

Newsletter

Chaplain Ed Welsh

Isaiah 61:1

Volume 4, Issue 1

January 2004

*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*

Peace in Times of Trial

It seems like a very long time since I sat down to write all of you. I have intended to get a newsletter out every two months but I have fallen behind on this one. It has been a very busy time for me lately but a kind of busy that has been awesome. The Lord has really been blessing the ministry.

In my last newsletter I wrote to you about one of the inmate trustees who works in my office at the jail. His name is Sam and I told you how I had been sharing the Lord with him, asking you to keep him in your prayers.

Sam recently went to trial on his charges and this past week the jury came back with a mixed verdict. On two of the most serious charges he was found not guilty but was found guilty on some of the lesser charges. It nonetheless has the potential to have serious consequences for him.

One thing that had always impressed me

about Sam was that he took responsibility for what he had done; the only thing he struggled with was that they were trying to give him three strikes and that would mean a 25 year to life sentence! He acknowledged he deserved to do time he just didn't feel he had that much time coming for what he had done.

As we sat in my office the other day, Sam told me how he was so thankful to God that he was found not guilty of the more serious charges, charges he always contended he did not do. In his own sense of right and wrong he now feels vindicated and believes that God was his defense. It blessed me to see him giving God the glory. Here was a man that up until recently knew very little about God at all. It was not part of his culture so to see and hear him doing things he hadn't learned anywhere else, you just knew it came from the Spirit of the Lord.

The longer we sat there talking the more the feeling grew in me that Sam had become a Christian with-

out me knowing it! Yes I know that sounds strange, especially where I had been asking for you to pray that he would.

In many of the messages I've given there at the jail, while giving an alter call, I will say that they can ask God into their life at any time, right then would be best but if they did it later in the solitude of their cell God would meet them there. I just encouraged them to then tell someone about it. **{Matthew 10:32; Luke 12:8 and 1 Tim 6:12}** Only thing is Sam hadn't told me. And now Sam has informed me that he asked Jesus to be his Savior nearly two months ago.

It really blessed me to hear of his decision, I just would have liked to have been let in on it sooner! I want to thank all of you who have been praying for Sam. The Lord definitely answered.

As he and I sat there talking it became very obvious that Sam was demonstrating the fruits of the Spirit. He told me

how his felt and acted during the trial and he really seems to have put his fate in the hands of the Lord. There are other guys in his cell that did not believe him when he told them he was found guilty. Because he appeared too composed, their way of looking at it is that there is no way someone facing three strikes could take it that calmly. They just don't understand: **Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:6-7**

Sam is a leader within his peers. Because of the respect he has with others I am sure that he is going to be used mightily. I have no idea what is in store for Sam. I hope he receives mercy concerning his case but no matter what, I am convinced the Lord has great plans for him. Please continue to keep Sam in your prayers.

Six German Prisons in Ten Days

How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!" Rom 10:14-15

I said in the last newsletter that there was a possibility of going to Germany on a short term mission trip. Well I am happy to announce that we are going.

When Calvary Chapel Pomona Valley announced they were planning a missions trip to Russia in March my wife encouraged me to sign up. She knew it had been a desire of mine for a long while now to go over and minister within the prisons of Russia. In March it will have been ten years since I had first went to Russia on a short term mission trip with Calvary Chapel Chino Hills. I have always looked back to that time as a benchmark for when ministry really started for me. As I looked into doing a Russia outreach, all the doors seemed to be closed for now. We do have a open door to go but it will not be at this time.

I would have loved to have gone to Russia with CCPV but I didn't see where that would be at all possible. My support comes for what I am doing at the LA Jail, not to go half way around the world to do jail ministry. If the Lord wants me to go He will provide the way in His timing not mine.

I want to assure everyone who is

a contributor; none of the support that comes to Jesus is the Key Ministries has been used for this missions trip.

My sponsorship has come completely from the generous help from Calvary Chapel Downey. And a few other people who got directly involved. I am very grateful for all the help that has gone into making all this possible.

Running into Pastor Edmund from Calvary Chapel Herborn Germany was not just by chance. In the past few months it has been amazing to watch it all come together.

The team has been assembled, tickets have been reserved and our itinerary has been put together. We will be leaving Friday, the 13th of February and will be returning on the 23rd.

The plan is for us to go into 6 prisons in 10 days. I have been assured it is going to be a very full schedule.

