

Volunteer Reflections

I met a man on Death Row who has his date set. He has a close walk with God. We shared about the grace of God, sang "Amazing Grace," and had an awesome worship time together.

-Haskell Dunn, AL

I was blessed by observing a chain of events, over a period of several years and involving several different people, the result of which was one of my friends leading a young man to Christ. I am happy to be one of the people in that chain.

- Joe Hertzler, VA

God used this crusade to pull me out of my normal timid shell, and I was able to freely share with women and show them the plan of salvation. Thank You, Lord!

- Sharon Bruckhart, PA

This week was the first time I've prayed with and for a man who was rededicating his life to the Lord. It is a precious moment. Something I'd like to do again.

- Ronald Martin, ON

A man who is in a bad way mentally has committed his heart. When I prayed for him, he broke down and cried and told me that no one has ever told him about God's love for him.

- John High, PA

I saw the love of Jesus in the life of a lady bound by law, but free in Christ. I was touched by her testimony of gratefulness for God bringing her to prison so she could learn to know God.

- Carol Stutzman, IL

2009 Crusade Edition

On January 25-29, 2009, We Care Program held its annual state-wide prison crusade. This year 366 participants from 21 different states, 2 Canadian provinces, and 145 congregations ministered in 18 different Alabama prisons, visiting thousands of inmates and conducting 75 chapel services during the 4-day spiritual renewal event.

Orientation

Before dispersing to regions of service, participants gathered in Montgomery for a day of worship, teaching, inspiration, special music, and fellowship. As the day progressed, it was evident that God was beginning to do "Greater Things" in our lives, with more to come as the week went on.



Volunteers respond to a call for greater freedom in sharing Christ.



God used Nelson Coblentz, NC, for heart preparation.



The day ended with We Care staff persons honoring our guests with a "Prayer of Blessing" and final time of worship.

Morning Sessions

Monday through Thursday in each region (Birmingham, Montgomery, Troy, and Atmore) began with a hearty breakfast followed by a worship time, instructions for the day, and a morning devotional. Teams were then dispersed to the different facilities for a day of ministry.



Jim Britnell, FL, brought the Scriptures to life for the Atmore region volunteers.



Birmingham region volunteers listen as Bill Wohlers, MT, motivates them towards passionate service for God.

Most teams entered the facility by lunchtime, gathered in the prison chapel for prayer and final instructions, and then were released to visit the men or women in their dorms, hallways, yards, visitations rooms, and chow halls (with some variation, depending on permission given at each prison).

Prison Visitation



Lee Hochstetter, MN, converses with an inmate on Death Row (Holman).



David Landis, AL, discusses spiritual growth with friend in Fountain's Faith Dorm.



Richard Brubaker, VA, shares God's Word.



Inmate enjoys outdoor visit with Anthony Sensenig, PA.

This week I witnessed first hand men who are experiencing true freedom, peace and joy in their hearts, despite their difficult circumstances.

- Eric Burkholder, PA

Meeting inmates that have gone through the system and been released is an amazing testimony that glorifies God. This proves that what We Care is propagating does bear fruit.

- Edwin Yutzky, OH

I came to be a blessing to the inmates and am going home being blessed more, much more.

- Mervin Martin, PA

I had been struggling spiritually, and I stepped out in faith. God used me to minister the power of the gospel. As I did, it became more powerful and real to me.

- Steve Gehman, AL

Prayer works. I talked to so many ladies who are reading the Bible and doing Bible studies. I praise the Lord for the way He is working in the prison.

- Celia Landis, PA

A lady we ministered to last year in prison is now out and ministered to us at our breakfast. She was not one of my prospects for God's use, and there she was! God is greater than we know. It strengthened my faith to meet her there.

- Naomi Bucher, PA

On Tuesday I was praying where the inmates work out, praying for them and over the equipment. When I went back inside, I sat at a table alone to read the Word when William came to me and asked to hear something good because all he hears are bad things. Through our conversation, I had the opportunity to lead William to Christ. Wow! First time I ever got to do that. And by the way, William is the equipment renter for the gym and weight area.

- Eric Brendle, VA

Freedom is definitely the condition of the heart, not the location or circumstance!

- Ruby Hochstedler, FL

A man with a very troubled look on his face poured out his struggles. Eight of us laid hands on him and prayed, and he was delivered from demonic spirits in the name of Jesus.

- Earl Eby, PA

My battery has been recharged.

- Cliff Martin, PA

The unique blend of evangelism, discipling, and simply fellowship with my sisters in Christ was a wonderful reminder that God is our only hope for salvation, for spiritual growth, and for the fulfillment of the deepest needs of our hearts.

