SOMEONE CARES PRISON MINISTRY

Quietly Changing Lives

News Letter

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Don & Yvonne McClure
Directors

CHOOSE FREEDOM

There are many reasons that a program like Choose Freedom should exist in our society. My reasons for it are much more personal. Choose Freedom began with a man who found out that he was going to prison for three years and could not buy his way out of it.

"The feeling that I had when I was told I was off to prison and would not see my family for a long time was the best thing that could happen to me. It taught me that I had to make changes in my life--for my wife, my kids and our future. My first week in County Jail I saw a Ziggy cartoon that rang true to me. I do not know what my future holds, but I know who holds my future..."

Choose Freedom is a program aimed to help a child or young adult make an educated choice about what he/she will do with the future. We will simply inform the children about what life on the inside is like and how ONE wrong choice can and will change their future forever. Parents and teachers do their best to help children choose the high and moral path in life. We, as inmates, can reach and affect a child in a different way. Very directly, we are the BAD GUYS and we have true stories to tell about ourselves. It is not a history book or even about a friend, it will be about us and the wrong choices we made - a true story that could hit home and hopefully have a strong impact on the choices that they will be forced to make themselves. The program will direct most of its focus on drugs, alcohol, guns, robbery and fraud.

Picture this....A thirteen year old child finds some drugs in his parents' house. He brings them to school to share with his friends. He is instantly the popular kid on campus. He has the drugs. One week later he is now selling drugs to his new friends at school and their friends as well. He gets caught, kicked out of school and goes to a youth camp for one year. As a fifteen-year-old, he starts life at a new school. He has no friends and remembers how popular he had been when he was dealing drugs. His parents no longer had any, so he has to find a place to buy them. He steals money from home, buys drugs and sells them at school. Wow! He is Mr. Popular again. Thinking more drugs means more friends, he decides to get more. Money is the problem. He gets hold of a gun, robs a local liquor store. An adult in the store tries to catch him. He is so scared. He shoots the man and runs. The next day at school he is picked up for murder....

Now, at age 40, he has been in jail for 25 years and is telling his story to a classroom full of young teens who may face the same insecurities and challenges that he did.

Over 300,000 inmates and parolees are currently in the California Department of Corrections system at a cost of $4.6 billion to the public each year. 98,000 are currently in for drug related charges and over 57% of them will return. We cannot change the past of these people. We can,
how-ever, work to change the future.

Through a lot of hard work, great sponsorship, city and service club support, Choose Freedom could touch the future of over 350,000 school children each year with our classroom project and many more with the road show program. If Choose Freedom could reach 2% of the state's children and change the lives of just 0.5%. That 0.5% would stay out of jail and the State of California could save over $50 million per year.

I would love the opportunity to review the plans and projections at length and show you how effective and bene-ficial it can become. It is very difficult for me to put my excitement and enthusiasm on paper. If I could have 20-30 minutes of your time, you, too, will see what I see. With the right people supporting this project, it would not only help out the future of the young in your state, it could even save lives.

IT CAN HAPPEN TO YOU

My name is Cecil. I am 51 years old and serving time for child molesting. It makes no difference if you believe me as nothing will change. I was raised in a solid Christian home and lived under Christian principles all my life. I had a good job and a wonderful Christian wife. When my wife died, I thought my life was over. My church was so supportive and gave me much love. I moved to a new town and new church, where I met a very nice woman. After about six months we started dating. I saw again a chance for happiness, and getting rid of loneliness. We married and I stepped from heaven into hell. My wife had 2 daughters, both of whom seemed really nice when I visited before marriage. With me as head of the household, they were downright defiant, but my wife stuck by Christian values for the home.

I was the manager at a department store. Just before lunch one day, two men walked up to me and said, "Sir, you are under arrest."

In shock I said "For what!?" "Child molesting."

It seems my step daughters told police I had molested them both, and they had a story down pat. I was sentenced to 20 years in prison. Several years later the girls told their mother (who never really had believed them) that they had made up the story to get rid of me. My wife called police and was told there was nothing they could do.

This story was told to us six years ago. Cecil is now out of prison with a label he will never live down.

