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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.*

Something to Think About



Have you ever wondered why during a sermon pastors often speak in the third person, saying "we" when they really should have said "I"? Well I have and now I finally think I understand why.

Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,'
Zech 4:6

It is the Spirit of the Lord who is enabling them to preach and teach the Word.

When I was first asked to be a Chaplain, Pastor Jack wanted me to ask my prospective boss why he thought I could do the job. The answer my boss gave was, "You can't, but God can."

When awesome things happen I need to give God the glory first and foremost. And if it wasn't for all of you who are supporting this ministry, none of these things could be possible either. So I'm training myself to really think in terms of "we" and not "me or I".

When I am sent to places like San Quentin it is the Lord empowering me and the Church sending me. We collectively are being used by God to promote the gospel.

In the last newsletter I reported that we would be going to San Quentin in May. The team was from Calvary Chapel Downey, headed by Pastor Mark Maciel and Pastor Mike Sasso. Also Pastor Carlos Ayub from Calvary Chapel Costa Mesa, who is overseeing the restarting of their jail ministry. Rounding out the team, Pastor Bob Hoekstra from Living in Christ Ministries and his son Pastor Matthew Hoekstra, the new head of IPM (International Prison Ministry).

The prisons we went to over the weekend of the 18th were, San Quentin, Valley State Prison for Women, Northern California Women's Facility and the Santa Rita County Jail for the Alameda County. A very full weekend for the forty plus people who went on the trip.

As anyone who has gone on any mis-

sion trip knows there are both spiritual highs and lows. The attacks are plentiful and this trip was no exception.

People who were supposed to be cleared to get in were not, there were missed rides, late planes and on and on. Knowing that the Adversary was coming against the team assured us that God was going to do a mighty work.

Every trip we say that it was the best, maybe because it is the freshest in our memory? All I know for sure is that there were many decisions for Christ and it was very powerful. I really want to thank the church body for letting me be a part of it.

Most prisoners are totally without God and are ruled by their lusts and their insane compulsive behaviors. So often, God uses their coming to prison to break and humble them to show them both their sinfulness and their need for His love and grace.

How parent-abused, street-hardened, institution neglected prisoners need to hear and see this truth! The favorite worship song of prisoners across America and many parts of the world today is "Amazing Grace." Why? It simply exalts what God has done by grace in our lives, bringing us from darkness to the light of His love, from bondage of sin to glorious liberty and position as sons and daughters of God!

"So, just what does an inmate need to really get rooted in Christ?" One thing he or she requires is a Christian friend, that someone who Romans 10:14-15 says "brings good news". It is to be understood that the volunteer going into a prison or jail is to be Christian, but he is also to be a friend. Webster's dictionary defines a "friend" as being "one attached to another by affection or esteem". The volunteer is to be a bridge builder, a person with the endurance and commitment to not only meet with the inmate regularly while in prison, but to assist in his or her transition back

into society, employment, and most importantly, into the life of a loving local church. ***The inmate may be just a number to the state, but to Jesus he is a person of eternal value.*** In light of this, our mandate is to nurture him and be that Christian friend.

The real need for this kind of ministry is underscored by numbers like these:

- The number of inmates in state and federal prisons has increased more than five-fold from less than 200,000 in 1970 to 1,254,600 by 1999. An additional 606,000 are held in local jails. (23,000 in the L.A. County system alone!)
- The number of persons on probation and parole has been growing dramatically along with institutional populations. There are now 6 million Americans incarcerated or on probation, or parole, an increase of 225 percent since 1980. (The year I got out of prison for the last time)
- Almost one in three (32%) young black males in the age group 20-29 is under some type of correctional control (incarceration, probation, or parole), as is 1 in 15 young white males and 1 in 8 young Hispanic males.
- In fiscal year 1995, state and federal governments planned \$5.1 billion in new prison construction, at an average cost of \$58,000 for a medium security cell.
- The 1999 United States' rate of incarceration of 682 inmates per 100,000 population is the second highest reported rate in the world, behind only Russia's rate of 685 per 100,000 for 1998.
- 94% of prison inmates are male, 6% female.
- 48% of prison and jail inmates in 1999 were black and 19% were Hispanic.

*Jesus is the Key
that unlocks the door*

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**Not by might
nor by power,
but by My Spirit.**

Something to Think About continued



**Bring my soul out of prison, That I may praise Your name;
Ps 142:7**



Entrance to San Quentin

- 65% of state prison inmates in 1991 had not completed high school.