There will be four of us going, from three different Calvary Chapels. Calvary Chapel Pomona Valley is sending both Tony Maese and Matt Monzon. Calvary Chapel Chino Hills is sending Jeff Torok. We also thought someone from Calvary Chapel Golden Springs was going to be coming with us too but that didn't work out. We have to believe that the Lord put together the team He wanted to go.

When I share with the inmates both at the jail and when we go into the prisons about the upcoming trip they are excited about it.

As if they are sharing in the adventure themselves. I do know, I think for the believers it is an encouragement for them to see God working. I am sure we will have some neat stories to share with them after we get back.

I've told many of them that when we are in Germany I want to send greetings from them to the prisoners over there in much the same way the Apostle Paul sent greetings in his letters to the churches.

I'm not exactly sure what we will be doing over there, but one thing I am very sure of is that He is calling us to go. I am expecting great things to happen, to see the Spirit go before us, to be our strength, where His word will go out and not come back void!

I want to ask you to keep us all in prayer while we are gone. Especially for our families, that there be that hedge of protection around them while we are away.

I have always liked what Pastor Jack has done in getting prayer coverage for any mission trip that went out from CCCH. We already know the enemy is going to try to come against us.

He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us, as you help us by your prayers. Then many will give thanks on our behalf for the gracious favor granted us in answer to the prayers of many.
2 Cor 1:10-11

“By this all will know that you are My disciples”

Our first “Custody Chaplaincy” class at the Bible College turned out to better than we had hoped for. The students did very well with the internship program.

What a blessing to see the hearts of these people who want to give of themselves and serve! It blessed me just to get to know each of them.

It was a sixteen week class that met for two hours every Friday night. Then each student also does a minimum of six shifts where they worked within the jail doing Bible studies and counseling inmates.

The men did half their time training at the Twin Towers facility and the other half at Men’s Central Jail with me. We also had one woman in the class and she did all of her internship within the women’s jail at Twin Towers.

It may be that none from that class will ever feel called to become a Chaplain but I am sure that they have had a real introduction to what it is all about.

It is our hope that by offering this class we will in time help to raise the standard of the chaplaincy at the Los Angeles Sheriff’s Department. To that end it may soon become a requirement for any one wanting to become a Chaplain in the L.A. system will be required to first take this class. In the fall it will be offered at Biola university as an elective.

The challenges are many. First and foremost we want to have qualified people and ones who will leave the divisive issues outside. Unfortunately there are some who have a problem of doing that. Between denominational differences and the ultra charismatic there are continual problems with some of the Chaplains we already have. They just don’t get it when they are told to just give the gospel message.

There are so many battles that go on

in there on a daily basis, it is a shame that we can not be able to agree on what is the essentials.

When I first started as Senior Chaplain, I brought in a poster that I showed to all the Chaplain’s assigned to me, it says:

“By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” John 13:35

So far very few have been able to grab hold of that idea and put it into practice. I can accept that from other faith beliefs but not from the ones who say they are Christian. The book of Romans makes it real clear, we are all under authority with someone in leadership that the Lord has placed there and as Christians we are supposed to give to Rome what is Rome’s. It will never be easy to do ministry within the jail, but the chaplaincy working in agreement would go along way towards making it better.

While I am on the subject of things not being easy, there are some things I would ask you to keep in prayer. With the budget cuts going on all over the state it is having its impact with in the prison and jail systems. Just recently there were some Chaplains laid off within the state prison system. Other changes that may come down the line could have very serious effects on the ministries going into the jails and prisons everywhere. I just heard recently on the radio show someone or some organization was wanting to file a suite to remove all religious programs from within the jail / prison system using the “separation of church and state” ! It is amazing to me to see how that agenda is being pushed by some in so many different arenas.

Another thing with the budget cuts, there is talk of reducing the population that is in custody. That has many dangers built into it. And at a time when things seem to be getting worse rather than better.

The Deputies at the jail have a very

hard job to perform and it is getting more difficult for them all the time. In just the past few months there have been a marked increase in violence with in Men’s Central Jail. There have been three murders and numerous other things that have happened. We even had a stabbing a few months ago in the chapel while I was having a service. That was a first. Something that very rarely happens. The chapel has always been considered neutral ground, a sanctuary. Really it was just another example of how everything seems to be on an increase.