- Melody Showalter, VA

At the end of Monday's service, an inmate was set free from Satanic influences. The change was instantly evident. Equally evident was the response of believers who were present—clapping, crying, hugging, shaking their heads in wonder. The church at the Annex is a praying, caring, reaching out, sharing church—a thing of beauty. It has been a great joy to fellowship with these believers this week. My prayer is that God will grow such a church in every prison.

- Doris Bender, PA

I have been moved by how much Bible knowledge there is in prison, but often not accompanied by any brokenness or signs of repentance.

- Daniel Frustino, PA

This year for me seemed to include the job of encouraging discouraged believers. One such man I met on Monday promised me he would not be at the evening service because he was just not feeling "into God." He said he had disappointed God so much and felt like giving up. But he was there that night and two others. Praise God. I felt that by the end of the week his mind was renewed and he was back on track.

- Alvin Landis, PA



From Canada to Alabama, Ron Martin, ON, encourages a friend.



Helmuth brothers Jacob and Bill, OH, visit on Staton's outdoor court.



Titus Beitzel, MD, and inmate engage in friendly conversation on Holman's recreation yard.



Donaldson Faith Dorm resident and Mervin Martin, PA, enjoy an afternoon visit.

Chapel Services

A highlight of the day for many volunteers and inmates was the nightly chapel service in each institution. On each of the four days, at least eighteen different services were held throughout the state with a singing group and evangelist as special guests for each service. By God's grace, our efforts resulted in over 450 known commitments (first-time and re-dedications) being made for Christ during the crusade.



The Wissmann Family, NE, share their talents at Tutwiler...



...and the women show their appreciation.



Messages are centered on God's Word.



The sounds of gospel bluegrass music fill the visitation hall at Fountain as the Yoder Family, VA, minister in song.



Inmates at Donaldson listen intently as Steve Longenecker, AL, communicates God's story.



Young and energetic, IMPACT (University of Mobile, AL) blesses the men at Holman.

Team Pictures*



Montgomery Work Release



St. Clair Correctional Facility

One day I talked with four or five different guys, each with a different struggle. I encouraged each one to come to chapel that evening, and was glad to see they all came. As it turned out, the sermon that night dealt with each one's struggles! I was moved to see how God worked it all out. - Curtis Wengerd, SC

I was challenged and encouraged by some of the dedicated Christians. - Lester Leid, PA

On day four I asked fellow brothers to help me reject Satan's attacks about worth, value, not being used by God, and to affirm what God says about His children. I was able to talk with people with an inner confidence in God using me that I had not had before. The really great thing happened the next week when my son Hans, a volunteer in the internship program, told me the guy I spent the most time with was now in the new believers' class! He had gone to the chaplain's office on Friday, the day after we left! Glory!! I had confidence that in a year or two he might become a believer, but the next day?!! God is able...above all we ask or think. (Eph. 3:20)

- Paul Stutzman, IL

I was in a service and everyone was singing their heart out, and I just realized that I was singing with prisoners that are more free than some people in the free world.

- Paul Sensenig, PA

I have been stretched by meeting those who are in sinful lifestyles and to know how to love and encourage them in the Lord.

- Esther Mae Martin, PA

I realized afresh that you can't put God in a box. Salvation is for all nations, kindred, and tongues.

- Gerald Schrock, IN

*View more photos and team pictures online at www.wecareprogram.org

Coming Up...Service Opportunities

1 June 12-14, 2009 Softball Outreach



Looking for an opportunity to share God's love in prison...and play softball at the same time? We are planning an Atmore area (four prisons) Softball Outreach June 12-14 and are looking for softball players to help us make it happen. A \$75 registration fee covers three nights' lodging and meals at our headquarters. Contact Don Metzler at don@wecareprogram.org or 251-368-8818 for more information. Registrations due by Monday, May 18.

2 July, 2009 Summer Read-A-Thon

You can make a difference in the lives of prisoners! We Care Program's Summer Read-a-thon is an opportunity for you to participate in taking the gospel to thousands of inmates. Solicit sponsors for your reading efforts, read your chosen books, collect and send the pledges to We Care, and be assured that you have helped to share the message of Christ with men and women behind bars. Regardless of your age—child, youth, young adult, middle-aged adult, or senior citizen—we invite you to get involved by participating or promoting. Print out the read-a-thon form on our web-site or call the office for a copy.



3 October, 2009 Young Adult Internship



A seven-month program designed to help single young men discover their ministry giftings and life purpose. Following initial teaching and training, participants will be placed alongside a staff chaplain in an internship role, assisting with prison chaplaincy duties, including friendship evangelism, one-on-one discipleship, new entry contacts, and Bible study teaching and/or facilitating.