- 33% of jail inmates in 1991 were unemployed prior to entering jail.

- 32% of jail inmates in 1991 who had been free for at least one year prior to their arrest had annual incomes of under \$5,000.

- 71% of those sentenced to state prisons in 1996 were convicted of non-violent crimes, including 30% for drug offenses, and 29% for property offenses.

- 57% of jail inmates in 1989 reported they were under the influence of alcohol or drugs at the time they committed their offense.

- 1 in 4 jail inmates in 1989 was in jail for a drug offense, compared to 1 in 10 in 1983; drug offenders constituted 23% of 1996 state prison inmates and 60% of 1996 federal prison inmates.

Sources: Bureau of Justice Statistics, Corrections Compendium, and The Sentencing Project. April/2000

The numbers concerning Death Row have to make you stop and think as well. California leads the nation in the number of condemned prisoners--580 men and 12 women--more than Texas, which has 450, and Florida with 372. There are 38 states with death rows California's death row is so overcrowded the prison could stage an execution every day for 19 months--including weekends--and not exhaust its ranks.

In just one month there are 20 gang related murders in the city of Los Angeles alone. And an average of 240 gang related acts of violence every month. Maybe the city should be renamed something other than the City of Angels?

Where is it all heading? What is the answer? Tougher laws? Build more prisons? How about we just string barbed wire around the whole state? No the only answer is Jesus Christ.

1 Cor 1:23-25
23 but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, 24 but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. 25 Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

Generally speaking, individuals and groups who minister in prison chapel services disperse the Word of God, sing the music, give an invitation, cap it off with a show of hands and offer a brief prayer. While heads are bowed, hands are raised and a count is taken. It starts there but it can not end there.

Bible studies, long term mentoring and discipleship have to happen if we are going to see effective, lasting change in any of their lives. Helping them to establish real church bodies on their prison yards. Equipping them to be men and women of God no matter what their circumstances. Helping them become salt and light in a very dark place.

What is IPM?

International Prison Ministry is a ministry founded by Chaplain Ray Hoekstra somewhere around 57 years ago. Chaplain Ray went home to be with the Lord about three years ago but his ministry lives on.

Not too long before his death I was able to meet him at a Prison Ministry Conference. He was the main speaker of the conference. My wife, Allison, and myself ate a few of the meals with him and his wife Leola. I found him to be a very warm and friendly man who really loved what he did.

After spending some time with his son, Pastor Bob, it has given me a more complete picture of his father. Pastor Bob told me something that I thought was neat. He said as far back as he can remember Kay Smith (Pastor Chuck's wife) always introduced Pastor Bob as "this is Chaplain Ray's son Pastor Bob Hoekstra".

I understand that IPM started when a long time friend of Chaplain Ray's, who was a three time loser by the age of 19, accepted the Lord while in jail. He came out of jail, shared what the Lord had done in his life to a young Ray Hoekstra. It is what started Chaplain Ray on a lifelong journey of going to prisons all over the world. There was a radio ministry that

was heard daily by convict and civilian alike. It not only got the message into all the prisons but it also educated the Christian community on the need to reach the lost behind prison walls. I don't think there has been anyone else do a better job at getting that message out.

During an average year, this ministry produces and distributes 100,000 Bibles in English and Spanish; 150,000 New Testaments in English and Spanish, and more than 1,000,000 Life Changing books...the true stories of ex-Convicts who turned from Crime to Christ and became law-abiding citizens, and very often America's most effective jail and prison volunteers.

Chaplain Ray would bring the people back into the prison they came out of and would by example give the inmates hope by showing them that Jesus really did change lives and theirs could be changed too.

What is exciting to me is hearing from Pastor Bob what he and his son Pastor Matthew are going to reopen IPM. Everything but the book distribution had shut down after Chaplain Rays passing. Now that is going to start to change.

They are talking about starting the radio ministry back in a format maybe similar to what others did with J. Vernon McGee's Show after he

passed away.

They started to go into prisons in April with a mid-west tour and now with us on the trip up to northern California. Next on their agenda is a trip to the east coast near the end of this year.

