



# Newsletter

## Chaplain Ed Welsh

Isaiah 61:1

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As most who read these newsletters know, I am an ex-con and God has chosen to use that past for His glory.

Starting at the age of 14 in a boys home, then continuing up the ladder till at the age of 21 I was in San Quentin in the most violent time in its history. I grew up in that system and didn't get out of it till I was 31 years old. All together somewhere around fourteen years wasted in different institutions. I know I would still be caught up in that same life today if it wasn't for Jesus Christ being in my life.

The other day I had an inmate tell me the reason he feels I am able to reach people in jail the way they are reached, is just because I did grow up in the system. As he put it, they see someone who has been able to beat the system. By all the statistics I should still be in jail. To be a habitual repeat offender, you are supposed to spend

the rest of your life locked up. At least that is what the system says. I praise God that His system is one of restoration, of transformation, of redemption. The best part of all, its free! All it cost me is a step of faith.

I do know I am able to relate to prisoners because of my past but that is only through the power of the Holy Spirit who enables me. And I do feel very blessed that the Lord has called me to do this ministry.

Prison is nothing like anything in the real world. People communicate in a very different way and you better be able to represent what you stand for. Who you are as a person becomes a very important issue, obtaining and maintaining respect is really all you have. Everything else has been taken from you so your perception of who you are, your self respect makes a big difference to you. There is a different set of values and morals that everyone lives by and dies by too. Things like that are deeply engrained into you. It definitely becomes part of who you are and how you think. I understand it because I lived it for so long myself.

In a convict's way of looking at things, a man is only as good as his word. Now as a Christian man for the past

twenty plus years, I have learned to try to apply Biblical principals to how I view the world. For instance if a man is only as good as his word I try to apply it with things like :

*But let your "Yes," be "Yes," and your "No," "No," lest you fall into judgment. James 5:12*

Over the past six months or so, many things have been happening. As much as possible I have attempted to be transparent and inform all of you, soliciting your prayers and wanting to be open with your ministry.

I do view this as it being your ministry too. In one way or another all of you play a big part in making this ministry happen. Some by prayer, others with encouragement and others who support the ministry financially. With out any one part of that being there, this ministry just would not work.

So accountability to all of you has been a very high priority to me. That is what started these newsletters to begin with, to be accountable. Believe me being transparent doesn't come natural to me.

In my past few newsletters I shared with you about our

loss of my mother in law who had lived with us for over a decade. What most do not know is exactly 90 days later her husband died too. The attacks have kept coming in waves. But even during the attacks God was still blessing.

It was during that same time I was also trying to communicate all the amazing things the Lord was doing. The doors He has opened for the ministry. It has been so cool to see how the Comforter has brought so much balance into what would otherwise be chaos.

That brings me to the point of what I need to make clear. In the past few newsletters I've written, I said a number of times that I was not planning to leave CCCH. At that time what I wrote was true, I had no intentions of going anywhere.

Now it is very clear that the Lord has other plans for me; we are being moved on. It is so God ordained! I am at peace like I haven't been in some time now. And I am excited at what the Lord is going to do.

The many times I had heard Pastor Jack speak about our church being a launch pad, I had never

*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*

## His will be done

## His will be done (continued)

dreamed we would some day be one of those launched.

We have been at CCCH since five weeks after it had first moved into the industrial complex. We watched it grow from about fifty people to the now thousands that attend there weekly.

We have made many friends that we love deeply. You don't spend over a decade at a church and easily leave it. But leaving in this way is not ending any of that; we are just expanding our outreach within the body of Christ. Our friends here at CCCH will continue to be just as close as ever to our hearts.

Our children have grown up here and we have all grown spiritually under the teaching and experiences we have had at CCCH. As I have said before, I would not be doing what I am today if it were not for Pastor Jack and this church.

But now there are some new opportunities for ministry. The Calvary Chapel we have been called to is much smaller but has opened doors for some other areas to be used by the Lord.

With in the next few months, if all goes as planned, there will be three more Calvary Chapels going into prisons around the state. The ministry "*Jesus is the Key Ministries*" will start to accomplish one of its mandates to replicate what we have done at CCCH within the jails and prison. But not just replicate, I surely do not want to put new wine in old wine skins. God is doing a new, fresh work and I am very excited to see what the Lord is doing.

At the same time Calvary Chapel Chino Hills Prison Ministry is going strong and continuing to grow. They have been able to sign up some new people for the Blythe ministries and will soon be having another sign up

for the Chino prisons this coming month.

