



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

September Newsletter 2014

Who are your “favorite” people?

“My brothers, as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, don’t show favoritism. Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in shabby clothes also comes in. If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, “Here’s a good seat for you,” but say to the poor man, “You stand there” or “Sit on the floor by my feet,” have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?

Listen, my dear brothers: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him? But you have insulted the poor. Is it not the rich who are exploiting you? Are they not the ones who are dragging you into court? Are they not the ones who are slandering the noble name of him to whom you belong?

If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, “Love your neighbor as yourself,” you are doing right. But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers...

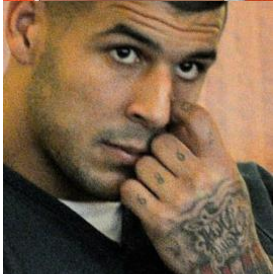
Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom, because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment!” (Jas 2:1–13, NIV)

Let’s face it; most church people would feel awkward, maybe even a little scared, if we found one of these people next to us, wouldn’t we? But what if they sat next to us in church? Would we move away? Excuse

ourselves to the restroom? Refuse to make eye contact? Wonder if they’re here to get a handout or rob someone? Would we hope no one thought we actually knew the person? Would we thank God that we are not “like them?”

Do we understand how afraid they are of being told they’re not welcome, especially not in “those clothes?” (I’ve talked to people to whom this happened!) They may just have been released, and “those clothes” are all they’ve got. Or even worse, what if they are simply ignored; what if no one talks to them, no one looks at them, no one even acknowledges that they exist?

What do you suppose Jesus would have done? Would He have played “favorites?” Or is He glad that they finally heard His voice calling them to take a huge risk, and actually walk into a church, maybe for the first time? He knows what a huge blessing it is to be “seen,” to be listened to, made to feel like their story matters. For many inmates who find Jesus in jail, it’s as hard for them to walk into a church as it would be for you to walk into a jail cell! How much would it mean to you to have a welcoming, encouraging person greet you with a sincere smile and some help navigating an unfamiliar situation? If you keep your eyes open for a stranger who looks different, out of place, uncomfortable, they may need someone to come alongside, and you might be “inviting *Jesus* in!”



Testimony of a Certified Jail Minister

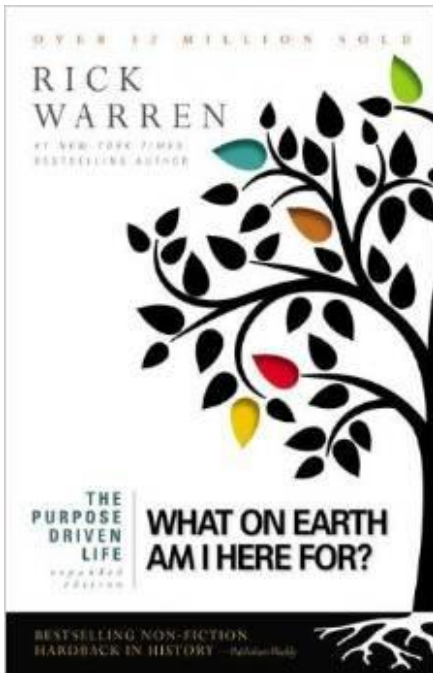
One CJM shared her process as she considered adding another inmate to her weekly discipleship schedule.

"My husband and I spoke about taking on ___ and he is totally fine with it. We also prayed about it and I felt the Lord brought old prayers to memory when I had been praying for a ministry to be a part of and serve in so I feel very good about taking on ___ also (In other words, answered prayer). I feel thrilled at the opportunity actually. Thanks again."

"I got to meet with her on Friday. She seems eager to learn and very thankful someone is there to help her. I love the fact that I am learning while allowing God to use me for teaching. This will be a growing experience for both of us which I think will keep a connection between us. I tried to elaborate on the importance having a strong foundation in order to fight off the enemy and/or ourselves even. I felt compelled to do so because I could feel the spiritual warfare going on around me while there... I am excited to meet with her again, I feel blessed God is allowing me to participate in this ministry and I ask for prayers that nothing but His words would come out of my mouth while teaching... Thank you again for this opportunity!"

This could be **you**, making an eternal difference in the life of "one of the least of these." Please pray about it!

What On Earth Am I Here For? – The Purpose Driven Life



There are over a dozen men and women *inmates* leading studies in the Butte County Jail right now. The number fluctuates as they are released or transferred to other jails or prisons. As a result, when I visit in the jail, I am always looking for men and women who have started leading Bible studies among their peers, or who are willing to step up to the need in their cell pod. When I find a natural leader like this, I meet with them one-on-one to find out how I can help equip them to fulfill their calling. To date, we have distributed about 25 donated study Bibles, fifteen Bible handbooks, hundreds of study guides, and dedicated concordances.

Recently, an inmate on the women's side got ahold of a copy of Rick Warren's excellent book, *The Purpose Driven Life*, and started teaching it to others in her cell. When she was released, her copy went with her, and we had an outcry for more copies so the ladies could continue their study. Through a donation from a local church mission board, we purchased a number of the books, and the ladies were studying again, this time with their own copies. Then, women were transferred to other cells, and they took their books with them, and various women started teaching others from their copies. As they wrote friends on the men's side, it started there, too! At this

point, we have requests for dozens of copies of the book, and you can help us!

Please pray and ask God if He would have you partner with us in equipping disciples with this learning/teaching tool. You could consider a one-time gift to help us to buy fifty of these books at \$12.49 new (and even less used), providing these God-gifted leaders with discipling tools they will put to use right now. Any amount will help!

Prayer Requests:

- Praise God for the spontaneous revival of interest in spiritual things, for inmate leaders stepping forward, and for God's provision of discipleship materials. Please pray for more disciples who know "what on earth they are here for," and who will step forward to meet inmates weekly.
- Please pray for wisdom and workers to expand into the Juvenile Hall, and for Roxanne's health as she has surgery this Month.

May God use you, too, for His glory! Ian and Roxanne Carlisle