There are plans for more books to be published from the publishing branch of their ministry, Acclaimed Books. I asked Pastor Bob to consider publishing Bible study curriculum for the prisoners. As a Chaplain, I see the need to have more tools to help in teaching the word of God in the prisons and jails. And with Pastor Bob being a Bible teacher for so long, I am sure that God will use him mightily in developing teaching and discipleship aids to equip many prison ministries around the country.

Over the years our church has had its time of going to Russia, Germany, England and Mexico. Soon the youth will go to Brazil. We have a mission minded church and I praise God for it. If that were not so I don't think the prison ministry would be what it is today at our church. Well could it be that there are mission trips in the future where the destinations will be prisons around the county? We will see what God has in store.

Please keep Pastors Bob & Matthew Hoekstra in your prayers as they keep Chaplain Ray's vision going.



**International
Prison
Ministry**

Mark 16:15

Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature....



Chaplain Ray and his wife Leola on a mission to the former Soviet Union

Don't Judge a Book by It's Cover



it gives you the idea. This guy wants all to know he is Made in the USA

So God, who knows the heart, acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He did to us, and made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.

Acts 15:8-9



Remember the movie Braveheart? I was recently reminded of it, how they painted their faces all up when going into battle. Lots of cultures did the same kind of thing. American Indians for example, with their war paint. Then there was the tattooed sailor in the movie Moby Dick .

All of them had something in common, they were trying to frighten the enemy with their appearance.

Tattoos on convicts is nothing new. I have got more than a few myself. But by today's standards I don't have many at all.

After I started going to church, I became very ashamed of my "tacs" as they are called. You would never see me in anything but long sleeved shirts no matter how hot it was.

It is kind of ironic how things work, I long ago got over my shame of my tattoos. God used them in a powerful way while we were in Russia. A young Russian man was drawn to me because of my tacs and later accepted the Lord. I never again wore long sleeves to cover them in shame.

The ironic thing is I now have to keep my arms covered while I am at the jail doing my job. It is a political thing now, some feel it wouldn't project the right image. Whatever, as long as my past came be used to glorify God.

A few weeks ago, the issue of tattoos surfaced again for me in a new way. You see today convicts are known to put tattoos in places I would have never thought of putting them. It used to be you put them where they could be covered up if need be.

Today they put them all over their face, neck and everywhere else imaginable. The guy in the story of Moby Dick had just a few in comparison.

And some of the things they put on I won't even go into here, you can just know that the more shock they can produce the better they like it.

I had such a guy come into my office a few weeks ago. Some of it would be very hard to put into words but it was shocking. He did achieve the desired effect.

He had horns on his forehead, a design all over his shaved head that was a scene right out of hell. Many other designs on his face and neck.

Ever watch a dubbed movie where the voice doesn't match up with the movement of the mouth? Well sitting there listening to Bill tell me how he wanted God in his life, sure didn't match up with the guy I was looking at!

Bill was so far down the only way to look was up. He isn't even facing a lot of time. No he was just burned out on the whole life style. He is finished with people who only wanted him for what was in it for them.

After spending some time with him, it started to become more clear to me, that stuff all over his face was just a big front, a defense to cover up the vulnerability that was really there. Braveheart wasn't so brave after all. Much of what he appeared to be was there to keep people away. Now he just wanted to get out of the rat race he had been in for so long.

I couldn't help but think he is going to have a real hard time, the consequences of his past were literally written all over him. Long sleeve shirts wouldn't do it

for him.

I thought to myself, why couldn't he have come to this realization before it had gotten this far? But then who am I to judge God's timing? And I ought to be the first to acknowledge it took me far too long to come to that same realization in my own life.

He is saying all the right things and it seems like he is sincere. I really hope he makes it. What an awesome testimony it would be. You really would be able to say, **you can't judge a book by its cover.**

Bill is just facing a violation of parole this time. The most he is looking at is a year. After all the time he has got under his belt a year is nothing.

I hope he does the things we talked about. Reading his Word and developing a prayer life. Getting involved with the prison ministries that will be coming to wherever they send him. To get to know the other Christian men at the prison and above all else, work on his personal relationship with the Lord.

Somewhere down the line I hope I hear from him. He said he would write me, maybe he will? Or maybe I'll run into him? All I can do is be a part of the planting process and just hope that something takes root.

For the LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."

1 Sam 16:7-8

Someone is Wanting to Hear From You

In one of the past news letters I put out a call for anyone who would be interested in being a pen pal to someone in the "pen". The only problem was I didn't get even one taker.

