SOMEONE CARES PRISON MINISTRY

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CAMP MEETING 2005

For many years Yvonne and I had a Prison Ministry booth in the Santa Cruz, California Mountains at Soquel Camp Meeting. We often spoke and held many meetings on Prison Ministry. This year we were able to revisit via TV (not the same), but a joy. We were able to see, and would have loved to talk to many friends. It bought back memories of my first visit to a Camp Meeting so very many years ago.

I was not a Christian. In fact, I was an atheist. Yvonne took me, pushing me there with a promise of the beach after. We finally found a place to park and walked onto the campgrounds. No sooner had we arrived, when Yvonne was stopped by many of her friends, preachers’ kids.

During a very long chat I was not interested in, I lit a cigarette. A thousand eyeballs popped my way! What had I done? It was not fun for me, but Yvonne had a ball.

I had taken Yvonne from her lifestyle into the fast track I followed. Had someone said at that time I would someday be a minister working for Jesus, I think I might have belted him or her. But God planted and watered a seed there in Soquel that would soon blossom. It was a lesson I learned that would be used sooner than later. God directed my life, teaching that the purpose of ministry was leading men and women to Christ, not all the do’s and don’ts.

While writing this, I just heard that Peter Jennings died. He was a powerful reporter who had quit smoking twenty years before 9/11, then started again, causing lung cancer.

I pray that next year we can go again to Soquel, have a Veggie burger or two, and talk about Jesus. If you have never been to a Camp Meeting, try it. You’ll like it.

WAS I THAT BAD?

Now a Christian, and a Chaplain with my wife at Soledad Prison, we had the chance to take an inmate, Pat Drug, to Soquel. I spoke and then Pat sang. He not only sang, he sang from the foot of the cross and the bottom of his soul! After his song in the main auditorium there was many an “Amen,” but no one applauded. Pat asked, “Was I that bad?”

We told him, No, folks showed they loved him by Amens.

We next went to the Youth tent where we spoke and Pat sang. This time the Youth almost split the seems of the tent with applause. Pat stayed on cloud nine until he got out of prison.

WHY WE ARE LOSING OUR YOUTH

Our friend Michelle told us she loved it when we said “Don’t give up, give in.” (Thanks for avocados.) When we put our attention on Jesus and His guidelines, we are very safe.

No matter what church you belong to, Jesus should be the center and the Bible its base! Being high on Jesus is neat -- better than the drugs and booze I did so many years ago. With a Jesus high, there’s no hangover, just peace and peace of mind. I learned as I studied God’s word that I did not want to do the things that were not good for me. I have preached at over 500 hundred
churches and often, looking out from the pulpit, wondered why were the people here?

The song I Have The Joy, Joy, Joy in my heart doesn’t mean a thing if I have a frown on my face. It’s only expressed with a huge smile that lights up the room.

Repeating a story of long ago, we were invited to a church to speak. I asked the Pastor if it would be O.K. if I dressed down and showed up looking like a bum. He said OK.

Well I showed up and the greeter did not greet me. When I sat down, the folks got up and moved. Then the Pastor introduced his guest speaker and I got up and told them about the joy of caring and sharing, and loving Jesus. There was Joy... Joy down in my heart!

A blast from the past was when I took a pastor friend of mine to a bar to witness! He was uncomfortable, but I was at home. “No, Sam, I don’t drink any more. Why? Because Jesus would not! Once after my conversion, Yvonne and I went to a piano bar I used to practically live in. It was around Christmas. The piano player had not shown up and the owner asked Yvonne to play. She did all Christian songs and they all sang the familiar melodies. Not much booze was sold that night. To God Be The Glory!

NO, NOT MY KID
Again, to repeat a story from long past. A Pastor friend of mine called and asked me to go with him to visit his son in jail! Seems the boy had been invited to a party after High School graduation. He wanted to be like his friends and belong. Peer pressure is so tough these days! Because he was a Pastor’s son, they all pressured him to take a hit on a joint. Simple English: a puff on a marijuana cigarette.

He said no many times but wanted to be accepted. He took just a puff--a second to do. What he did not know was that someone had laced that joint with PCP. His mind was foggy, he got in a car and soon hit another car, killing two people. He was arrested and tried. This straight-A student got a long sentence in a very bad prison.

He was raped in jail while awaiting trial, and again raped in prison. He took his own life. Satan won another victory. We say no to drugs but then what?

Do your children have a TV or Play Station or computer in their rooms? Do you know where they go on line? What chat rooms they visit? Jesus on the Main Line ... Satan waiting on the computer. You can’t turn on a radio or TV without hearing of sexual predators. Lock them up and throw away the key!

HATE THE SIN, LOVE THE SINNER
Friends, we, like all of you, do not like any crime. We really don’t like criminals! Our job is to lead men and women from crime, no matter what, to HIM. Going back again in time:

A man marries a woman with two teenage daughters. A good Christian man, he sets down new rules that are unfamiliar to the girls and disliked.
Mom is happy. She has found a good man, a Christian, a churchgoer, which is viewed as threat by the girls. They make up a story that he molested them, in a state that does not require a physical examination. He is found guilty and sent to prison. In prison, guilty or not, there are no programs for sex offenders. In fact, a real sex offender goes into hiding in prison.

Now this man’s young accusers tell the police they made up the story. Three years later, after a total of five in prison, he is released.

