

NO PIT TOO DEEP

Twenty-four years ago, my life was transformed as the result of being court-ordered to a drug rehab founded by a man who believed that “no one was beyond redemption.” Lester Roloff believed that there was “**NO PIT TOO DEEP**” for the grace of God. My life is truly a testimony of that statement, and recently I was once again reminded of that truth when I encountered an inmate whose name is Christopher.

Chris is a tall, blonde-haired, handsome young man who had a reputation as one who was “beyond redemption.” Not only was he affiliated with a racist gang, but he was openly involved in satanic activity and often scoffed when I visited the cell block he was housed in. Just before the Christmas holidays, the bottom fell out of his life; Chris broke down when his own mother told him she had done all she could do for him. I was a bit surprised when I was told that he was asking for “the chaplain who was an ex-drug addict.”

By the time I reached Chris, the Holy Spirit had done a work on his heart. Chris seemed to hang on every word as I shared how Christ had delivered me from the power of darkness to the glorious light of Jesus Christ. God had opened a window into his heart, and Chris confessed Jesus Christ as Lord of his life that day. Everyone, including the inmates, the guards, and his own family, has been astounded at the total transformation of his life. His mother, who is an attorney, called to tell me that her son had called on Christmas day to tell her he had found a peace he had never known before.

Chris is housed in a cell-block that I must walk by every time I enter the facility. I remember before when I would walk by, he would just glare at me with a very dark look. Now he waits for me, and when I turn the corner, I am almost blinded by the biggest smile you have ever seen. He looks like he is plugged into a light socket. I helped him establish a quiet time every morning, and he usually has something he wants to show me from his devotional. Last week, he stood in front of a large group of inmates and shared how Christ had delivered him from his bondage. I have asked him to write it down for me, and I will put it in print.

GOD IS A GOOD GOD

Recently, I was bringing a message to a group of inmates on the subject of anger and bitterness. I had shared with them how I had become angry at God as a teenager when my dad was suddenly taken away after suffering a heart attack. I showed them how my anger and depression had led me into drug addiction and, ultimately, jail. I then shared how the message of the cross had set me free and brought me back to jail as a chaplain. As I was speaking, a young man named Will began to cry. He walked out of the dayroom where I was holding my service and went back to his cell.

After the service, I went to see if he was all right, and he began to share with me his life story. Will’s dad had deserted him when he was very young. Will was an only child, and he and his mother were extremely close. Will was doing pretty well until he turned fifteen. That is when his mother suddenly got sick, and her health began to deteriorate quickly. Will began to share how he could hear his mother cry at night from the pain and how he would go in and try to rub her legs to relieve the pain. One night while he was trying to comfort her, she slipped into unconsciousness and never woke up. Will said that the anger toward God, and life in general, that I had talked about was exactly the same thing that began to grip his life and lead him into a life of drug addiction and violence. He told me that when I began to share how our anger toward a loving, merciful, and gracious God was totally misdirected, he became overwhelmed with grief and sorrow. That is why he left the chapel service. He said that was the first time he had ever entertained the thought that **GOD IS A GOOD GOD**. That day in his cell, Will asked God to forgive him, and he crowned Jesus Christ as Lord of his life.

Will is going to get out very soon, and he says that he feels like the Lord wants him to find his dad. He told me last week that he has never missed one day in which he does not thank God for his own jail sentence and for bringing me into his life. What he does not realize is that I thank God every day for the privilege of doing His will and for being able to have a small part in the lives of guys like Will.

THERE IS ONLY ONE HIGHER POWER

Last week an inmate requested to stay after the service to speak with me. This inmate was a registered nurse who had a great career but lost it all when he became severely addicted to the prescription drugs he had once dispensed. He had tried many treatment programs and AA meetings prior to coming to jail. When he first started to come to my services, he told me he was an agnostic and was very skeptical

about the claims of Christ. What a blessing it has been over the past months to watch the Holy Spirit and the Word of God do what no man could never do. This self-proclaimed agnostic has fully embraced the Savior and has become an avid student of the Word of God.

Recently he stayed behind after the service and said he needed to talk. He told me he would soon be getting out and that he did not have the words to say to thank me for being a part of what God has done in his life. We embraced, and I asked him why he thought he was going to make it *this time* after having tried so many other programs. He lit up like a light bulb and said, "I had always heard about this higher power stuff but now I know **THERE IS ONLY ONE HIGHER POWER.**" He said that the relationship he now had with Jesus Christ was something he had never had before. He told me when he first heard me preaching that faith in Jesus Christ was the only hope for anyone, he had a total aversion to it. But God helped him work through every argument one by one. This guy has literally devoured every book I have given him to read. Pray for Gerald as he seeks to put his family back together and get his license restored to be a nurse. I told him we would all be praying.

CLOSEST THING TO THE HEART OF GOD

As we begin another year, I want to once again thank all of you for being a part of what our Lord has done in the lives of so many men this past year. I am always frustrated when I write a newsletter because there is no way to convey in this brief letter all that God is doing. Only eternity will tell the whole story. I have never been more convinced that what we are doing as a team is **THE CLOSEST THING TO THE HEART OF GOD.** Never is God more glorified than when men and women are turned from spiritual darkness to the glorious light of the Lord Jesus Christ. Ephesians, chapter six, reminds us that we are in a war against an enemy who hates what we are trying to accomplish. Please pray that we will stay focused and continue to fight the good fight of faith until we see Him face to face.

Chaplain John Downs