WHEN YOU WALK THROUGH A STORM

Now that so many get our newsletter through the Internet, we would like to deal with some basics. Ministering to anyone can be difficult. It can be tougher writing or visiting an inmate. Probably as high as 40% of the inmate population in the U.S. is in a lockdown status—meaning all but an hour a day is spent in their cells. Most are two- or three-person cells. Some have TVs, many do not, meaning they are not aware of your world and don't know how to tell you about theirs. Ask lots of questions about prison life, not as if prying, but show a genuine interest.

Do not ask why they are in prison. If they tell you, say Praise God. Some of their cases are really shocking and fear of losing a friend stops them from confiding in you.

This is a ministry. Inmates in prison have little and try to get help. That's O.K. if you can afford a little once in awhile. If every letter is asking for money or things, then it may be time to change Pen Friends. If we match you with someone you don't get along with, let us know and we will use your talents elsewhere with a new friend for both. Remember, they do not understand the world you live in any more than you do theirs. Most say they are not guilty; a great many are telling the truth. Some say as high as 30% of those in prison are not guilty of the crime they are there for. Fear, ignorance, and lack of money puts most in prison.

WALK A MILE IN OUR SHOES

You start your day early with a 45-minute drive to the prison. You check in, go through the metal detectors, and draw your keys to Hell. As you walk across the yard, you can almost smell fear and hate. Thank God the inmates know who we are and the greetings are mostly nice, but Satan's recruits want to get you gone. You stop and talk to an inmate here and there, always inviting him to a better way. We might preach or teach, or just listen to the massive hurt and deep loneliness of men wanting so badly to put together those broken pieces. In prison, men and women have very little chance to release the hurt they feel inside. Some of the things we hear are totally frightening, but they trust us. We are Grandma and Grandpa to many, Ma and Pa to others. We are sisters and brothers to all. We, like God, hate the sin and learn to love the sinner. We also have a chance to talk to officers who, just like the inmates, need someone to talk to.
How things can change in a heartbeat, however. Several weeks ago all was quiet and two men got into it, and soon the two were a hundred. Thank God there were no weapons and no one was seriously hurt. Then came the hated lockdown where all, for the madness of a few, are kept in their cells for days.

**BIBLES**

Dear Friends and fellow Christians, your response to our appeal for Bibles was great, but we need 173 used STUDY BIBLES for advanced students.

If any of you requested a Pen Friend, we are playing catch up and you will be matched soon. God Bless You. Because of YOU, Someone Cares. The God Squad web page: www.someonecares.org

We need used STUDY BIBLES for advanced students. A study Bible has a concordance and explanatory references at the bottom of each page, as a rule. We have some inmates who have stayed with their study programs in spite of a lack of church services for several years, and they also need full concordances, such as Strong's, sets of Bible commentaries, etc. Please ask your church members and other friends to check their libraries for spare reference books.

Ship Bibles to: Chaplain Jordan North Kern Prison 2737 W Cecil Ave Delano, Ca 93216

Also we need a used prisner for a MacIntosh Computer. God Bless. [Sometimes Don's fingers don't keep up with his train of thought, and he said I could keep this bit of humor intact. He assured me that they've already received a used PRINTER for Yvonne's Mac.]

On the serious side, we do need pastors and/or volunteers to visit in prisons. One is urgently needed at the moment at the Soledad, CA facility.

**THE 'HOOD**

Living on the streets of downtown L.A. Trying to make my own way, I was taking instead of giving, Living day to day.

Never cared what I was doing as long as I got ahead. Didn't know my life was ruined until I was near dead.
Now I'm doing time.
I don't know what happened to me.
Oh God, what have I done?
What I once had is all gone.
My loneliness is growing,
It's hard to stand the pain.
The hurt of not knowing
Is driving me insane.
I was about to end it all
When I heard God call my name.
He said "I know, now you must change your ways and come to me.
I will take your suffering, your loneliness and pain.
Son, hear what I'm saying, you have everything to gain."
God then gave me what I never had-LOVE.
Steve Goldbalm

YVONNE'S CORNER

This is the time of year that we all look forward to Mother's and Father's day as we can all reflect on how much they have given of time, patience, love, and last but not least, money, to help us become the persons we are today. I am so grateful for good Christian parents and grandparents, and their Christian friends who helped me along life's path. I pray we all take time to let people know how much they have meant to us over the years. There is no time like now to say Thank You.

