears, it gives us hope when nothing else seems to be able to.

In the end he promised to start reading the Bible I gave him and that he would start coming to our services at the chapel. I wanted to give him some other kind of Christian book for him to read that would hopefully give him some encouragement. What I found was a book titled *When Your At The End Of Your Rope* and it had a picture on the cover that had a pair of hands hanging on a rope that was ready to brake. He sure did feel that way that day!

When I showed him the book he said "man that is the book I need to read." It was just so obvious to me that God was

## Hanging On A Rope

***J, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, 2 with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love,  
Eph 4:1-2***

in the whole thing, all the way down to providing just the right book for him to have.

But what made it even better was when I saw the inmate out for a Bible

study a few days later. I was really blessed because I was seeing fruit of what God had done, by His Word.

In the past few weeks since this all first started, I have seen him a number of times. Every time he gets depressed he wants to come talk about it and get some encouragement. I suppose there will be a lot more before he goes to where he is going to go. But what I personally like about it all is, I am seeing him get stronger and stronger along the way. Just yesterday I saw him walking down a hall and I asked him in passing how he was doing. His reply to me was to smile and say “

I'm blessed “

I wanted to convey this incident for the reason of helping all of you to see how much good some old paperback book you have laying out in your garage somewhere could do for someone else.

We as a church have already put in a lot of Bibles and books to both the jail I work at and to the prisons we go to. One woman at our church has donated about 1,000 Bibles and New Testaments to the Jail. Then we had a Prison ministry that was closing down who donated another 1,000 or so Pocket New Testaments. Then of course the Gideon's have donated about the same . So there have been a lot of Bibles and that need will never go away.

But what I am really hoping to get is more Christian Books to hand out. Maybe for the next guy who is at the end of his rope too.

For all of you who have donated books and tapes in the past, thank you. It has made a difference in someone's life. And for those who haven't, please pray about giving the old books you have around the house.

I should also mention, the jail won't allow hard back books

### ***We Continue To Grow***

There have been announcements made for sign ups to be in prison ministry. Of course not everyone is called to be in prison ministry. But I would encourage anyone to pray about how they could be a part of it. Keep in mind *Matthew 25:36*. If you are not into going yourself, then it can be as a sender. It could also be praying for us when you know we are out there on the battlefield, in donating Bibles and books. Its all part of equipping us to have the weapons needed for the fight.

From the recent new signups, we do have enough to send two different teams to Chuckawalla and Ironwood Prisons. So we plan to start going on the 1st & 3rd Saturdays of the month, starting in May.

We will be fielding new teams into the Chino Prison facilities in June so we are just starting to

organize those groups. There is still some time left to sign up.

We have all the people needed for the Youth Authority group as well. They will be cleared to go in very soon.

At the recent prison outreach we did at Chuckawalla. When we were on our way out I was heading up the rear. And as I looked at the 30 or so people walking ahead of me, I felt very humbled and blessed to see what God has done in His prison ministry over the past five years!

Another thing I had been thinking of was how we have just grown in sheer numbers! We have doubled in size. And from the start we have been a far larger ministry than is the normal size for a church. Usually there are no more than a half dozen or so in most churches prison min-

istry, if they even have one at all. From the start we had 25 volunteers and now we have grown to over 50! Praise God!!

My family has been going to Calvary Chapel Chino Hills from with-in just a few weeks of it coming to the industrial complex. Back then there were about 50 adults in the whole church. It has been remarkable to see the church grow in the past 9+ years, its been just as amazing to see the prison ministry grow in the past 5 years.

With continued growth we may soon be able to start going to California State Prison in Lancaster. There is also the possibility that some women may be able to start going into (CIW) California Institution for Women in Frontera. We have been trying to get in there for a long time and it looks like that may

happen too.

All these doors that have been opening to give us the opportunities to minister have truly been incredible!

***11. Therefore we also pray always for you that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness and the work of faith with power, 12. that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.***

***2 Thess 1:11-12***

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