



Newsletter

Chaplain Ed Welsh

Isaiah 61:1

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I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me. Matthew 25:36

Things don't always work out the way you think they should

You know how they say that hind sight is 20/20 and looking back on the past six months I now can see that God really does have a plan in all of this. It is the only explanation.

Even going much farther back and looking at the whole thing in perspective, shows me once again how He is always in control.

In 1996 Pastor Jack first sent me a message, to pray about starting a prison ministry. An inmate's letter had come from the Chino prison to Pastor Chuck Smith's radio program, asking for a Calvary Chapel to come in and teach Bible studies. Pastor Chuck forwarded the letter to Pastor Jack and Jack sent it on to me.

I had been going to church for fourteen years by then, and was at Calvary for about five of those years. Gone to Russia and come back and saw our church explode after it caught the vision of missions. I have been very blessed to be at a church where the Pastor has such a passion for missions and also views jail / prison ministry as part of our mission field.

I know full well that if wasn't for the Lord's leading and Pastor Jack support and encouragement I would have never done

what I am now doing today. I had been involved in many different ministries over the years but had never once thought about going into prison / jail ministry. I had wasted about fifteen years of my life in places like that and there was no way I ever wanted to go back, not even to visit. Well of course it wasn't too long and I was going in with teams on a regular basis.

I am starting to realize more and more, I really am a Jonah when it comes to what God wants to do in my life. The prison ministry was that way for me. And it was the same kind of thing again when it came the Chaplain position .

About four years ago a Pastor from another Calvary, who oversees a large prison ministry at their Church and was also working for the LA County as a Chaplain, started asking me to become a Chaplain. I kept saying I would really like to do it, but..... Actually I felt like there was no way I was going to ever be able to do something like that, I had a family to support, a BIG family!

All of you that have been with me from the start, know the kind of doubts I struggled with. I struggled with them even after I became a Chaplain. I was full of doubt, mostly doubting myself. Well for over two years now I have never regretted the decision to become a Chaplain. And it is really the main thing I want to continue doing.

Over the past couple years I had formulated what I thought was God's plan for my future. I was convinced I would be doing something like the Pastor that had first got me to become a

Chaplain. Where I would eventually go on staff as a Pastor, continue being a Chaplain and continue with the prison ministry. Maybe even start a men's and women's home out of the church. I have been stubborn in hanging onto that plan even after it became more and more clear to me that was not the way the Lord was leading .

But once again, like Jonah I had it all wrong and the Lord had to use a series of things over the past six months to get my attention. It is like one Pastor recently counseled me, saying that it is probably the only way I would let the Lord get my attention. I was too comfortable; been at the same church for 12 years, had the ministry going the way I thought it ought to be and even more compelling, the way I thought the future was going to be. Well I wasn't taking into account the Lord may have other plans.

One thing that recently happened that helped really clarify this for me was our new group going into the Women's prison at CIW. We were going to be going in there with seven women that I was convinced were the power team going in there for the Lord.

Things didn't work out at all like I had hoped they would concerning the women's group. Because God is in control, everything completely changed. At first I was so disappointed, only three of the original seven would be going in. But then I was reminded of when I was struggling with taking the Chaplain's job.

I was like Gideon in Judges 6 were he put out the fleeces to decide if God was really in it. That is when it really dawned on me that God was in this change at CIW. You see in Judges 7, God tells Gideon to send the 32,000 home and He fought the battle with just 300. That was so there would be no doubt it was God who would get the glory. I knew then God had sent three women, not seven, to fight this battle. And God will be The One that gets the glory. The women's team has already gone in twice and we are already seeing the impact in some of the women coming to the Bible study. It sure brought it home to me that things don't always work out the way you think they ought to, but that doesn't mean they don't end up working out the way they should.

I guess that brings me to what I really intended to write about in this segment.

The ministry is changing for me far more than I ever dreamed. I alluded to it in my last newsletter, so I am going to paste in a quote from that newsletter to start the explanation.