Most of you parents are familiar with the words; "I'll do it in a minute, but first..." Our Heavenly Father often receives a similar response from His children. Oh, I am so guilty of that, and then I forget what I was supposed to do. I'll never forget my inner battle one morning as I was on my knees scrubbing my kitchen floor. It began with a strong impression from the Lord that I should go and check on my next door neighbor, Delores. I told myself I'd do it later, after I finished scrubbing the floor. Then the inner prompting began to feel more urgent. "As soon as I finish the floor, I'll go next door," I promised the Lord. But deep inside, I knew He meant now, before I finished scrubbing the floor. A real battle of the will took place. I admitted that countless opportunities had been lost because of things I wanted to do first. Finally I said, "Okay, Lord, I'll go now!" When Delores opened her door, she said tearfully, "How did you know I needed you right now?" I didn't, but God did, and my surrender to Him played a part in Delores being able to trust us so we could witness to her. In Luke 9, Jesus taught that some things can wait. That includes half-scrubbed floors-and a host of other things.
But a ripe harvest can't wait!

Then in fellowship sweet,
we will sit at His feet,
Or we'll walk by His side in the way;
What He says we will do,
where He sends we will go---
Never fear, only trust and obey.
Delayed Obedience is only a step away from Disobedience.

HE SAID
SHE SAID
THEY SAID

Barbara worked for a bank. She was a nice young girl who had few friends. Worked hard. She met a young man who showed an interest in her, the first in her life. One day this person robbed the bank where she worked. When caught, he said she was the inside person, and set everything up. Because he plea bargained, he was set free and she served time! Police are working to solve crime no matter that the innocent suffer.

Paul was an honor student, had a good job and a nice car. He also fell into bad company. One night he and two friends had gone to a party, had a little to drink. While he was driving home, one of his friends said "I have to go to the bathroom," and Paul stopped at a convenience store. His friends went in, Paul stayed in the car. His friends came out and he took them home. Three days later Paul was arrested for the murder of the clerk in the store. Witnesses had seen the car and turned him in. He told police what happened and they arrested the others. They stuck together, plea bargained to a softer sentence, and sent Paul to prison for five years. The real killers served less than a year.

CRIME BOMB

One out of every twenty born today will do time. Many will do hard time. For minority males, the risk is higher. A black male has a 1 in 4 chance; Hispanic 16%; and an Anglo 4.4%. Once into the prison system it is almost impossible to get out of it. Soon we will reach the two million incarcerated level. Where will we put them? Prisons are overcrowded warehouses with little rehabilitation and not much regeneration. Who cares that the bomb is ticking? Praise God, Someone Cares. If not you, who? If not here, where? If not now, when?

I WAS JUST A HAMMER
Many of you know my background, where I came from and how God brought me out. I think back now and the poem to follow will tell you who I was. The battle between Heaven and Hell went on for so long. I knew that becoming a Christian was what I needed, but giving up all Satan's world was for me a real challenge. The pushing and pulling went on for a long time until Jesus came into my heart in Mountain View, California. But I was still just a hammer trying to do better.

Then the hammer I was fell into the Carpenter's hand. To be a tool for the use of Jesus is so great that, as hard as I try to remember the person who wrote the following, I just can't find him. Praise God!

ONCE HAD DREAMS

I once had dreams to be somebody,  
a doctor, a lawyer, an engineer.  
I once had dreams to succeed in life;  
how did I end up here?  
This was not supposed to happen.  
Where did I go astray?  
Why didn't someone warn me of this awful day?  
Or could it be they told me and  
I turned them all away?  
And so I sit here wondering,  
What did they have to say?  
Maybe they knew the road I was  
traveling was not what it seemed.  
Maybe they tried to tell me it would  
swallow up my dreams.  
Maybe they tried to tell me my  
friends were not all "cool."  
Maybe they tried to tell me that I  
should stay in school.  
The drugs, the gangs, the party life  
all will come to an end.  
Not until they destroy your dreams  
... I wish I had listened.  
I wish I had listened when they  
tried to keep me on track (me, too).  
I wish I could start all over and take  
my dreams back.  
I wish I didn't have to live in this  
man-made Hell,
Where dreams are things that pass and man becomes a shell.
Where life has little value and each day may be your last;
Where all are daily tested and few pass the test.
When you're stripped of pride and dignity and fear grips each soul.
Where days turn to weeks, weeks to months, and you're getting very old.
Every day you sit and cry for what life could have been. They tried to warn me (are you listening?) Of this day. I wish I had listened.
You have a chance to be somebody.
You have a chance of hope.
Don't trade your dreams for home boys [friends];
Don't trade your dreams for dope.
You only get one chance to dream, and now is yours.
Don't turn away from those who care or your dreams will end up like mine.
So I hope you get the message of what I'm trying to say.
You can be someone great, but you must start today.
Jack Roberts #10237

PARADOX OF OUR TIMES

We have taller buildings, but shorter tempers; wider freeways, but narrower viewpoints; we spend more, but have less; we buy more, but enjoy it less.

