Visit our web site: www.someonecares.org
Become a Pen Friend (Register on line!)
See Don and Yvonne
Catch up on back issues
Send us Email (see below)

WHAT SAYS THE BIBLE

“What says the Bible, the Bible to me? Words of men so often mislead us. What says the Bible to me?”

It seems we have about every known religion, some of which I don’t know much about, connected with this Ministry. As I read the letters from inmates, it has prompted me to pass on some advice for all of us.

This is a Christian based Ministry trying to lead or help inmates to Jesus. But we have always said, “Do not let your doctrine be a barrier, but a bridge, to Jesus.” Before you can positively influence your pen friend with the truth of the gospel, it is important to first establish a friendship. If those in prison knew about Jesus, they might not be there. Writing seems to be a priority to God as He “with His finger” wrote the Ten Commandments.

Prisons usually only provide New Testament Bibles. If you know your pen friend well, try to teach him about God’s commandments, and that they all must be kept. Many church groups say these commandments were nailed to the cross, but we believe this is not so. When religion becomes confusion, it is not good.

The Pen Friend program can be a mighty tool for the Lord, but many in prison will attempt to “use” those involved with this Ministry. We have worked hard to make it risk free, and are sorry that due to a massive increase in mail we have had to let letters go through without reading them. Unfortunately, Yvonne suffered a falling accident and is confined to her chair, but on the bright side most of the mail will now be read. Your prayers for her healing are welcomed.
**GOD, NOT THE AUTHOR OF CONFUSION**

Many years ago I was asked to visit a young man who had attempted suicide in prison. He told us that he did it because he would never go to heaven. “Why do you believe that?” we asked him. He told us he had been going to many different Bible studies, and one group spent a lot of time telling him he needed to speak in tongues in order to get to heaven. I told him that was not true. Tongues are a gift, not to be taught but given. We had to remove the group that was teaching this.

At another prison where Yvonne had volunteered as Chaplain she questioned some Muslim material that was very dangerous in its teaching. The warden, not realizing its content, had allowed it in. I was a Chaplain at a prison across the street and we stopped it. It seems that the state we were in had endorsed four separate Muslim groups, three of which were inmate gangs. Since they were allowed due to ignorance the state was afraid of a law suit.

(Ignorance is bliss???)

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**PLEASE FOLLOW THROUGH**

I have spent a massive amount of time going through all the names we have on our computer. The results caused many an “amen” but also a bit of sorrow. Over 50 people who asked to be matched with an inmate never ended up writing. Sadly they never informed us, and as a result 50 inmates never got what they requested and what we promised.

Some people gave up after the first time writing to an inmate and then not receiving an answer. This commonly happens when the inmate feels overwhelmed with information written by their pen friend that they simply cannot handle. Here is an example, written to us by an inmate:

> “Folks, I asked for a pen friend and was happy when I got a letter. I had written to many other organizations with no answer. The person you matched me with sent a letter that I did not understand at all. I know that Jesus saves but I’m really not yet a babe to Christ. Can you send me a new person? I enclosed a letter explaining my problem to my assigned person.”

(I called that pen friend, and they remain matched with better understanding.)

Please use common courtesy and follow through – if you were matched with an inmate but cannot continue writing for any reason, simply let us know so we can re-match the inmate.

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**LET YOUR HEARTS NOT BE TROUBLED**

We live in a very troubled world with so much happening – much of which has been predicted by the Bible. We are told to watch the signs of the times, and to be ready. But since we know the end of the story, our hearts should not be troubled!

As children of God, and as called to be a part of His plan, we are made ready to get in the boat and cross over to the other side.

It is a real joy when we hear from inmates after they’ve been released to learn that they are doing well. But Satan has plenty of tools at his disposal, and is like a lion seeking to devour whoever he can.

Recidivism (lapsing back into criminal behavior) is about 70% in the U.S., and is climbing in this economy. To be free in Jesus is to be free indeed. The surest way to turn a prisoner away from a continued life of crime is through a relationship with Jesus. Only the armor of God can protect against the attacks of the devil, and because Someone Cares (you!), inmates are being reached with the Word of God. “Paper Sunshine” builds friendships, through which bridges can be built to Jesus.

Keep up the good work, Pen Friends!
ADVICE FOR PEN FRIENDS

1) Most prisons do not provide inmates with stamps or materials to write and send out letters, and for an inmate, trying to get a 44 cent stamp can be a real problem. Not all inmates have jobs or the ability to purchase extras. Even though prison food is sometimes terrible and is not enough, some inmates will trade meals for stamps in order to write.

