I’m so glad we’re a part of the family of God When I get up in the morning, He and I spend time together going over His plans for us. Then I turn on the computer and wait for what He has in store for us.

Yvonne and I are so prayerfully happy we have all of you with us. Last week, when Voice of Prophecy aired a program we recorded after the auto accident, the Holy Spirit directed a whole lot of new folks our way. AMEN!! We may have to change “God Squad” to “God’s Battalion.” In talking with many of you by phone and Email, we knew that it is again apparent that God’s people are looking for something to do in His name. We pray that “Paper Sunshine,” a.k.a., The Pen Friend Program” is that spot. We pray that God gives you the entire blessing He has given us over these very many years.

I am interested in the Pen Friend Program!

To me, that has always meant, “I want to be a part of writing to inmates, not just learning more about the program. If we have matched you and this is not what you expected, please return all the materials we sent you,

The response was so great, and we were able to match many free folks with many inmates’ letters requesting an application. I need to explain that we match by a two-pile system. When you Email or write, or call, we collect your information and put inmate requests in the other pile. The names of “free folks” being matched from the Free Folks’ Pile are joined with inmates’ names at the top of the other pile. God is good!

If, at any time, you are uncomfortable with the person you’re matched with, let us know, or you need help with an inmate’s question, please try to resolve the issue through Don or Yvonne so they can give you someone else to write.

Please remember that this is a Pen Friend Program based on religious principles. We attempt to lead men and women to God and show them a better path to take.

Jesus said, “I was in prison and you visited me not.”

We all were told to go forth and He has given us the tools to go anywhere. The prisons in this country are a mess. Over-crowding is massive. Danger is everywhere. My background made
going into prisons easy; Yvonne came along slowly, and learned swiftly. We do not read your
letters to the inmate but we read theirs to you.

YOUR LETTER TO THE INMATE SHOULD NOT HAVE “SOMEONE CARES”
ANYWHERE ON THE ENVELOPE.

Your letter to us should have your real name or pen name on the envelope, with your address.
We have a lot of letters to Someone Cares and have no idea where to send them. If you are not
sure, ask.

NO STICKERS

Stickers on the envelope or inside are not allowed. Drugs are smuggled into prison on stickers,
and your well-meant effort at cheering your inmate will be disposed of.

THEY CALLED MY NAME!!!

I could not believe the mail call and I had a letter! My first letter in eleven years!!

80% of the inmates belong in prison; the rest got there because of over-zealous court systems, or
plea-bargains. We are given the chance to give them a second, third or more. They have enough
problems; try not to share yours.

In your first letter, do not tell them what you know or what you believe. Find out slowly where
they are coming from. Be open and honest as to why you are involved with Prison Ministry. If
you write more than one inmate, and we pray you all will, don’t talk about the others unless to
prove or share a point. When you write, you expect an answer. In prison, it may be very hard to
do so. Paper, pens, stamps, etc., are scarce.

THANKS SO VERY MUCH

I signed up for a Pen Friend and you sent me one. Jerry wrote a neat letter and I answered him. I
was thrown in the hole for something very stupid; Jerry kept writing, I could not answer. It took
ten months til I was able to answer all his letters. I also found out what a real Christian does. He
sure proved it to me that someone does care.

John

HELP!

Don, you matched me with a lady who really knows the Bible and church stuff. I have received
two letters, about six pages long; I have no idea what she is talking about. Please forward my
letter to her and ask her to slow down. The Chaplain did get me a Bible and I’m trying to find
the things she seems to think I need. I sure need some outside contact.

We explained to her what the problem was. A wise lady, she got a church member with a bit of a
worldly past to help her write him. This got two “babes in Christ” into the Word. Then the person she got to help asked for a couple of Pen Friends.

AMEN!!

PAUL AND SILAS BROKE INTO PRISON???

When I first became a Christian, I had no clue as to what I was supposed to do for the Lord. He sent me back to prison where I could “fight the good fight.” Have you ever wondered, “what have I done for Jesus today?” Or, how about what has HE done for ME?

I look out my office window and see the animals preparing for the change of weather. We all need to be doing the same. I start every day after prayer by going to the Post Office. Everyone there knows what we do; I meet once or twice a week with the boys and they all know what we do. All of our neighbors know what we do and for whom we do it.

Our doctor is from India; he knows what we do and prays big time for us and what we do.

LOOKING BACK IS REALLY SCARY.

A couple of years ago I had an urge to contact all my friends from “Before Jesus” — the Jet Set, the party goers. It took awhile to come up with names and places. The list was 36 names long! It took quite awhile, as 30 of them were dead, two are doing well, and 4 were unknown. There, but through the Grace of God is where I would have been.

One problem with your new ministry is that most of you are entering a world you really know nothing about, and maybe ignorance is bliss. When you write through us, we can answer questions you can’t; we can give advice from experience. I had the chance to preach at a Conference church a very long time ago. I had a couple of seasoned pastors inform me never to change my style.

It was very easy for me to understand Job’s Garbage Dump; I could smell inside the belly of a Big Fish; I knew well the One Lost Sheep. Been to the mountain top.

Most inmates have some religion in their past. Most have had some Bible; few know what it all means. A long time ago, we took a position to not let our doctrine be a barrier but a bridge to Jesus.

PREPARE THE WAY

Her name is Kathy; I will never forget her first call. A friend of hers brought her to a church where Yvonne and I were putting on a Prison Ministry Outreach Program. She called a couple of weeks later.