"A number of months ago I spoke to Pastor Jack about going out to speak to other churches regarding jail and prison ministry. To go out and try to replicate what we've done at C.C.C.H. in other churches around the country. I have spoken to a number of pastors who are interested, so we will have to see how the Lord leads. The need has never been greater. More people are in

Things don't always work...continued

prison today in this country than ever before. And what many people don't think about is 90% of the people who are in prison today, will be out again some day. When they get out, which would you rather they be, someone who has heard the gospel and done something with it or someone coming back out worse than when they went in? "

Just the other night I was able to meet a Senior Pastor of another Calvary. He said if I ever get over to his area he would be more than happy to let me speak to his Church on jail ministry. It is exciting to see God at work. It's also scary to venture out on my own, but then I stop and remember, I am not my own, I have been bought with a price. This is His battle. I keep reminding myself of the scripture :

Proverbs 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.

What has been the outcome? We are in the process of having *Jesus is the Key Ministries* become a 501(c)3 non-profit corporation. With the intent of going out to try to replicate what we have already done at Chino Hills. One of the main goals will be to try to get churches located near the prisons to team with us to put on yard concerts. That will open the door for those local churches to stay on and continue to do ministry afterwards. I hope to be able to cross over the denominational obstacles and encourage the body of Christ to capture the vision to do what Matthew 25:36 teaches.

In my capacity as the Senior Chaplain at the jail, I oversee a number of Protestant Chaplains from many different kinds of Churches. I have had to try and learn to be tolerant without compromise and to deal with the essentials without having to be divisive. Too many Christians argue over doctrine and lose the chance to present the Gospel to the ones who need to hear it. When I was first made Chaplain, I put a poster up in the office that has been there ever since, it is the verse from **John 13:35 By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."**

Too many churches can not agree and what kind of witness is that to the world? I know what Amos 3:3 says: **Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?** But surely we can agree on the need for Jesus in people's lives. And I hope that *Jesus is the Key Ministries* will become one of the vehicles to help make that happen.

We recently had a new Chaplain added to our ranks at Men's Central Jail. He is an Orthodox Semetic Jew. The Fedora hat, long beard, heavy trench coat, and all the rest. I would say he is in his middle thirties, all he has to say is a few words and you know he is a Jew from New York.

As Senior Chaplain it is my responsibility to accommodate all faiths, schedule and assist them in any way I can. I have come to look forward to seeing the Rabbi when he comes in. He is so traditional and yet so down to earth.

When he comes in he always has a smile for me, a kind word and encouragement if I need it. And as he put it one day, I could count on him to be one of the soldiers in the battle. Another time he came in and would not settle for anything less than a hug.

We are brothers, a kindred spirit. I know we serve the same God. We may disagree on when the Messiah comes but we can both agree that these prisoners are in bondage to sin and need God in their lives. If a Rabbi and I can agree on this, surely the Lord will help me to communicate that need to the Christian Church.

With that in mind, I was invited to go down to San Diego this past week to sit in on a planning committee for the upcoming Billy Graham Crusade that is going to happen the first week in May.

At the same time as Billy Graham is doing the crusade, they are going to be having a large outreach into five local prisons and jails in the San Diego area, two of them being the military brigades at Camp Pendleton and Miramar Naval Base.

There is a ministry called Operation Starting Line that is a coalition of ministries teamed up with the stated goal of reaching all the prisons in the country within the next five years. Ministries like, Prison Fellowship, The Navigators, Campus Crusade for Christ, Promise Keepers,

American Bible Society and many others have all teamed up to reach the lost in this way. I am so excited things like this are happening within the Body of Christ and I want to be a part of it in any way I can.

I've spoken to a number of Calvary's in our general area about being a part of the upcoming outreaches. The organizers of the outreach would prefer to have churches more local to San Diego area be involved if possible. The idea is to try to do a church plant so to speak. Hopefully those churches will want to continue to go into the prisons after the outreach is over. But if not enough locals sign up to participate, then there are already about 75 people from various Calvary's in our area ready to go and be a part of this. I find this very encouraging because it goes right in line with what I hope and pray Jesus is the Key Ministries will be doing in the future, getting Christians involved in prison / jail ministry.

As I have already said, my first and foremost calling is to be a Chaplain, I will continue to be sent as a missionary to the L.A. County Jail. After announcing that I had stepped down from leadership in the prison ministry at CCCH, there were some who possibly mistakenly thought I was also no longer a Chaplain. Hopefully that misconception has been cleared up.