Before giving up because you haven’t received a reply from your inmate, please try this first — write to your assigned friend three times, about every 30 days. If after sending three letters you still have not received an answer let us know. We will rematch you and will deal with the inmate. I know it is tough getting no answer, but please try.

2) We have a large stack of mail from inmates and have no idea who they should go to. They are neatly stacked in order, while we pray that you contact us if you have not received a letter from your inmate friend.

3) Do not send any items to your inmate, especially cash, without contacting us or the prison to find out what is allowed. Most prisons have strict guidelines about what they can receive. If you send something that is not allowed they will not pass it on to the inmate, and they usually will not return it to you, so don’t take chances.

4) Your letter to the inmate should be placed in a stamped and sealed envelope (we do not read your letter) addressed with their name, number and address. The return address is your name or “pen name” but with our address in Fort Wayne. Please make sure your pen friend addresses their letters to YOUR name (not “Someone Cares”) at our address.

5) If you do an online search for Inmates and Pen Pals, you will see what most of those in prison are looking for. If your friend asks you to put them online, please do not do it. More and more inmates are trying to get email addresses and phone numbers from their pen friends. There are many of you who do allow your friend to call you, but for those who do not, be advised that it is all collect calls and at very high rates. Allowing your inmate to call you provides them with your location, which may not be a good idea and voids our “risk free” promise.

If your friend asks for anything that you are not comfortable with, let them know. If you are not sure, contact us.

THEIR STORIES …

John. For 13 years John was in one prison, and 16 years in two other prison stays. During that time he lost all his family and connections with friends. He was released with $300 he had saved, which for an inmate is quite a lot, as most have nothing.

John had little money, no job, and no home – things were not easy. However, his faith was strong, and he soon found a place to live and some odd jobs to do. John was resourceful, and finding an old lawn mower he went door to door asking to cut lawns or do handy work around the house. He found a small church and has been out five years. Praise God!

Rick. I met Rick at San Quentin in one of the lock down units, which is where a prisoner spends 23 hours a day in the cell. I had to tell him his dad had been killed in a drive by incident. Rick did not even blink, but responded with, “Too bad, I guess.”

I had received notice of the father’s death from Rick’s mother, along with the information that he had five brothers, all in prison, and that his father was an ex-con. Over the next year I spent a lot of time with Rick. On his 18th birthday Rick asked me if Jesus could really change him. He was involved...
Yvonne's Corner

We were leaving Soledad Prison after a very long day. I met Don in front of Central Facility. We chatted with the warden for a bit in front of the visiting area. A little boy came out and was on our side of the fence and turned toward the visiting area where his dad was.

The boy’s dad was in the yard of visiting. The boys standing outside the fence under a gun tower yelled, “Is it because you don’t love me you stay here?”

We then spent some time with the boy and his mother. Often the world forgets how many people are hurt when someone goes to prison - Grandma and Grandpa, parents and lots of direct family. It’s a shame, but after a time most give up on the prisoner.

Many of our writers, when they ask about the inmate’s family, have gotten involved and some great things have happened. I have always said, “Do the crime, do the time.” One thing we have discovered that makes me happy is that in almost every prison we go to the Christian inmates have a strong influence. The bitter harshness of prison is turning some very hard core inmates to Christ. For some, like Don in the past, coming from that background and then becoming a Christian and living the walk is hard.

Using the Laubach system and the Bible, one day I announced I was going to teach reading. The first morning the Chapel was full. Hard core gang members who knew the only way out of prison was to do their own legal work needed to read and write. When we broke into small groups, I had the group with all the hard core inmates. Amos was among them – he was a middle-aged black man from Watts. I gave each one a Bible, which was their text book. Amos had grown up going to church but could never read God’s word. Over the next few months I will tell you some amazing stories about our results with these remedial reading classes.

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in gang activity, drugs and trouble in general. After many visits, and the involvement of a great couple who became his pen friends, Rick accepted Christ as his personal savior.

That was twenty years ago. He is out of prison, married, has a pretty good job, and he attends church weekly. Amen!

“The look of addiction, confusion, lost-ness, loneliness.

Then I say good morning with softness.

We eat with silence.

They call the next bunch to eat, my time to go.

Then I get back to my cell - what some call hell,

My house, never my home.

I look at the mirror and am relieved to see

The man in the mirror does not have The Look.