

DEAR FAITHFUL FRIENDS AND PARTNERS:

The year 2021 was a challenging, yet fruitful year in the jails where I bring the Gospel. Even with the hurdle that the Covid lockdowns presented, the Lord opened many doors for me to bring the good news to those who are bruised and broken.

I NEED GOD IN MY LIFE

My first day back into the mission field in 2022 was unusually cold for Texas. As I approached the jail complex that houses approximately 10,000 inmates, I decided to go in through an entrance I don't usually take just to avoid the cold. I walked through the tunnel that connects the jails and the courthouse and entered the basement of the jail. There I encountered an inmate sitting alone in a chair reading a Bible. I paused and asked him what passage he was reading. He said, "Psalm 139." He said he knew nothing about the Bible, but had just picked it up and opened it up there randomly. I sat down in the empty chair next to him and said, "Let me see if I can tell you what it says," and I began to quote it by memory as he read along. He was quite amazed that I had it memorized. I explained to him that over 40 years ago I sat in a court room facing my eighth felony related to my heroin addiction and trafficking of heroin and had been court ordered to a program where Bible memorization was required. I told him that Psalm 139 was one of the first chapters I ever memorized. He then told me he was in jail for possession of four kilos of heroin and that it was "very weird" that I had stopped to talk to him. At that point he said to me, "I am 54 years old, I am tired and empty, and **I NEED GOD IN MY LIFE.**"

I asked him what he thought the odds were that I would come through this tunnel, find him by himself reading a chapter that changed my life, and for both of us to have been arrested for the same crime. I then used Psalm 139 to show him the Omniscience, Omnipresence, and Providence of God and how God had orchestrated our meeting. I explained to him that the message of the entire Bible is Salvation and that God was obviously drawing him to a new birth in Christ. We had a business meeting with the Lord right there in the tunnel, and Jose embraced by faith the finished work of Christ. I went and got him a really nice Bible and wrote in the flyleaf "Happy New Year" and "Happy Birthday" with several verses pertaining to security and sanctification. How true it is that salvation is of the Lord.

A HUG FOR ALL OF YOU

I was recently invited to attend a church service where some of the men I had ministered to in jail planned to meet. They had

all been a part of my grace-based New Path Program that the Lord helped me implement in the jail. We truly became a band of brothers for Christ.

One of the guys, Stuart ("Stu"), was at the church with his dad, who he had been begging me to meet. Stu had been put in the Program without my permission or my requesting it; it was totally a God thing. Stu was immediately confronted by the inmates in the Program with the Love of God, the Word of God, and a demonstration of the Power of God. Stu, like me, had struggled for many years with heroin addiction. His parents had exhausted all means and money, and prayed many prayers trying to fix their son. It was in the cellblock where the Word of God was read, memorized, and taught (and the television was turned off) that Stu's life was eternally transformed.

Immediately after the closing prayer at this church service, I was accosted by a man who proceeded to crack my back with a bear hug. It was Stu's dad thanking me for being there for his son. That hug was actually **A HUG FOR ALL OF YOU** who have stood with us in prayer and support for so many years. Thank you for being a vital part of reaching the least and the lost. Stu has been out for a good while and has started his own business now. Pray for the men who have gotten out that they will remain accountable to God, His Word, and His church.

WHEN THE WORD OF GOD IS OPENED THE VOICE OF GOD IS HEARD

Please pray for protection and power for the ongoing ministry. We are now changing much of the way we conduct ministry due to the darkness, violence, and Biblical ignorance of these times. The violence inside the jail and on the streets of Houston is at an all-time high, and the need for a move of the Lord has never been greater. Pray for me as I try to enlist new soldiers of the Cross of Christ to come into jail to serve.

We are constantly reminded that the world as we know it is not the world that was originally created. Although sin remains, it no longer reigns in the lives of those who know Christ. We live in the realm of the three groans of Romans 8 and long for the full fruition of our salvation as promised in His Word. (1 Peter 1:5) These are days when it has never been more vital for all of us to abide in the Word of God. Never forget that **WHEN THE WORD OF GOD IS OPENED THE VOICE OF GOD IS HEARD.**

Blessings,

John & Anne Downs