She told me she delayed contacting us because she had to get ready.

She first went on line to learn everything she could about prison. She then attended A.A., and
N.A. meetings. Knowing the answer, I still asked why.

She was taught, prior to entering any project, to learn as much as she could before she started. Over the years she wrote a lot of inmates and if I had to give her a grade, it would be A+.

I laughed, she listened, when Yvonne was asked what bothers her the most about going into prison. Yvonne told her “the smells.” Each cell has a toilet; some men don’t get out to bathe; garbage is often thrown everywhere. She went on a tour of a prison.

Now, not all of you can or will do that. Prayerfully, by next year, we will finish a video and take you into where your “Paper Sunshine” letter may go.

THE HARDEST NUT TO CRACK

Inmates need to get the hate out of their systems. Holding in your troubles inside is very difficult. I remember a guard once telling me, “Son, if you don’t learn to cry, that hate will kill you.”

But building up trust to a stranger, “YOU” takes time. Look for common interests. Blanche did not like sports but she watched football and baseball and that knowledge led her Pen Friend to Christ. Doing time is tough, taking time is tougher. I’m going to let Yvonne tell you of her first visit to Ad Seg, a.k.a. The Hole.

YVONNE’S CORNER

This is not easy for me to do, even today. The Watch Commander walked up to me and said, “Come with me,” there was no way that I could say anything but “Yes, Sir.”

As we were getting into the car, he informed me that if I was going far in prison, I needed to know more than what I knew, which wasn’t much.

Now, I knew I could trust him, and God, and I also knew that my angels were with me.

We arrived at the Maximum Security, or Ad Seg, my knees were shaking; I now was really Scared!

He informed me where we were going and said that he would tell me what to do; that gave me some assurance. He took his keys out, hit the door, and another commander looked out of a peek hole in the door. As he opened the door, he introduced me to the officer and told him where we were going.

Now it did not smell good, and by this time I was not even sure I could swallow.

My mouth was dry, but being raised a Christian, and having God-fearing parents, I tried to tell myself I was O.K.

Now we were down in the basement of a prison and there is one man in each cell. The Commander stopped and said, “I want you to meet some one.”
I said, “All right,” as I looked down at the floor, as most of the inmates have very little clothing on.

As the commander introduced me, he said, “You must look at who I want you to meet, so I made eye contact with the inmate. You know, he was just a human being like me, who had made a very bad mistake.

That day I learned a real lesson; we as Christians must get to these people; they need Jesus, also. It did not matter if I got dirty, or the smell was horrible!

God is so wonderful to give us the opportunities; we must be willing to open our hearts and minds so He may show us what we need to do.

I said, “Nice to meet you,” and that I hoped, in future visits, I could help him help himself to a better place.

JEAN’S JOTTINGS

Yvonne is right. Writing that first letter to someone you don’t know, have never looked into their face and eyes, or seen them express their feelings to a perfect (well, imperfect) stranger IS difficult. Where does one start?

From the heart,
Led by Jesus.

I’d been thinking of writing a new inmate, and asked Don or Yvonne to send me one.

An envelope soon arrived in the mail that contained a letter from my new Pen Friend, who seemed to have not a chip, but a rock on his shoulder.

After several readings, I’m ready to reply to someone who doesn’t seem to have much in the way of trust in his life. Many inmates have this syndrome. They have been lied to or about, or bullied, all their lives, from family, to school, to jobs or gangs; they needed to have a stable foundation to build faith on.

Parents, let’s not be blind to what goes on in the bus, or the classroom. Know your kids’ friends, enforcing rules with kindness, but being firm with love and caring.

Some parents demean their children, or ignore them, or allow relatives to call them bad names that continue into their environment. Chums who don’t follow your standards can become gangs; gangs become their families, and the crime rate in the cities is becoming critical, more dangerous and more vicious every day.

Even children in Christian schools are allowed to be bullied by other students, when they should have been taught to cherish one another in friendship and love, as Christ would, or protected from the violence that goes on. The TV news has frequently shown clips on children being beaten on school buses by bullies.

Yes, we know that’s the ideal.
How do we help our children understand that video games are teaching them to be violent, when they learn the opposite through realistic, violent actions and sound effects?

“Dark” artistry, clothes, accessories, fondness for realistic looking weapons? Even the way clothing seams are stitched, is done in a certain pattern that is part of “the uniform” of black clothing.

We’re living in the dark ages, folks, and only Jesus can break the bonds that keep prison doors shut, separating the deceived from those who would follow our Savior. He wants us to follow Him and be free to enjoy the happy, productive life He created for us.

Satan, on the other hand, wants us dead.

The inmates we write to don’t need someone to chide them about what they’ve done or how they came to be in prison. They already know, and readily admit their crimes. They need encouragement to rebuild their character, with God’s help. We’re not their judges; we’re their friends, to give them unconditional love as Jesus would. They need the confidence that they truly can make it out in the world.

Instead of being judgmental, churches need to nurture the inmate during his incarceration time, during his parole or rebirth, helping him or her find work, or education, or both.

It’s quite an adjustment to be free again. A supportive group is vital to survival– but only if that group doesn’t lead back to more life in prison.

So, dear Pen Friends, I covet your prayers and you will certainly have ours, as we try to bring Paper Sunshine into the lives of our inmate friends. AGAPE

Someone Cares Home Page