I hope some time in the future to be able to have a group from CCCH come in to do Bible studies at Men's Central Jail where I am the Chaplain.

That brings me to the other part of what I have to explain clearly. "*Jesus is the Key Ministries*" is now a 501 (c) 3 non-profit corporation. For those who support this ministry financially, you need to now send it directly to Jesus is the Key instead of to CCCH. Any funds that come into CCCH in the future will be forwarded to Jesus is the Key.

Your donations are tax deductible. Jesus is the Key has a Board of directors that include a Senior Pastor of a Calvary Chapel and another man who used to be with *Focus on the Family* before it left our local area and he is now in full time ministry in another national ministry. The board is rounded out with a school teacher, a retired police officer and a successful businessman. All bringing different talents and experience to the ministry. I am very pleased at the way the Lord has put this together.

Anyone who wishes more information on the corporation, its board or any other questions about the ministry, please contact us and we will be happy to answer your questions.

In any non profit corporation it can not be for the sole purpose of supporting a person. So it is not just for the missionary support of my Chaplaincy at the jail as it was while at CCCH. With in our articles of incorporation we have made provisions to help support missionary Chaplains as one of the goals. But also to support prison outreaches, helping to get other churches involved in prison ministry, getting Bibles and other materials into the prisons. Later we hope to expand to things like the follow up after people are released from jail/prison. This help

could include rehab, halfway houses, or helping find work. Another direction I would love to get more into is helping the families of the prisoners. There are many needs and ways this could develop in time and as the Lord leads.

In the wisdom of man I am doing a crazy thing in going out on our own. Especially at a time like this. Just today I was watching a news show where they had a segment on how giving to charities has dropped off considerably; that many ministries were laying off people or closing down.

Many of you may not have even known about it but the yellow "boxcar" building on Riverside Drive in Chino has been the office for the national prison ministry, Prison Fellowship. The next time you drive by there you will see that it is now empty. Many ministries are cutting back right now.

It is one of the ways I have felt very blessed that the financial support of so many of you has continued to be so faithful. It has always been very encouraging and another proof to me that God is in this. It is my prayer that all who have been faithful to support us will continue to do so and hopefully some who haven't in the past will prayerfully consider it.

Please continue in your prayers for us; I really do cherish them. It always encourages me when someone tells me they are praying for us. I can rest in the knowledge of the power of those prayers.

*The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.*  
*James 5:16*

For those who are interested in contributing to this ministry please look at last page of this news letter for the needed information. Thank you and may God bless you.

## New Wine in New Wineskins

I have to confess that over these past months with all its trials, I lost some of my focus on ministry. The enemy had gained strongholds in me where at times I was far more in the flesh than I should have been. Not that I ever turned my back on God or anything like that. It was simply that I would try to take control of the circumstance instead of giving God rule and reign in my life.

When will I ever learn to really let go and let God? When will I learn to let the Lord be my defense?

One thing I have learned is many people who are in a position to give advice aren't very good at taking it themselves. I have had more than one counselor share with me that while counseling someone they would hear what they said to that person and it would actually be something they should be doing or not doing in their own life. I know the Spirit has been revealing that to me in my walk.

I would be counseling someone at the jail; something like Proverbs 3:5 to let God direct their path and here I was not doing it myself. I was trying to lean on my own understanding instead of giving God the control. I would counsel someone to pray more, get into the Word, to seek His will, to grow closer to him and yet in the trials of these past months I was not doing enough of that myself.

God will take us to task and He will also use trials to refine us, teach us and then use those things we learn for His purpose. I have come to really appreciate in a new and fresh way how His word will do His work in us. 1 Peter 4:12-19 has taken on new meaning to me in recent times. Yes I have felt conviction and have been taken to task but at the same time God has been so faithful...

*If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself.*  
2 Tim 2:13

Over and over again in these past months of trial the Lord has continued to assure me that He was there and in the midst of the storm... I often hear within me the words to that song... *"in the midst of the storm, you'll still be faithful my Lord"*

How He has done that has been so cool, when I have let the circumstances really start to get me down He has been so faithful to bring something into my experience that lets me know it's not about me, it's not about my family, it's all about Him! ...

*But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.*  
Matt 6:33

When I would start to get discouraged or doubt what I was doing or even worse start to doubt His calling, He would bring someone or something into my life to let me know He was there "in the midst."

Recently I was in my office at the jail talking to two inmates. They came in with separate needs and yet the three of us started talking about the Lord. One of the men was someone who is coming out of the Nation of Islam and its teaching. The other guy was a white guy about my age who had no background of God or Bible at all in his life. Both had come into my office with questions after a Bible study I had just finished in the Chapel.

