



Isaiah 61:1



# County Jail Chaplain Ed Welsh

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.*

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## What's Happening

plate fuller than I have ever had it before.

The website has been a doorway into reaching out in a new way. People are e-mailing us for help. Mostly in requests to have us see someone at the different facilities we go to. Others are looking for resources or just to ask some advice. There are hundreds coming to the site every month, each month more than the last. What amazes me most about that is that there hasn't been too much new content so it has to mean there continues to be new people coming.

There is a web-ring we joined that has 1200 prison ministries in it. Our site has continued to grow in popularity to where it has been listed in the top ten for some time now. It is so amazing! God truly does use the foolish things to confound the wise. From the start I haven't had a clue what I have been doing. That is what makes it so completely obvious that it is God who is doing it.

I have no idea where it will go in the future, I just want it to be something that glorifies God and helps minister to the Body of Christ.

It has been the same kind of thing with the school too. I remember how intimidat-

ed I was before I started. If you go back and read the newsletter where I first asked for all your prayers, I think it conveys just how intimidated I was. Well God has answered all those prayers, school has been a real blessing. I really enjoy it and I know it's helping to equip me for the ministry that God has called me to.

Its true that having a full plate has slowed me down in getting the next news letter out but it has been more than just that. I need to be transparent with all of you. Especially with the ones I know are praying for me and this ministry.

You can't always be on a mountain top. And there have been some valleys in these past few months. It is nothing that I am surprised about. **Eph 6:12** says, **For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness.....**

I have known all along that there is the powerful element of spiritual warfare involved with what I am doing. Just today I was talking with one of the new couples who recently signed up for prison ministry. They are long time Christians involved in many ministries over the years.

And yet they were sharing with me that ever since they signed up for the prison ministry they have been under attack like never before. They understood just as I do, that we are truly dealing in the devil's domain and it goes with out saying that the spiritual warfare comes with the territory.

The real battle for me has come in the past few months. I've written about Hannibal & Monster and what I have been trying to do with them. Well more than part of my problem is I too often try doing it in the flesh instead of the Spirit and every time I do I fall on my face. I need to always keep in mind: **Zech 4:6** **"Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit," Says the LORD of hosts.** I can have the best of intentions, be right on in what I am trying to get accomplished and if I don't do it in the power of the Spirit I fail every time. Or at the very least go through many unnecessary battles along the way.

When I started dealing with Hannibal I felt very inadequate. I went to pastors, teachers and anyone I could think of for advice. No one was able to help very much. Sure all encouraged me but in the end *(continued on page 2)*

I have been asked when I would be doing another newsletter so many times, I knew I just had to make the time to sit down and start this. I am not trying to make any excuses but these last few months have been very full.

Just trying to learn how to put a website together has been very challenging. I had no idea when I started the project just how much time goes into making one.

Then there has been going to school too. I just finished my second semester and now into the summer session.

By no means am I complaining about it. I have really been enjoying all of it. But it has made my

## What's Happening (continued)

(continued from page 1)

I had to realize that the Lord brought me into this and He will be the one that will see me through.

The AIDS is taking its toll on Hannibal and it effects everything he does. One time I see him he is fine and the next he is going off on me to the point I just have to leave and come back another day. We all know it is just a matter of time until it gets him and I guess because of his American Indian heritage he is obsessed with where he is going to be buried. I keep trying to redirect his concerns, to where his soul is going to be instead of where his bones are going to lie.

We have been working on getting him in contact with his family before the time comes. He hasn't seen his mother in about twelve years. For the past month or so he has been able to talk to her every week on the phone. First we were able to set the calls up and now we have been able to get her down here this coming week to see him for a few days.

I still haven't got a clue what I am doing, I'm just trying to be there for him. He knows that if I tell him I'll do something for him, I'll do it. Hoping

that I can get him to trust me in the more important issue of where he is going to spend eternity.

Now Monster is a different story, with a much more hopeful prospect of something good happening. A few weeks ago he had a real turning point. He had a important decision to make concerning his case. He had to wave his right to a speedy trial because his attorneys were not ready to proceed with his case. All he wanted to do was give up and go back to death row and let everything take its course. He was wanting to give up. The way he put it to me was he didn't think he wanted to try and deal with doing life without a possibility of parole. You have to remember he really thinks of himself as a monster because of his past. He truly does carry a lot of guilt and remorse for what he has done. So much so I haven't yet been able to convince him that God would forgive him if he would only just ask for it.