We have bigger houses and smaller families; more conveniences, but less time; we have more degrees, but less common sense; more knowledge, but less
judgment; more experts, but more problems; more medicine, but less wellness.

We spend too recklessly, laugh too little, drive too fast, get too angry too quickly, stay up too late, get up too tired, read too seldom, watch TV too much, and pray too seldom.

We have multiplied our possessions, but reduced our values. We talk too much, love too seldom and lie too often.

We've learned how to make a living, but not a life; we've added years to life, not life to years.

We've been all the way to the moon and back, but have trouble crossing the street to meet the new neighbor.

We've conquered outer space, but not inner space; we've done larger things, but not better things; we've cleaned up the air, but polluted the soul; we've split the atom, but not our prejudice; we write more, but learn less; plan more, but accomplish less.

We've learned to rush, but not to wait; we have higher incomes; but lower morals; more food but less appeasement; more acquaintances, but fewer friends; more effort but less success.

We build more computers to hold more information, to produce more copies than ever, but have less
communication; we've become long on quantity, but short on quality.

These are the times of fast foods and slow digestion; tall men and short character; steep profits, and shallow relationships.

These are the times of world peace, but domestic warfare; more leisure and less fun; more kinds of food, but less nutrition. These are days of two incomes, but more divorce; of fancier houses, but broken homes.

These are days of quick trips, disposable diapers, throwaway morality, one-night stands, overweight bodies, and pills that do everything from cheer, to quiet, to kill.

It is a time when there is much in the show window, and nothing in the stockroom. Indeed it's all true.

Think about it...read it again.

Then, let's try to make it better in 1999. Via Email

The Anatomy of a True Friend

Eyes:
Will always see you for the way you really are, your true self.

Ears:
Will always have them open to listen.

Mouth:
To always tell you the truth and give their opinions, tell you when you mess up or do something good.
Shoulder:
Will offer when you need one to
cry on, will be your strength when
you find it hard to carry yourself.
Will always let you lean on them.

Heart:
To love you for who you are and
not judge, Will always have a place
there for you.

Hands:
To hold yours when you need a
little guidance, to lend when you
need help, and to help you up
when you may fall.

Arms:
Will always make you feel
comfortable in them and to offer
hugs when you need one. Will try
to warm when you are cold.

Feet:
To walk with you throughout your
life and be the best friend they can be.

Author Unknown

JEAN'S JOTTINGS

ODE TO JOY

A young lady wrote us a beautiful letter, stating that she and the inmate to whom she was writing
had formed a close friendship over time, and she admired the Christian qualities his letters
reflected.

She decided to visit him in prison and was equally impressed with him in person. Their
friendship has blossomed into a Christ-centered love for each other. Her fiancé is out of prison
now, and they plan to be married soon.

We congratulate this dedicated young couple. Please lift them up new life together and pray for
their happiness as we share their joy.

This is the third such marriage in the history of Someone Cares. One is in its eighth year, the
other in its tenth. Both are solid, stable, loving marriages. Praise God that all of you care enough to make this ministry possible.

A word of caution to the single:
When signing up to be a Pen Friend, do not expect to automatically find romance, either as an inmate or as the person on the outside. It is very easy to open up too much, too fast, when you are lonely and have the anonymity of another mail box between you and the friend to whom you are writing. Keep your letters newsy when writing to inmates, and try to point your Pen Friends to Christ as their best friend. Relationships need time to bloom, just as it took a long time, this Michigan spring, for the first bulbs to open into their glorious display.

There are people looking for a type of relationship that Christ would not approve of. There are people looking for a reference point to call home to promote a parole. There are those playing a game where winning is everything.

Then there are those who are genuinely seeking God in their lives as a way out of their sin and their despair. Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and all these [other] things will be added unto you ... in HIS time.

MORE PRAISE:

God has blessed me with a computer tower that should never again present the uppity message "Out of Virtual Memory" and flash off line.

I'm sure Satan will continue to plague in some other area. If we were as persistent as he, and spread the gospel, we'd all be in heaven by now. For the present, my Best Friend allows me the joy of listening to the disk drives hum, shift into overdrive, and instantly pop up programs, ready to go to work. Praise God from whom all blessings flow!!!