I am very grateful how management within the Department has worked with us in the chaplaincy. It can at times make their job even harder, to accommodate us and the programs we have and yet they really do work at helping us to get things done. Like at Christmas time we had a few different special programs come in and custody worked hard to get people out to the services for us.

We had as many as 300 inmates out in the chapel, for some of the programs. I really appreciated the extra effort the Deputies put out to help make Christmas a little better for the men at Men’s c Central.

Another side note regarding Christmas. For many of you that have been getting these newsletters for a long time will know who I am going to mention now. I received a Christmas card from San Quentin’s death row. It had a single line written in it saying Merry Christmas, from “Monster” with a smiley face next to his nick name. I have to say I laughed out loud when I saw it and it touched my heart as well.

Monster may one day go to his death up there for what he did in his past. But what has changed now is that he still has his new life in Christ!

As I have said I really appreciate how the Deputies help make the program work at Men's Central Jail but unfortunately not all have been helpful. To some of the Deputies in there we are nothing more than an added burden to them. Another task they have to contend with. We are added responsibility for them, they are responsible for our safety. And then just the added work of getting people out to our programs.

Then of course they have to be concerned with all the security issues. We could be a potential breach in security in bringing in contraband. Not all past clergy have had a good track record of obeying the rules, it is amazing what some have done.

There are battle lines drawn and in the Deputies eyes we are on "their side" (the inmates). Breaking down those obstacles can be a real challenge. And each volunteer that goes in there has to earn the Deputies respect and trust for themselves.

I want to tell you about one such Deputy and for the sake of this article I will call him Deputy Joe. As with anyone I write about in these articles I have to maintain their privacy.

I first came in contact with Deputy Joe about two years ago and he made it clear from the outset that he didn't think much of what I was doing there. He didn't give me a hard time. In fact he was always very respectful yet he was anything but friendly. Everything was strictly by the book.

I don't know too much about Joe but I get the impression that he would have a story to tell if he wanted to. I think he was one of those kind of guys that grew up on the wrong side of the tracks and yet didn't go down the same path in life that many of his friends did. Just being from the ol' school myself I can recognize it in someone else. It would not surprise me much if I found out he had been in the neighborhood gang as a kid but somehow managed to stay out of serious trouble. I don't really know, Joe has never shared his past with me.

One day not so long ago Joe came to me with a request. As it turned out Joe had a close relative who was in there on some very serious charges and the policy is clear because of the conflict of interest there could be no communication between them. Normally they would transfer the inmate to another facility or at least make sure the Deputies assignment would be where the two would not see each other.

The inmates mother had been murdered and Joe had asked his supervisors if he could be there when his relative was given the death notification. As I have mentioned many times it is one of the hardest parts of this ministry to have to tell a person that someone they love has died.

Joe was every bit the professional while we were there together. He didn't say anything, just stood by while I talked to the man. I don't know maybe he was just there to be able to go back to his family to report to them what

happened. The inmate did take the news hard, yet he listened to the gospel message of hope and the encouragement I tried to give him. Later the inmate was found not guilty on his charges and was released. I would like to end this with being able to say that the guy went out and turned his life around. Unfortunately that wasn't the case, a few months later Joe mentioned that his relative was once more back in jail. Another one who just can't stay out of that revolving door.

It wasn't a good ending for this story concerning the inmate, which is the case most of the time. But the thing that means a lot to me is what a difference it made in my working relationship with Joe! Now when I run into him I get a genuinely friendly greeting but more than anything I think both Joe and I learned something that day, we aren't so far apart from each other really. We are both just two people trying to do our jobs the best way we can. Joe hasn't said anything to me about it but I've got the feeling he views his job just a little bit differently now.

I have no idea where Joe stands in a relationship with God. I can't imagine any Deputy being able to deal with all they have to do in there without Him!

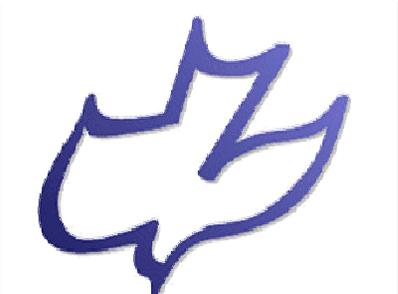
I often end articles asking you to pray for some inmate. This time I would like to break from tradition and ask you to pray for all law enforcement, its an often thankless and always tough and dangerous job.

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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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