BETTER SCHOOLS

BETTER EDUCATION... say George Bush and Al Gore. I can give them both a clue—it should start in the prisons of the United States. As high as 40% of all inmates cannot read or write well enough to get a job. Yet there is little chance to get an education in prison. If inmates were forced to get an education, the crime rate would drop. Just think. Inmates form the inner city go to prison for ten years. Nothing is done to rehabilitate them and they are returned to the inner city. The $40,000 we spent per year to incarcerate them is wasted. In some states the cost is even higher. Inmates in many states are paroled even though they have no job, no money, no place to
stay. We wonder why they return to prison.

**PRISONS DO NOT EXCLUDE GOD**

Strong are the walls around me,
that hold me all the day;
But they who have thus bound me Can't keep God away.
These dungeon walls are dear,
because the Love of God is here,
They know, who thus oppress me, That it's hard to be alone,
They know not, One can bless me, HE comes through bars and stone.

He makes my dungeon walls of darkness bright.
Then fills my heart with exquisite delight.
Thy love, Oh God, restores me.
From sighs and tears to praise, And deep my soul adores Thee,
None thinks of time or place.
I ask no more in good or ill, but union with Thy holy will.

This is that time which makes me treasure, 'tis that which makes me gain.
Converting woe to pleasure, reaping joy from pain,
Oh this is enough for whatever befalls,
To know God is behind these Prison walls.

**THIS IS MY STORY**

My name is Judy and I want you to know why I'm in prison. When I was very young I was forced to do terrible things to and with my step father; as I grew older, to his friends. I grew up hating and had an evil spirit. All I could dream about was my eighteenth birthday and getting away. When I was 15 my mom packed up and left. What was I to do? I stole $22.00 and went to New York, using my body to pay my way there. Of course next came a pimp, and drugs, and AIDS. I was 17 when I killed a customer to save my own life.

This I got away with. I was 18 when I killed my pimp. When I was arrested I gave all to the police and am serving a life sentence, but that will not be long, as I am dying.

My message is to moms-if you know your child is getting abused get them out, no matter the cost. We used to have pools on the street on who would live to be 21, I will not make it.

(Since this was written, Judy died. The only blessing is, she got to meet Jesus.)

**BEHIND PRISON WALLS**

Do join me for a moment. Take a mental note of living in a small bathroom 6 x 12. A toilet-sink combination and two steel bunks are fastened to the wall. My food, and my cellie's, is pushed through a hole in the door. We have no radio and no TV; we listen to the one next door. Hate permeates the whole cell block, and fear is in all our thoughts. Who will get stabbed, raped, or kill them- selves? I'm lucky I only have 40 years to go, my cellie has double life. We both more than deserve to be here and I just hope I can make it. Last month the kid down the run killed him- self by chewing the veins in his wrist and bleeding to death. Why am I writing this? To thank Someone for the two books I have, which I have read a hundred times. Your address was
in the back.

Slash

WHAT IS IT LIKE?

To walk along a beach or into the shallow water of the ocean? I've never seen a beach or ocean. What is it like to climb a mountain, or smell a rose? What is it like to be loved or hugged, or have someone buy you a present? What is it like? I grew up in the inner city, the ghetto, the hood. Our turf was 22 square blocks with nothing in it. My mom was born and died in there and never once saw outside, what is it like. We fought to keep this 22 blocks. Why? it was all we had. Oh, I will not ever see that again, as I will spend the rest of my life in prison.

What's it like? It smells of urine, pruno (prison wine) hate and fear. What's it like seeing a young boy raped? You are thankful it's not you. What's it like when the cops take your shank (prison knife)? You know you must get another. What's it like being surrounded by He-She's? I'll tell you, folks, it's HELL.

J. W. Browne

LIVE FAST, DIE YOUNG, HAVE A GOOD LOOKING CORPSE

When we talk to young inmates, this is their thinking. When I get out I go back to what? The hood. The Ghetto, The Barrio. One young man, 22, said, "Don, on the street I had a fancy new car, broads, money, all I needed. Now what am I to do? Go out and work for McDonald's for minimum wage when I can still make a grand ($1,000) a day? No way, man. I'm going to have a ball until I fall. I'm going to do no good in the hood, until the man guns me down. I WILL NOT COME BACK HERE (PRISON)! Sure, I believe in God, but HE does not come where I live." (He does if we let Him.)

