

### REACHING OUT FOR GOD

The limited space of these newsletters does not allow me to tell all of what the Lord is doing in the lives of the men he has allowed us to minister to. I wanted to start the newsletter by reminding you that only eternity will tell the whole story of what the Lord has done in the lives of broken people because you chose to invest in eternity.

Last week I was conducting one of my weekly services that have grown so large that we have had to break it up into two services. When I explained to the inmates that they would have to choose between eating lunch or coming to Bible study they did not hesitate. They choose the bread of life over the bread of man.

Both services were packed with men who have been separated from the rest of the prison population because of the nature of their crimes. The room was so packed that I had men sitting on the floor surrounding my feet as I brought the message of God's plan to reconcile sinful and stubborn man back to himself.

As I explained that God loved us "while we were yet sinners" and that the Lord "will have all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth" something unusual happened. Many of the men broke down and began to weep. One young man who has been sitting at my feet grabbed my leg and said, "I want to have Jesus Christ as my Saviour." It was obvious that he and several others were **REACHING OUT FOR GOD** that day and that the Holy Spirit was working in hearts.

When I reflected back on that young man grabbing my leg and looking up at me with tear-filled eyes, I was again reminded of the humbling truth that God has chosen to use us to be the only link to God that many will ever have to grab on to. May God help us all to ever be mindful of this wonderful opportunity and to be good stewards of our time, talents, and treasure.

### A DOUBLE-BARREL BLESSING

One day while I was visiting one of the men on death row, I told him I would like to buy him a Coke and a snack to eat while we shared the Word of God together. He said that he would rather me not spend my money on him. I then told him that some of the kids at church had given some money to help in the ministry to inmates and they would be glad to know that they had a part in being a blessing to a death row inmate who loves Jesus. When I returned a few minutes later from purchasing some snacks, I noticed the inmate had been weeping. He was overcome by the fact that anyone, especially children, could care about a man who is condemned to die.

A few days after our visit I got a letter from the inmate. Enclosed with the letter was a money order for \$100.00. In the letter he said that he had not gotten over the fact that some kids would care about "one such as him." He said that "the Lord had blessed him with some extra money and he wanted me to use part of the \$100.00 to take the kids out for pizza or ice cream in order to teach them a vital lesson in life. He said, "be sure to tell those kids that it always pays to serve the Lord and if they will seek first the kingdom of God their needs will always be taken care of."

I got **A DOUBLE-BARREL BLESSING** out of all of this. First, I got to see some children learn to joy and blessing of giving rather than receiving. Second, I was deeply moved by an inmate's response to something as simple as a cold drink and a snack. God has been faithful to always supply our need in this ministry through churches and individuals but it is always extra special to see an inmate begin to give out of his gratitude for what the Lord has done in his life.

Just last week I received another letter from a death row inmate who I love very much. Enclosed in his letter were twenty postage stamps that were his offering to the ministry. That may not seem like much to you but it is real big in the kingdom of God and served as a real encouragement to me.

### IT HAS ALL BEEN WORTH IT

One of the greatest joys I have is to see men who have come to the Lord in our services while they are locked up and then go on to serve the Lord upon their release. I recently got a call from a man who had committed his life to the Lord while attending services. He had made quite a bit of money transporting cocaine and it finally had caught up with him. Because of his crime he lost everything, including his wife and two beautiful daughters. When he began to attend our services I could tell that he was a man who was genuinely broken over his sin. He committed his life to serve the Lord. He attended regularly for over a year and then was sent to another facility to serve the rest of his time. He stayed faithful to the Lord and recently was released.

While I was talking to him over the phone I mentioned that I might be doing some work on my house. He begged me to let him come over be of some help. He said it would be a blessing to be able to do something for me in return for my being there during a very deep valley in his life. We had a great time of fellowship and it was special for my wife and children to see a man who had been touched by the ministry God has allowed us to be a part of.

He called me again just the other day to just tell me that the Lord continues to bless him and that he would be forever grateful for the days I spent coming to the seventh floor to bring the light and love of Jesus Christ. Before he hung up the phone he said, "I just want you to know that if I was the only one whose life was touched because you came **IT HAS ALL BEEN WORTH IT.**" I agree that one precious life is worth it all and may I close this letter by saying thank you once again for being a part of what God is doing in the hearts of the men and boys the Lord has allowed us to minister to.

~ CHAPLAIN JOHN DOWNS