I’M HAPPY TODAY

Yvonne and I just returned from California. We started off by having real Mexican food—hard to get here in Indiana! After the peanut flight on Southwest (a nice change), Yvonne got a chance to visit a very loved family member she had not seen in a long time. In Indiana, thinking about California, we’d forgotten about freeways. We also saw the damage close up done by the wildfires. Then we went to work.

VOICE OF PROPHECY

As many of you are receiving this newsletter via the radio broadcast, we know many others will soon be joining. In fact, some of you may be surprised to be getting this.

We were told that VOP, like many programs, was having financial troubles, yet for years they have allowed us air time at no cost.

We knew they were having a special prayer session and we decided to invite our e-mail address book to join in that prayer. Now, even though I use a computer a lot, an expert I am not! I wrote the message, and one by one addressed it. I never knew we had so many names! In fact, so many I could not send the message. I called the server, who should not have been open, and someone was there. In order to send the message, I decided to print it and save it. But what printed instead was a lot of names. In fact, there was a printout of names we had LOST a few years ago! God is so good. We, as well as VOP, were blessed with the response from that e-mail.

A VOICE FROM THE PAST

I will lift you and VOP up in prayer. I don’t have much, but can make a small donation. I remember the days when I was alone and God sent you to comfort me in prison, you both did not judge me. You and the kind people who wrote me in prison through you, helped me understand the true love of God. Thanks to Paper Sunshine, I now lead a productive life in Jesus.

Charlie Lowe

THE SHOW WILL AIR FOR FIVE DAYS

...the end of December, starting the 26th. During this show a lot of areas were covered that
brought back memories of days long past. Every day I knew that Jesus was so vital for the new me, but it did bring back unpleasant memories. I am so happy Jesus saw me not as I was, but as I would be through Him. Many times Yvonne has asked me what might have changed me when I was young and wild. When I was a teen I was locked up in a very bad place. As tough as I thought I was, I knew danger was everywhere. Rumor had it a fight between races was brewing.

While I was sitting there, making up my mind what to do, a man sat next to me. He said he was a local youth worker. I did not chat much, but listened. I did not really want to listen, but his voice was kind and warm. As we sat, a fight started on the Yard and he left. For once I did not jump in, but sat and stayed out of trouble. The man never came back! Would the next twenty years have been as bitter and full of hate had he returned?

Often we have received notes from inmates: “My Pen Friend never wrote back.” Seed planting starts a process, but it takes a lot to keep a flower growing.

**YVONNE’S CORNER**

We have the opportunity to plant seeds no matter where we go or what we do. It depends on how we live our lives. Yes, it was wonderful being back in California. That will always be home to me, as I was born and raised there and did not leave there until I was in my fifties. I was taught at a very young age that if God called you, you followed. It isn’t always easy to do that and I understand why some hesitate or just ignore that still, small voice. It is important to stay in tune with the way God could be leading you. It was so good to see all our friends at VOP (Voice of Prophecy) and please continue to pray for them, as they have been so good to supply Bible studies for many of the inmates free of charge.

It was just great being able to see my cousin who I had not seen in many years. In fact, we wondered if we would know each other. There wasn’t a doubt about that, and hopefully we will see each other more often from now on. For those of you who are writing, please don’t wait for a long period of time before you write to your pen friend. Remember, they might not have a stamp, pencil or paper. These are items that you do not find easily in prison. We are spoiled as we write and wait for an answer; it’s not so easy in prison. Keep on writing, you will get an answer when they can write to you. We have much to be thankful for, Praise God!!

**PEN FRIEND PROGRAM**

Its name should be directional. This program was started so men and women, boys and girls might find a friend in you. This friendship might lead to a friendship in Jesus.

Folks, some of your letters to non-Christian inmates are a bit heavy even for Christian inmates. You need to ask questions.

- Where are you from?
- What do you like to do?
- What is prison like?

Most of you know nothing about prison; we know everything and are still learning. The
application form gives you some information. Expand on it. Their handwriting and grammar gives you an idea of their education.

I told a Pastor friend of mine who we took to prison, that he was a failure there. Why? To be able to witness the way Jesus and the Bible wish, we must be willing to meet them at their level. For me it was easy. I climbed out of the gutter and remember what it was like there. Often inmates say to me,

“But you don’t know;”
Oh, yes I do!

Yvonne, having grown up in the church, has had to work harder. She not only worked harder, she listened and learned.

Some of you don’t have a lot of education, but have the love of Jesus. We don’t hand pick who we match inmates with. I remember an inmate we matched years ago who had several college degrees, and we matched him with educated people—not by choice but by his place in the pile of names. Finally we matched him with a high school dropout who was a dishwasher. The inmate found Christ, and the dishwasher got an education.

We have over 260 prayer groups around the world with every known and some not so well-known religions. If all those who tried to lead me to the church, instead of Christ, had slowed down, I would have jumped in sooner. Our job is to try to lead others to Jesus, not churches.

ALL FAITHS CHAPEL:

We look at faith, meaning a particular religion; all faiths, meaning all religions. There was an amazement that folks had when I started studying the Bible. The main interest folks had when I started learning the Bible was who I was, not who I might be.