If sexual criminals were separated from general population and put into several well known 12-Step Programs, or Christian programs of any kind, re-offending would drop a lot. Even if it did not work, an attempt to rehabilitate by regeneration would sure help. States that require sex offenders to register cause sex offenders to go elsewhere.

Yes, there should be registration, but also required programs are a must. For the more serious, medical programs should be offered. If not accepted, sentences should then be longer, still with mandatory programs that cannot be done in general population. Also, the only protection for young inmates is the massive gang connections everywhere.

**IT’S NOT BROKE, BUT NEEDS FIXING!**

Someone Cares: Help! I wrote to you for a Pen Friend and was matched with the neatest couple. For the first time in my whole life (39) years I met someone who really cared. After writing for a couple of years, being taught about Jesus, becoming a Christian, the truth killed our friendship and almost me.

I felt, after prayer and much thought, it was safe to tell these friends why I was in prison. I had molested a young girl while on drugs. You, Don, caught the letter and sent a note with my confession. You nor I ever got a letter again. [I wrote the couple and tried to see if I could rekindle the friendship. I finally matched them with some new friends and all is well.] We have about 40 couples that have written for a while and just quit. Same reason? I’ll find out.

A Pastor wrote and said he would write if I could match him with an inmate who had not done anything serious? I’m glad Jesus did not question the crime of the thief on the cross, or better yet, me!

Yvonne and I get discouraged when folks are matched and don’t write, but God gets it handled. Many times we have gone to churches, not really wanted by some Pastors who do not believe in Prison Ministry. Then we speak and have such a neat acceptance.

Writing convicts is hard, but Jesus never said getting to the other side would be easy, either. But when He said it and we believe it, we will get there.. We keep on growing and God provides our needs through so many of you. Sure, it’s tough sometimes, but with God’s Glory, the sheep on a thousand hills are within reach. We don’t need to move a mountain, just have more Mountain Top experiences.

Please join Yvonne and me, and hundreds of others, sharing the experience of directing or helping growth in Jesus. I have the advantage of knowing what prison is really like: lock-downs, gangs and fights, fear you would die, scared you might live. The thing I still remember most is
the stench!

I traded in a prison shank (knife) for the sword of the Lord. A question I often ask Jesus: If you needed to use me, why not a comfortable church in Beverly Hills? My wife sure would have liked that. His answer is always the same.

“Before I created the earth, your future was predestined.”

When I reached the road marked HELL, He sent Yvonne to hold my hand and lead me in the right direction. God and Satan fought, as many of you remember. Giving up and giving in was not easy, but it sure is fun. When Don Hawkins died, he said: “I’ll see you and Yvonne under the tree of life.” Amen!

GIVE YOUR PROBLEMS TO GOD. . . . . not your Pen Friend.

Those in prison, no matter how much they deserve it, have enough of their own. The concept of Pen Friend is friendship. A lesson I learned from a wise man was: be Christ-like to bring Christ in.

I can tell a person not to drink, smoke, do drugs watch the wrong things, but sharing the life and ministry of Jesus and the rewards that His life gives, turns the harshest of the hard; it sure turned me.

I once met a man who was at the end of his rope -- looking, I think, for a rope to end his life. I could not make yesterday go away, but I could help make today a little better. In the hands of Jesus, step by step, day by day, the man gains skills to make it through the rest of his life.

Now out of prison, that man has a Street Ministry dealing with those in a life he came from. I told a wise minister once, “You have good breeding, a great education and a solid relationship with Jesus. Don’t go to prison to minister, as there you must get down were they are instead of bringing them up to where you are. Amen.

YVONNE’S CORNER

It is true that Don and I have been through a lot together, and we are total opposites, which is a trip all by itself; I am always cautious and take my time to evaluate different situations, making sure what the risks could be.

Don is just the opposite. If someone new moves into the neighborhood, Don is the first to go introduce himself and welcome them.

We should nick-name him the Welcome Wagon. He never meets a stranger and likes everyone, which I am sure is the way God wants all of us to be.

Yes, God does tell us in His word: Judge not that ye be not judged. If some of you are a little more like me and cautious, and trying to evaluate different situations around you, that is all
right. Just remember, God is patient and understands each one of us. Remember, every time we meet someone in the name of Jesus, the heavenly choir sings. Listen.

JEAN’S JOTTINGS
Don and Yvonne never cease to amaze, with their skills. If they hadn’t given me this job, and a real-life situation or two that God gave me, my heart for this type of ministry might never have happened. He taught me to “Give up and give in” years ago. It’s an exciting trip that one day I may be able to share with you. God is a God of surprises, so we should learn to enjoy each one.

The ol’ Pinhead, the devil, loves to find a comfy shoulder to sit on, like the dermatophyte in the toenail commercial, and whisper doubts in our ears. Then we can know it’s time to get out God’s Word, and with some gospel Q-Tips, flick Satan off his perch. Remember the old quartet hymn? *A Little Talk With Jesus Makes It Right.*

The Pastor who said he would write to an inmate as long as he did nothing serious really boggled my mind. In our ministry, Shirley nor I ever ask why they’re there or what they did; only that they come to the chapel and participate in the service. Our “parishoners” amaze us with their knowledge of the Bible, and enjoy singing immensely. They also look forward to the inspirational handouts.

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