



## April Newsletter 2013



### Hunger for the Gospel

On Maundy Thursday (the Thursday before Easter), I was privileged to call on a cellblock with a visitor, a volunteer who is waiting for his full clearance as a jail minister from the Butte County Sheriff's Office. He was feeling nervous and vulnerable as we entered the open common area for his first time, and a little alarmed as a young inmate, with gang tattoos covering his shirtless torso, quickly approached him. My friend was wearing a black leather vest with "Motorcyclists for Christ" emblazoned on it, and the inmate was intrigued! He had a load of questions, and the two found lots of common ground and opportunity to discuss spiritual things.

Meanwhile, I was talking with another young man whom I have been discipling, but who was struggling because his trial was not going well. As my visitor friend finished his first conversation, he joined ours, and we listened, counseled, and prayed with this young man in his anguish. Emotion was high, and God's powerful, comforting presence was very evident.

Then it was time for the other half of the cell block to have their time in the common area, and the first half had to lock down in their cells. When the second group came out, ten men came right over to us, Bibles in hand, and said, "OK, let's do this!" Scripture came alive, as I brought out that this was the very day, the Thursday before Easter, when Jesus washed His disciples' feet, instituted the Lord's Supper, and prayed for both them and us. (John 17) This was the very evening when Jesus prayed in the garden, was arrested and carried away to trial. He could have walked away from all the pain and humiliation. He could have called more than twelve battalions of angels to come to His aid! (Matthew 26:53) But He chose to go through with the Father's plan to save us. He asked Peter, James and John to pray for Him, but they fell asleep; they let Him down the one time He asked them to minister to Him! In His struggle, an angel came to strengthen Him. Now, if I was struggling, and an angel showed up to help, I'd expect it to get easier. Wouldn't you? But it didn't:

There appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him. And being in an **agony** he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground. —Luke 22:43–44 (ESV)

Why didn't it get easier? Because the angel wasn't sent to deliver Jesus from his suffering, but to give Him strength to persevere through it, and accomplish His Father's will, the salvation of many. How often are we asked to endure suffering for the kingdom of God, and all we want is out? Yet, God works through our suffering, both for our growth and our witness to others. Are we willing to walk through both good times and bad, when our Father calls us to walk that path for the sake of His kingdom? Do we pray for strength to endure for the kingdom of God, or just quick relief of our pain? No matter our circumstances, and even in jail, God has

a purpose for our lives, new life to bring from the ashes of defeat and death! And it begins now, not after I get out of jail, after my suffering is over, after I heal from my latest injury, after I overcome my addictions and sins. My visiting friend came away amazed at the hunger for the Word of God in the jail, and eager to return! You could join us!

## **Inmate received Christ**

I was asked by a friend to visit a young man awaiting trial, and, when we met, he was reaching out to find God in any way he could. He had no background in the Bible, though, and he was confused and lost in the historical accounts of biblical characters in all their mistakes and foibles. I explained that this realistic picture showed the truth of the biblical account – some followed God and some didn't, and even those who did, failed at times and needed to repent and be forgiven, just like we do today. I asked if he knew what the Bible had to say about how we get right with God, and he said he didn't, so I took him on a quick trip through Romans. Paul lays out our need, Jesus' provision, and how we receive it in our lives. He prayed with me a prayer of repentance, of claiming Jesus' Easter provision for our forgiveness, of faith in His care for us in all of life, and of submission and obedience to His revealed will for our choices. When we were done, his smile said it all! I look forward to seeing him again, to help guide him as he begins his walk in God's light.

## **CISM**

Roxanne and I recently attended four days of Critical Incident Stress Management training in Rocklin. It was an excellent opportunity to learn and improve skills for helping people through traumatic events in their lives, from individual grief management to complex responses to natural disasters and large tragedies, such as the recent school shootings or bombings. If help appropriate to a person's level of exposure and reaction is not provided immediately after the trauma, such an event can catapult a victim into a life-long Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. It was good to learn and practice those skills in the company of many Christian professionals in fire departments, police departments, chaplaincies and emergency response teams in northern California. The classes were sponsored by K-LOVE radio station.

## **Praises and Prayer Requests:**

- Pray for the young woman I introduced to Jesus in February, as she reads her Bible and grows in understanding of her newfound Savior, and for the young man I mentioned, that God would fill and grow them with His Word, and the peace and joy of His presence.
- Our biggest need is for partners to join us. The fields are white, ready for harvest. Nowhere else have I seen such eagerness for the gospel. Nowhere else have I seen such potential to transform our community's life and health. Pray that the Lord of the harvest will raise up workers, teachers, mentors, pray-ers, helpers, and givers in this new year. Pray for churches and Christians in Butte County to hear of the need, and rise to the call of our Savior.
- Please pray that God will raise up prayer warriors and a Prayer Coordinator, someone who would take the initiative to get our specific prayer requests out to those who have committed to hold ARM's ministry to inmates and their families up before our Lord.

Thank you for your prayers, your help, and your encouragement. May the God of resurrection work in your life and among us together to bring new life to many inmates and families in Butte County! I'm excited to watch what God is doing, and anticipate what He is about to do!

Ian and Roxanne Carlisle

