



*Life is messy, but Jesus gives hope
to all who need to be set free
behind bars of steel
and walls of bitterness.*

November 2015 Newsletter

Freedom!

I have been convicted lately of all the things I take for granted in my life. We live in a country where most of us here experience freedom and safety in public, and security in our homes. We have our needs met, and much, much more. But in many other countries it is not so, and especially for Christ-followers. I read prayer reminders from World Vision and Voice of the Martyrs, and I cry out with tears for those who have lost their homes, their livelihood, their freedom, and even their lives because of their public stand for Jesus Christ. How their families struggle and weep as they are denied food, shelter, and the presence of their loved ones! I have never experienced what it means to be denied those things. And yet, in the jail, I get to see a little bit of what it means to lose that freedom.

“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

Luke 4:18–19 (NIV84)

Just in the last few months, I have visited with a man whose wife was raped while he was in jail. He expressed how outraged, and yet how helpless he felt!

One inmate asked me to visit his mother, because she is dying of cancer, and he can’t go himself. He wants so desperately to ask her forgiveness and to care for her in her last days. When I visited her, first in the hospital and then at her home, she grieved his absence and his poor choices, but was comforted to hear that he had given his heart to Jesus, and was living out his faith behind bars.



I got a call from a distraught mother whose son was in jail here, and she lives in Texas. I have no idea how she got my number. She had called the Sheriff’s office, and was unable to get any information or help contacting her son. She is a disabled single mom, a diabetic with younger children still at home, and had just been diagnosed with cancer. Her oldest son had been murdered in prison, and now his younger brother is headed to prison. She used to attend church regularly with her mother, who had recently died, but now it is hard to go to a place that reminds her so much of that loss. I prayed with her as she wept. I promised to visit her son, and encouraged her to return to her church to find people who would comfort her and support her in this difficult time. I emailed her instructions

on how she could visit her son by videoconference from Texas. I am praying that her son will consent to talk to me, and that God will use my visit to bring healing to his soul, and comfort to his mother.

I had opportunity to pray with another mother whose son suffers from a mental illness, and is now accused of a terrible crime. I was able to tell her that her son had expressed his love and concern for her when I visited him, and that Jesus is reaching out to embrace her and comfort her in her pain.

Our world is full of broken and hurting people. Jesus told us His desire is to proclaim freedom for the prisoners, preach good news to the poor, release to the oppressed, and proclaim that the Lord's favor is available to us all.

I met with a man who was raised in church but never believed until his behavior landed him in jail. He saw his face in a mirror, contorted by anger, and it shocked him to see what he had become. He prayed for deliverance, and is now on fire for Jesus, leading Bible study and prayer daily among the inmates.

I have supplied Bibles and Christian books to a former shot-caller in the jail, to read and distribute to dozens of former inmates who gather at his house for Bible study and prayer. He is a man who once ruthlessly ran his "kingdom" in jail, but then was transformed by the Spirit of God into a child of heaven and a Bible study leader. In jail, he showed me a list of prayers that his group had been praying for. It was single-spaced and small print on both sides of several pages, because paper is scarce in jail. Every prayer that God answered was highlighted with yellow pencil, and the yellow that filled those pages was powerful and convincing evidence of His loving attention to the prayers of His sons, crying out to Him in their need.

Last month, we baptized 65 men and 23 women in an old horse trough filled with very cold water! In spite of the cold shock, they were laughing and shouting and embracing one another (and us) for the joy of a new beginning in Jesus! I ended up about as wet as they were by the time we were finished!

God is doing amazing things among people whom many in our society regard as "throw-aways." And you can be part of what He is doing there! If you feel God tugging at you to make an eternal difference in someone's life, and you want to get in on the joy of watching God at work in miraculous ways in people's lives, let me know. I'd love to hear from you and have you join us as we follow Jesus' example in the jail! I promise you will find that God works in your life at least as much as He works in those to whom you are going!

Prayer Requests:

- Please pray for the inmates I have mentioned, and for their families, who are suffering the fallout of their loved one's poor choices. Pray that God would work in the inmates' lives, and in their families, to draw them closer to His love and salvation. Pray that God would raise up and empower more leaders in the pods, to call the inmates to pray, and to study God's Word, and to "do the work of an evangelist."
- Please pray that God would raise up more Certified Jail Ministers to step forward, discipling inmates once a week in the jail. Thank God for His transformation in the lives of these volunteers, and in the inmates they serve. Ask God what He would have **you** do!
- Praise God for the 27 volunteers who attended the jail orientation in August! This is the first orientation since February of 2014, and the ranks of those visiting the jail on Thursday evening are growing thin. We have not seen any of the volunteers receive their jail ID cards yet, so please pray that God would speed the process of background checks and approvals, so we are able to visit all the pods with the good news!
- Pray for continued donations of Christian books, to help guide those who are spiritual seekers, and those who want to grow in Christ. Pray for revival!
- Pray also for wisdom and workers to expand into the Juvenile Hall, and funds to make it all possible.
- Praise God for our donors, who make this faith venture possible. "We thank God on every remembrance of you."

Blessings to you all!

*Jan and Roxanne
Carlisle*