SEND FOR ME... was part of a beautiful song, morning noon and night were the words. "Don't you fret my pretty pet. Who do our kids send for?"

And our kids are fretting right into prison. We say no, not my kid, but we see Christian-raised kids coming into prison every day.

"Did your folks talk to you about drugs? NO. Sex? No. AIDS? No. Tomorrow? No. Our Pastors, God bless them, are not trained for today's problems, and thus leave a generation with nowhere to go.

Let Go, Let God, sounds good. We need to get our churches involved with Youth

For Christ, Campus Crusade, Teen Challenge, or Bring Back programs that used to be part of the church. Grand Parents, ask your Grand Kids; Parents, ask your Kids. If you don't, someone else will show them. Kids if your parents don't ask, scream at them to listen. Many of you reading this have stories to tell. We would like to share them with our readers.

YVONNE'S CORNER
Time goes by so quickly, if we are busy working and sharing our faith with others on a daily basis.

Over the past six months or so there has been a sales pitch that if you talk to three different people a day five days a week, you could end up with fifteen new customers. Now, as Christians, we should be able to do that easily, and think how many Bible studies we could be holding in our homes. Pray about it and let the Lord lead you! Investing in Eternal Salvation is becoming Lost in Love with your Personal Savior! So many of you who are active in the Pen Friend program or Paper Sunshine, hear from your inmates that they are coming up for parole. That usually means a parole hearing, that doesn't mean they will be released from prison. In a news article from the state of Michigan in 1999, 14,667 inmates had interviews for parole. Out of that 10,158 paroles were denied! There has been a 17% increase in parole denials since 1990. Source of information: Office of the Parole Board of Michigan.

Now, this is happening in all the states, so just keep that Paper Sunshine flowing. The men and women in prison need that, and if it was not for you, Someone Cares would not exist. Now that we are back to school and back to a more regular routine, I know we will be more consistent.

**WHAT DO WE SAY AFTER WE SAY WE ARE SORRY!**

We had a massive backlog of mail and were forced to forward letters unread. We don't like to do that. We need your help. If you are using a pen name, send us your real name and your Pen Name. Many of you wrote using a Pen Name and forgot to tell us; we have mail that we don't know who it goes to. Also, many of you are sending things to your inmates that they cannot have.

Please don't send anything to the prison unless you check with THE PRISON, not the inmate.

NEVER send cash.

NEVER put stickers of any kind on envelopes. This is a way used to get drugs in.

If you live in Canada, please send us the letters. We will put US postage on the letter to your inmate, and forward.

If we sent you a name and you never wrote, please let us know.

**OTHER MINISTRIES**

We have spent years building a ministry. We plan God's work and work God's plan. I have newsletters from three other ministries who send news-letters to inmates. They advertise their Pen Pal program and use our address for the inmates to write for same.

These same ministries send out newsletters to supporters and when we asked them to put in a plug for our ministry, they would not. I have more than 500 letters from inmates saying so-and-so said to write us, and of course we accommodate them.

In fairness, however, we ask that you help support our ministry when you refer an inmate to us.
from another ministry. Our Pen Friend program is designed with a strong safety net so that even children can write to inmates. That takes a lot of money for postage, and we cannot handle the overflow without help. For our present supporters, can you write one more? God Bless You.

JEAN'S JOTTINGS

We've reached the end of this issue, and I'm blown away by the journey. We've met prisoners inspired by God to put on a program like Choose Freedom. We've seen a judicial system whose mindset is closed to righting wrongs. Cecil's plight is a common one. There is Judy, so precious to Jesus, whose parents violated their trust and hers. She should have been loved and cherished. We suffered with Slash and JW, whose vivid imagery of prison life gripped our hearts. We marveled that someone else was so cavalier about his own life. I hope all you parents paid special attention to the appeal to talk with and listen to your kids. Love them as Jesus does. If you don't practice Communication 101, Satan will lure them with Course #7734 (hell). Yvonne is right on about states being reluctant to let ANYONE out of prison. They make a lot of money housing inmates, and fail to change their charges from tax-Consumers into tax-Payers as a requirement for release.

Your Paper Sunshine means more than you can ever know. When you imagine that tiny cell, project in your mind not just one moment, but years locked in the bathroom with your food shoved at you by an uncaring guard.

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