It is intimidating to step out in this new way but no more so than when the ministry first started. As the old Calvary motto goes, where God guides, God provides. It is my prayer that many of you will continue to share in the vision that God has called me to, bringing the Gospel to the men and women in the jails and prisons.

I appreciate your prayers and financial support which has made it possible to share the love of Jesus in the largest jail in the world. Jesus said in Luke 12:31 to seek the kingdom first and then everything else will be added. I have used that benchmark often in the past few years and it has never failed me. I have sought the Lord in this, in fact there have been many praying about this.

Proverbs 11:14 "Where there is no counsel, the people fall; But in the multitude of counselors there is safety"

Just goes to show, you just never know

I want to switch gears and write about some of the things God is doing in the jail and prisons.

Over the past few months we have had some ministry outreaches into the jail that have really been a blessing. Old Bridge Calvary Chapel from New Jersey had a team out here doing outreaches. They went to a number of churches including our own youth/children's ministry. One of the brothers in their group does magic/slight of hand and in the process gives an evangelistic gospel message that is awesome.

We did two programs at the jail and something happened I have never seen before. From word of mouth, after the first show there were many more deputies show up for the second program. Even the Watch Commander showed up. That was unique enough all by itself but what happened at the end was so cool.

There was the opportunity given for the inmates to accept the Lord as their Savior. They were asked to bow their heads and raise their hands if they wanted to accept Christ. What the inmates didn't see was there was a deputy in the back of the chapel who also raised his hand!

The amazing thing about this is the deputy did this in the plain sight of many of his fellow deputies. Something like that is just unheard of.

I got word of something else that just happened that is as equally unusual. There is a female Lieutenant at one of the Chino prison facilities CCCH prison ministry goes into. Over the past few years this particular Lieutenant has spoken to us a number of times about her faith. She has asked us to pray for her concerning different things. She really has been supportive when we needed assistance with our program. It makes it so much easier when someone in authority is supportive of what you are doing. Those kind of conditions are not the norm. So that in itself you could classify as unusual.

Well yesterday I got a call from one of the Brown Card leaders from the CCCH prison ministry wanting to tell me what has just happened. That same Lieutenant came to him to ask if it was possible for him to minister to the Correctional Officers there. They want to have a Bible study too! I have never heard of that happening before. Of

course there are many believers who work in all forms of Law Enforcement. That isn't the issue. But there is a big thing especially now a days with the issue of separation of church and state. And of course the apparent conflict of interests of ministering to both inmate and officer. But all things are possible.

There has been an appointment for them to go talk to the administration to get their approval to make it happen. Now it could be that one volunteer may have to stop ministering to the inmates himself but just maybe we will soon have another Chaplain ministering within the prison system from our church. This time as a Chaplain to the officers. God is so faithful! This same man just went with our Law Enforcement group who just got back from ministering in New York. Even though he himself was not in Law Enforcement, he went and while they were back there, they started calling him Chaplain. Keep in mind none at that time, including himself, knew what would be asked of him when they started calling him Chaplain. Could it be there was something prophetic there? Please keep this in prayer till they have the meeting with in the next week.

Yearly sign ups are here again

While I am on the subject of the prison ministry at CCCH. Even though I am no longer directly involved with the ministry, I of course have a big interest with its future success and will continue to support it in any way that I can be of help. Along that line, they are very shortly going to be doing sign ups again for the two Blythe outreaches to Chuckawalla and Ironwood prisons. They have their yearly orientation coming up and are always in need of new volunteers. Please pray and consider being a part of the team that goes out there. They go out with twice a month, each time with a different team. So you are only looking at a commitment of one weekend day a month.

Its really a blessing to all who go. Please pray on it if you feel the call at

all. There will soon be announcements and a sign up table about it. This is just an advanced notice or I guess you could say a plug for it.

If you have never considered it please do that now, I promise you that you will be blessed. Just go speak to anyone who is already involved and they will tell you what a blessing it is.

Talk to Pastor Roy who is the Pastor in charge of prison ministry or either of the two leaders of the prison ministry, Bruce Frost or Don Fagan.