I am finally getting into gear to finish the book on my life for several reasons:

1. To finish it;
2. Mainly, to bury the old me.

God called me into Prison Ministry to use my past life in dealing with those who lived the same kind of life or worse. Yvonne, who lived part of the latter years of that life, learned all that applied to my past. In Broken Pieces, the name of the book, I said all that to say this: Be about being a friend, then remember that What a Friend we have in Jesus could put some of the first letters to inmates in here. But many new Pen Friends start with “My name is, and let me tell you thus-and-so.”

JOIN ME IN MY CELL

My cell is the size of a small bathroom and there are two bunks. My cellie can’t read or write, but he’s a nice guy. This is our bedroom, bathroom and of course, our dining room. We get out
of here twice a week. I do have an older TV but only use it a bit each day. I get a shower twice a week, and yard time two hours. I get to listen to other TVs and radios but they blend together. There are “three hots [meals] and a cot [bed].”

I got a Pen Friend two years ago. Her first letter was ten pages long. She acted like I had to get into her church right away; I’m serving a double life sentence. But she was a she. I mistook friendship for? Made a real fool of myself. Someone Cares fixed it for both of us.

My next Pen Friend was a neat woman from Texas. She told me about herself, her husband and kids, dog and cat. Told me she and her family wanted to be my friend. I cried! When she signed the letter “love,” she also explained what it meant. Thirteen years later I’m a Christian, and a member of their church. It sure was easy.

I KNOW WHAT THE RULES SAID!

Often inmates try hard to get folks to write direct. This just is not a good idea until you establish a solid base for your friendship. Even then, we advise you to write through us. By the way, you may write your friend through us even when they are released. The reason for the rules is that we know all The Games Criminals Play.

1. Giving your phone number gives the area of the country you live in. Also, some collect calls from prison cost as much as $5.00 a minute with a kick-back often going to the prison.

2. If you’re married, writing is neat, but only if your family is aware of what is going on; even better if they join in.

FIRST RESPONSE

I was not going to write when a friend told me about Someone Cares, but curiosity got the best of me. You, friend, are the result. I hope we can be long time friends...

Another says he is not a good writer but is so very lonely. He was shocked when he got a letter, as he had tried dozens of other services and got only a request for money. Here he got a friend and a free Bible study...

Another said he wanted a friend and he prayed to Allah, never expecting a Christian friend. Maybe they can learn from each other. Another wrote that it is neat to know that there are folks outside who care for those inside. He states he belongs inside and does hope he can find the direction in life to someday get out...

Then another said, “I need a TV, can you send me a little money?” We helped answer that one!

WINDING DOWN ANOTHER YEAR

This has been a good year for us. Not a good year for the country. It will take a strong finish but we believe we will again end the year in the black. If you are not a supporter and need a tax write-off, we do need you. Next year postage is going up 2 cents (to us, 4 cents) for each letter.
My computer is great, but Yvonne does need a new one as she is handling the e-mail Pen Friend program. Hers has a glitch or two. Our van had so many miles on it we had to sell it. A used car would be neat. If you have a home in California we can use until Jesus comes, that might be interesting. The reason, the head of the Department of Corrections really wants to put Rehabilitation back into prison! But that is all in God’s hands, and Yvonne said if it did happen, some-one had to pack us. She has moved enough. Wherever we are that God is (and HE is everywhere), is great with us. I love new challenges as long as we can keep up with it all. So if it’s Christian, including you, we need it. The Widow’s and Widower’s mites have kept us growing for years. Jesus keeps us going. From way back in the 70s, we have worn out 11 donated cars! As the year ends, all donations are tax deductible here, added to the treasure of giving laid up in Heaven.

JEAN’S JOTTINGS

Are you considering enjoying the huge blessings from doing work inside the prison? We’re so fortunate to have a Pastor and congregation who support us, but even if they don’t, the inmates and staff appreciate the efforts of religious volunteers. It’s too much to juggle our schedule every week, so we’re lucky to have two teams. If you had more, you could get together, say, once a month to compare notes and plan your program so you have continuity. For instance, Shirley is doing a project of handouts for a series of inspirational topics. Our inmates look forward to their Chapel services, and if we’re slow in passing out the papers, or taking turns reading, they gently remind us. We’ve become a family unit in Christ.

There have been two services: one at 8:00 a.m., and one at 1:00 p.m. for two different groups. We check out from the morning session to attend our study and church, then it’s back to the prison for our second service. Yes, it’s a day of non-stop blessings and lunch is ~3:00, but it’s so worth it! It’s also why we take turns with a volunteer who travels 2-1/2 hours on alternate weeks to minister to our little flock. We all do church! The chapel has instruments, Shirley and I both play, and our group loves to sing! In fact, there are times when it seems like the “choir” is multiplied by angels who fill the room.

Volunteers are not allowed to contact inmates outside chapel services. It’s for their, and our, protection.

But while we’re together, our Heavenly Father opens the windows of Heaven and pours out such a blessing that we can’t resist the calling that keeps us returning.

If you have a few people who would be interested in exploring this type of rewarding ministry, contact Don and Yvonne for help. It’s a long-term commitment, the study group members invite others. Volunteers are not allowed – it’s called proselytizing. Our guys have become good missionaries. We even have one young man who we, and our pastor, feel is a good seminary candidate and are encouraging him to pursue the ministry, as he is to be released soon.

Someone Cares Home Page