There really is a need and where there is a need God always provides for it. There have been requests but so far we haven't been able to do anything with it.

One thing I don't think I made clear when I first wrote about this, is how it all works. I am

sure many of you would be nervous of a person in prison having your home address. I would be too. But that isn't how it works.

We have a P.O. Box that all letters have to go to, that is built in for just that kind of protection.

So is there anyone out there in light of this new information that would be interested in a long term mentoring program via the mail?

Giving them the Gospel is very important but just as important is to be there for them.

Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. Gal 6:2

There are different parts of the body, not all of us are called to go out to the prisons. But if you think you might be interested in writing to someone please contact me about it.

Being About Our Fathers Business

Recently something happened that Jack has asked me to address in this newsletter.

A man from our church came to me wanting to contribute some money to get a number of Bibles for the men at the jail.

I explained to him I wanted all monies to go to the church for the accountability. As well as so that person can receive their tax donation deduction. And really, there is another personal reason, I don't want to know who is doing what, I would rather that stay between them and God.

I prefer to have just the contributors name, so that I can have them on the mailing list for this newsletter. I feel that as they are supporting the ministry they should be getting regular updates on what their money is going for.

While I am on the subject of being on the mailing list. If you are reading this and have not been put on the mailing list. Contact me if you want to be put on. All contact information is at the bottom of this page.

Anyway back to this man who came to me wanting to contribute for Bibles. He went to the church to give the money like I suggested.

He had planned to give some to our support and some to get the Bibles. He was at the church counter asking one of the weekend volunteers behind the counter how should he make the check out. He was told just make it out to the church and put prison ministry in the memo section.

The check should not have been made out that way. All checks or donation envelopes made out to any ministry, need to be made out very specifically. Making it out for prison ministry is not good enough for the church to know where you are wanting your money to go.

We have the outreaches and materials that we purchase for the inmates and that is a budget of its own.

Please let me say right here if anyone gave a donation that was earmarked to prison ministry and you intended for it to go to our support, please know that the Lord was in control. Our budget has been met every month so far, praise God. If you had intended for it to go somewhere else, God was in control there too, for he has taken care of the needs all the way around. After all everything is His economy.

It has all been straightened out and we just received all those new Bibles at the jail this past week.

Just for future reference, if you wish to donate something to the prison ministry, like the outreaches, put "prison ministry", if it is to get Bibles for prison write "prison Bibles", if it is for our support make the designation: "Metro Mission / Los Angeles" or you can just put "Ed Welsh", something like that so there will be no confusion as to where you want your monies to go.

In all contributions for any ministry you are giving to, you should always be specific.

For all of you who have been contributing to this ministry, thank you and may God bless you. For the ones who are constantly coming up and telling me how they are praying for me and my family, I can't tell you how much that means to me. This whole experience has been unbelievable!

Aside from the Bibles this man just bought for the jail, another couple from our church got a number of cases of the New Believers Bible (with a study section from Greg Laurie) Those Bibles have been such a blessing! I had a inmate come to my office the other day with one of them in hand. It was all dog-eared and worn. He said it had helped him to understand the Bible like never before. He said he planned to take it home with him so he could share it with his family. It really blessed me when I see that kind of excitement over the Word.

The woman of that couple said she had the dream of getting a

Bible for every prisoner in the Jail. I thought she meant the 6,500 that is at my jail! That would be awesome in itself. But what she meant was 23,000 for everyone is in the whole LA system!

I am not a convict sympathizer much to the surprise of many of them. I believe like the old Robert Blake show "Barretta" theme song said, "if you can't do the time, don't do the crime".

But I do have a heart for these men and women. My kid sister is an x-con and I've seen how the lifestyle destroyed her life. I know how it destroyed mine for so many years.

I just want the message to go out of what Jesus can do in their life, if they would only give Him a chance. I often ask them, what have they got to loose? They can have a money back guarantee, if they give God the chance and it doesn't work for them they can still go back to the same miserable life they had.

I have a motivation to do what I am doing. I want them to know the same kind of blessings that the Lord has shown me.

But what really blesses me is to see all the people at our church who also have a heart for the convicts, that don't have the past or motivation like I have. They give of their time, their money, they give themselves, because they are called through their love of the Lord. To explain it or understand it, I can't. All I know is we are about our Father's business.

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