I had no idea what he finally decided to do the day he went to court. But I was praying for him and the day I went back to see him after he had gone to court, the Lord answered my prayers.

He told me he believes that there was a reason for him to come down from death row that was far more important than just his appeal. He decided that he wasn't going to give up and just go back to the row. He says no matter what happens in court in the coming months he wants to spend this time to get his life right with God! That is a real big step for him.

One of the things that really encouraged him was when I told him about a man at our church who told me a story of how he had woke up in the middle of the night with Monster on his heart and how he prayed for him. The man didn't even understand it himself how the Lord would cause him to care for someone he doesn't even know. I told Monster that there were a lot more than just the one guy praying for him.

Yes there are many spiritual battles going on in this ministry and if I fail to equip myself with the full armor of God I will fall in this battle. I will experience more valleys and more dryness. I am so glad that this is ultimately God's ministry and it is He who wins the victory. I am also so very grateful that so many of you are praying. **James 5:16-17 The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.**

## Prayer Concerns

While I am on the subject of prayer, I have some prayer concerns I would like to give out.

Recently I had signed up to go on the mission trip to China. I had been asked to pray about going because they were planning to go to some prisons while they were there. Well of course I would love to do something like that. It would be awesome to get to do something like that. For years now I have been wanting to go back to Russia to go to the prisons there and have even been invited on a couple different occasions. Only thing is it hasn't been in God's timing so far me to do any of that

yet. There is certainly plenty for me to do right here.

But on this trip there are five people from our prison ministry team who did get to go. Praise God! Please keep the whole team in your prayers and that the Lord will be glorified in all that happens over there in the next few weeks.

There are also two trips I will be making in the next few weeks. And another at the end of August.

On the 28th of this month I will be going back to San Quentin with Calvary Downey and with Bob

Hoekstra's ministry IPM. Then on the 3rd of July I will be going back to Baltimore for a week to support IPM as they have their first east coast Chaplains conference. We will also be going to some prisons while we are there.

Then the 31st of August and the 1st of September four of us from the church will be going to Calif. Men's Colony, San Luis Obispo. Please keep all these upcoming trips in your prayers.

## He Goes Before Us

Recently while out at Ironwood prison we had just come into a chapel to do a Bible study. I was sitting off to the side as the men came in off the yard. When this one guy walks in who looked real familiar. Only trouble is I meet so many guys I can never remember everyone no matter how hard I try.

He looked over to where I was and smiled and it made me all the more curious as to who he was. He finally walked over to say hi and he realized I didn't know who he was. When I admitted as much he started to recount when I met him. It was when I first went in to the Twin Towers for the Chaplain training. He was a trustee on one of the cell pods. He was very stressed out, he was facing a lot of time and his wife was talking divorce. I would stop and talk to him, give him encouragement and gave him a Bible and other material to read.

Now nearly two years later I run into him again and everything was different. I didn't know it back while he was at the Towers, but he was a Buddhist. It wouldn't have changed my approach with him, he just never mentioned what his beliefs were. And now he is a Christian. He went on to tell me that he did get time, that was obvious, he was there. But he said he got a lot less time than he could have so he was feeling grateful for what he got. As for the divorce, his wife did go on to get it. But he says she is coming up to visit him regularly and as he put it "who knows, maybe we will get remarried when I get back out". He was just praising God and counting his blessings.

That guy had no way of knowing how much he blessed me that day. It is an awesome thing to see the fruit of what God is doing.

There is a balance to everything and as encouraging as it is to have things like that happen, there are other incidences that are just as discouraging.

On one of the yards there was a brother who would help us with worship when we come in to do our Bible studies. I understand from one of our team members this guy used to be in a Christian band on the streets that his daughter used to listen to.

Well a few weeks back we went in, only to hear the brother was in the prison hospital. He had become a victim of an attack. One of the leaders of his racial group assaulted him for being too friendly with another Christian brother from another race.

Racial prejudice is a way of life in prison and everyone in there has to deal with it. For many Christians they are forced to either compromise their faith or confront the prejudice and risk the consequences. One thing for sure it is not an easy thing to be a Christian in prison. Many will mock the 'jail house Christian' but any Christian has to understand it is not easy to be salt and light in a dark place, it doesn't get much darker than in prison.

Just this past weekend when we arrived at Ironwood there were many more correctional officers visible than normal. You could tell there was something out of the norm going on. This was supposed to be a special day. The men on C yard had asked if we would baptize a number of them. We had been planning this for weeks. The last time we had been out we did a special study on baptism so there would be the right understanding of what it really means. I had felt really blessed that they had come and asked us to do it in the first place. They said they wanted us to do it because they felt Calvary Chapel had a Biblically balanced view on what the scriptures say on the subject.