Right on the heels of the sign ups for the Blythe teams there will be the annual sing ups for the Chino teams as well. They will have to

have the new group submitted to the institution by the start of June. With the Chino groups they go in four times a month to three of the four Chino facilities. But the big difference is it is only a few hours a month commitment, where with the Blythe teams it is an all day affair when you go. Both have their advantages it just really depends on how much time you can afford to spend.

It is an awesome thing to be used by the Lord...

"The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest." Matt 9:37-38

One of the real advantages to working in the largest jail in the world is it give you exposure to other jail ministries. There was one such ministry that recently came in to do an outreach at both Men's Central and Twin Towers. The ministry used to be called *Bill Glass Ministries* named for their founder who was a pro football player who used his celebrity to bring in other famous people from the sports and entertainment sector, to jails and prisons with the gospel message. They recently changed to name of the name of the ministry to *Champion's for Life* and they call their outreaches, *Day of Champion's* or *Weekend of Champion's*.

Champion's for Life brought in 224 volunteers for the our two jail units. The combined population of Men's Central and Twin Towers is about 9,800 men and 2,200 women.

There was a lot of ministry that went on in that one day! In MCJ we had three services going on at the same time in the jail. Each program used a "platform speaker" and someone to do worship. In total we did six services and according to their figures they had 598 first time decisions for Christ and 690 recommitments. A total of 1,288 decisions for Christ! What a blessing no matter what the count, they celebrate in heaven when one lost soul is redeemed!

One of the platform speakers was a Olympic athlete but unfortunately I didn't get his name. He was a very dynamic speaker who received a good response from the groups he spoke to. The Lord worked powerfully in his services that day. You could picture this man being a very successful motivational speaker in the business world. But what he was doing was motivating them towards

knowing God.

The other two platform speakers were of a different caliber. And the men related and responded to their message in a very powerful way.

First was a man named Dennis Rice. You may have read about him in the book *Helter Skelter?* He was part of the Manson Family. He went to jail not for the notorious murders everyone relates to when they hear Manson's name. Dennis went to prison for a shootout with the police, after robbing a sporting goods store of a 150 guns, that they planed to use to break Manson out from the Men's Central jail. Now 32 years later he is back in that same jail sharing the love of Jesus to men who really need to hear it.

What turned out to be almost comical was as I listened to the delivery of his testimony, our stories were uncannily similar in content. Of course I wasn't with the Manson Family, I have got my own crazy story to tell. But it turns out that Dennis and I were in San Quentin at the same time, even in the same cell block. It was during that prisons most violent era in its history.

After Dennis shared his testimony we were talking and he had no idea what my past was. He had just been introduced to me and all he knew was I was the Senior Chaplain of the jail. So I am sure he was more than a little surprised when he found out we had so much in common.

The other platform speaker has been doing the prison circuit for a long while now. He can definitely be called a prison evangelist. His name is Jerry Graham. There was a book published by Chaplain Ray a number of years ago titled *Where Fly's Don't Land* , I know from passing many of them out over the years it is probably the most popular testimony books that Chaplain Ray pub-

lished. Jerry spent somewhere around 18 years in prison, many of those years in solitary confinement. Now God is using Jerry's past for His glory. It really blessed me and was an encouragement to see God working in this way.

The three of us talked after the program and promised to stay in touch. I have heard form them both since and I will continue to stay in touch with them . Lord willing plus time permitting I hope to work with them sometime in the future in some way.

Being in a place like Men's Central Jail can be very challenging on a number of fronts but is can also be very rewarding. I feel very fortunate and blessed to be able to do what I do. What better job can anyone have than something you love doing? And I do love being able to share the love of Christ with people who really need to hear about Him and discover for themselves the power in His name. You name it, every kind of high profile case goes through the LA Jail. Just think back in the past and all the way up to current cases in the news. You get to meet some famous, some notorious, some infamous people. I have gotten to meet some very interesting people in the last two plus years. Unfortunately because of their right to privacy, I can't tell some of their stories. But wherever I can I will continue to share those stories with all of you.

I'm asking all of you to pray for me to do God's will, not mine, in all these opportunities that have been presenting themselves. I know I can't do it all and I am asking for wisdom to discern God's will for the direction of this ministries future.

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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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