The man who had been a Muslim said that what he had embraced to believe in was not working for him. He knew his scriptures in the Qur'an very well but he had to admit that all of it left him very empty. I was so grateful for some of the teaching I had recently received at CCCH about Islam and the method of comparing the two faiths one along side the other to show the contrasts of what they teach. It makes it so much easier when you let truth speak for itself!

This conversation ended up drawing

the third man into what we were discussing and it bore some awesome fruit. His word really does not come back void! The man was able to hear the gospel in a simple way that made sense to him and act on it.

Where the enemy has come against me lately and I became discouraged, disillusioned or whatever, God has brought about things where I see His fruit within this ministry. Just the encouragement I needed to see He is still in this. He is so faithful, so good.

I think one thing is finally getting through to me; where there is love its from Him, where there is grace and mercy its from Him. But where there is condemnation, where there is doubt where there is confusion (both list go on and on in opposing contrasts) it is from the enemy!

*Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy--meditate on these things.* Phil 4:8

Only God knows the future. Where all of this goes from here is totally in His hands. But what better hands to be in! Yes I have questioned, 'Why Lord' many times through all this but Romans 8:28 has really taken on a new significance to me because I truly now believe that all of this was not only God filtered where He allowed this but even more importantly He has used this to prepare me for whatever He is bringing next. To me that is what is most exciting and now has finally filled me with a renewed joy.

My wife just mentioned the other night how it was good to see me once again coming home excited at the things God is doing each day. It really has become new wine in new wineskins!

I hope to project some of the real excitement I feel in what the Lord is bringing about within this ministry. If opening doors and new opportunities are any indications that God is in this, I have to believe there are some awesome things on the horizon.

Just yesterday I went in to meet with the Chaplain at the Chino prison. I needed to go in and explain that I was no longer under the church I had been representing there in the past. I was so blessed by the response given by the Chaplain there.

He has come to appreciate the ministry of Calvary Chapel and the kind of sound teaching that has come from it. He said instead of me resigning, he would much rather open the door for more of the same to continue to come in. What a blessing and encouragement that was to me!

Since then I've heard from the two Blythe prisons and we are going to be able to do the same kind of expansion out at those two prisons also. That now opens the doors to the possibility of having a number of other Calvary Chapels getting into as many as eight different state prisons. And as time goes on I hope to get other non-denominational churches involved too.

*"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 main things I hope to see accomplished with Jesus is the Key is to expand prison/jail ministry and the Lord is doing it for me before we even really get started!

By the time this gets in the mail and out to all of you to read, it will be very close to, if not just past the time I will be going down to Donovan State Prison on May 3rd with Operation Starting Line.

I hope to not only be used by the Lord that day, but also looking at this as an opportunity to learn how a large and organized ministry does an outreach. I want to glean from this for future outreaches that we will do.

It is also an opportunity to network with other churches and ministries who are interested in jail/prison ministry. At the end of next month we will be putting on a jail/prison ministry fair for all the churches who were involved with all the prison/jail outreaches during the crusades. Just being a part of Operation Starting Line with Billy Graham has been such a blessing.

I recently found out about another upcoming crusade that I hope to have Jesus is the Key be a part of. It is my understanding that all the Calvary Chapels in the San Gabriel Valley and Inland Empire areas are going to be involved with the upcoming *Somebody Loves You Crusade* with Pastor Raul Ries, at the Mt. San Antonio College in Walnut. Its going to be July 25-27 at the college. It is going to be a great chance to minister within our own community and help make a difference.

The groups Sixpence None The Richer, Sly Praise Band, Tait, Out of Eden, Grits and Tree 63 are going to be doing the worship.

It makes sense to try and make the impact before they end up in custody instead of afterwards. I have talked to some Chaplains who have been involved with a previous crusade and they said it was a great opportunity to minister to the people. I have been to many *Harvest Crusades* over the years but this will be my first *Somebody Loves You Crusade*.

But you know the thing I am most excited about is not these new things that are starting to come about. The thing I am really enjoying in a new and fresh way is going down to Men's Central Jail. When someone goes from despair to hope, from tears to a smile, those kind of experiences are what make it all so worth while. Its all about watching God changing peoples hearts and lives.

Now that the storm has finished and the clouds are past, I've recaptured the passion I lost for awhile.

*Remember the prisoners as if chained with them--those who are mistreated--since you yourselves are in the body also. Heb 13:3-4*

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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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