Well after getting inside the facility my instincts proved to be correct. The whole facility was on "lock down" status. Which means all programs are canceled. Not what you want to

have happen after you just spent three hours getting there. Especially when we were so looking forward to having the baptism.

It is so awesome that our Lord is in control; ***Isa 45:2 'I will go before you And make the crooked places straight; I will break in pieces the gates of bronze And cut the bars of iron.'***

It was really odd that they still let us on the yard and I was wondering about it till I got a chance to talk to the inmate who is one of the church leaders on C yard. The lieutenant must have been a believer. He did something very unusual in that he allowed us to still do the Baptism in spite of the fact they were on a major lock down.

He pulled me aside to ask a favor, he told me he was not feeling very comfortable with his decision to let us continue but he would anyway. All he asked is that we try doing it as fast as we could so that we could get them back to their units and secure the yard.

So we had a very short service and a brief explanation on baptism and then about twenty-five inmates watched as seven men were sealed with Christ into His death and resurrection.

What a site to see, these guys standing in their boxers, some nearly covered with tattoos. All stating their trust in what Jesus did for them on the cross. It was a trip, they were trying to keep that jail house macho image going, with expressionless faces and yet I got to see first hand the smiles on their faces as I lifted them back out of the water. It may have had to be done much faster than we would have like but it didn't make it any less meaningful to all who were present.

## Changing Lives, Inside and Out

It is always rewarding when you see what God is doing in whatever ministry you may be involved in. Most of the things I have written in these newsletters have centered around the things He does with those who are locked up.

There is another aspect in all of this. What God has done in the people from are church who are serving in one or more of the places we are going into.

I recently went in with one of the brothers who has been with the prison ministry from nearly the beginning. When he first started going in he would hardly say a thing. I more than once wondered to myself why he had signed up to go. Now to sit and listen to him teach it is amazing. God has really done a work in his life. It is so obvious that he has devoted a lot of time to study. He knows the Word and he is getting better and better at conveying it to others. I really enjoyed sitting there listening to him teach. And one of the neat things about it is I don't think he really understands just how well he is connecting with the men he is teaching.

**1 Cor 2:2-5**

***For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.***

There are others who started out in prison ministry and are now working in other ministries at the church as well. There are a few that are now Sunday school teachers and the they go to a prison to teach too. What a neat contrast.

I think I mentioned this once before but its worth mentioning again. We always have a shortage of people who can help with worship. Well one of the brothers who hadn't played a guitar since he was in high school decided he would re-teach himself to play well enough to do worship in the prisons. I know he is a busy man in the work place and yet he finds the time to practice and practice till it worked.

**Ps 37:4**

***Delight yourself also in the LORD, And He shall give you the desires of your heart.***

Another fruit we have started to see is some of these men are starting to show up at our church. Not only show up but are getting actively involved. There are at least five men who I can think of that are ex-cons who are serving in different ministries.

Then just this past Sunday I met a man who was introduced to me who just got out a few months ago. He had served 19 years of a 25 to life sentence. He had been at one of the concerts we did at Chuckawalla last year. Now he shows up at our church, he enjoyed the service so much he is talking about commuting here from another county.

One of the things we often tell them is that the first thing they need to do after getting out is to find a good Bible

teaching church and get plugged in. To go to someone at the prospective church and let them know who they are and what is going on with them. Say that if that church doesn't receive them then they are at the wrong church and they need to shake the dust off their sandals

Too many times we have the discouraging experience of seeing someone who seems to know the Lord and yet after they get out they forget all of what they learned and go right back to their old life style. Then they show back up in prison some months later and its always the same, when asked if they got into a church, they come up with all kinds of excuses. So when we see one show up who followed the advice its more than a little rewarding.

Starting over is no easy task. And to have a record makes everything all the harder. I was talking with someone just a few weeks ago who had three different interviews for a job he was trying to get. They told him he was the most qualified for it and he past all the tests with flying colors. All except the last test, when they did the background check and then they wouldn't even return his calls. All you can tell someone like that is that God will be faithful to complete the work He has started.

**Prov 3:5-6**

***Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths.***

Phone: 909-465-WORD

Fax: 909-464-1015

Email:

ed@prisonkey.org

or

ejwelsh@lasd.org

Web Site

www.prisonkey.org



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