As a team member, you will develop a deeper appreciation for the greater Body of Christ, you will be stretched beyond your comfort zone, and you will grow closer to God as you depend on Him to lead you in the work of

missionary prison chaplaincy. Contact Dave Landis at dave@wecareprogram.org or 251-368-8818 or download the Young Adult information packet on our website.

From the Field

Ventress Correctional Facility Clayton, AL



Richard Heatwole

Marj and I moved to Alabama the middle of December, and I began serving as a missionary chaplain at Ventress. I expected the work to challenge me and it has.

We brought our two 49cc. motor scooters along. We soon realized that not many ride scooters in this town. Nobody could tell us if the scooters needed to be licensed, insured, titled, or a special permit to drive them. I asked the sheriff, town police, DMV, and others. In Virginia these are not required. (Alabama requires all.) Let's drive them until caught. I had my list of excuses ready. I would plead ignorant. I could not get an answer. No one knew the law. In Virginia we were permitted to drive them. Let's save money and enjoy the ride.

In prison one day I picked up class material on developing business skills. It taught how to calculate the cost of a motor vehicle. It warned that even though one saves expenses by not having insurance on a vehicle, you must get it. It is the law. Anyone driving without insurance is thinking criminally.

Wow, a reality check. Do I really think like a criminal? Wanting to do my own thing. Believing that I am above the law. Rebelling against what I know is right. Thinking it is okay for one time. Hoping that no one will know or find out. This is criminal thinking. It resides in the heart of every man. Jeremiah 17:9 says, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" Left unchecked it bears the fruit of unrighteousness. It brings men to institutions like Ventress.

God, help me to remember when I see a speed limit, when preparing my taxes, when I pass a news stand or meet a poorly dressed girl, when I'm tuning my TV, or any time I have the opportunity to choose wrong and desire to be above the law, to choose not to think criminally. Amen.

Tutwiler Prison for Women Montgomery, AL



Anna Miller

While co-teaching the 12-week course "Making Peace with Your Past," I went down memory lane again. It was a fresh reminder of all that Jesus had healed of my own past. As the ladies shared their stories and their hurts, I identified with so much of the emotional abuse that they had suffered. I often cried in class because I hurt for them. Midway through the course, some of the ladies desired to meet with Donna and me for one-on-one counseling. It took awhile for them to open up, but as we met more often, the masks came down, and they found out that we were a safe place to deal with some of their hurts.

Near the end of the course, there was a lesson about "The Blessing." Many had never heard of the concept, but during that session, the women gave blessings to each other and to Donna and me. We all wept and felt the warmth of love, fellowship and caring for each other. We seek to help them with their past and they bless us with a blessing! The more we share out of our pain the more we touch others, and in the process we get blessed. Pray for the sisters in prison as they deal with their past.

Holman Correctional Facility Atmore, AL



Bob Depew

was a believer. He said he wasn't, that he believed in science theories. He just didn't have enough faith to believe that Jesus is real. At the same time he was afraid that there might be a hell. I asked him what if he is wrong, and he replied that he guesses he would go to hell. Then I asked him what about if I'm wrong. The conclusion was that I wouldn't lose anything, but if he is wrong, he would lose everything. I asked if I could pray for him and he consented.

The next evening Sam walked into the crusade service. My heart leaped and I began praying for him throughout the service. When the invitation was given to turn their lives over to God, Sam responded. Praise the Lord!

Donaldson Corr. Facility Birmingham, AL



David Bucher

“Good morning, Lieutenant,” I greeted the shift commander.

“Mornin’, Chaplain Dave. What can I do for you?” he replied.

It was 8:30 a.m. as I began to state my business, memo in hand. “I just want to remind you about the seminar we have scheduled in the chapel today. Is everything working out for us to hold that event at 11:00? Here is the memo, in case you want to see it again.”

He took the memo. “I have several memos from you guys. Yes, I remember this one, but do you realize, Chaplain Dave, that you have this scheduled right in the middle of chow?”

“Yes, I know that seems to be a conflict,” I said, “but if you want to feed chow to the population and then call for the inmates to come to the seminar, that would get us started right around 12:00 noon. We could do it that way.”

“That will work,” he said. “We might even finish chow by 11:30, and get you started before noon.”

“Great!” I responded.

I checked in with him several times in the ensuing hours, and he assured me that progress was good and we were on schedule. At 11:30 the instructor and I were in the chapel and ready for the inmates to arrive. Chow was finished. Then I heard the lieutenant say over the radio, “Everybody, send your inmates back to their assigned living areas, now! We are on lock down!”

“O Lord,” I prayed, “now what do we do?” All kinds of thoughts go through my mind at times like this. Was there a fight? Did someone get hurt? What’s going on? What about our seminar? Why did this have to happen today?

We were locked down for about two hours. Thankfully, there was no major emergency. We did hold two hours of the four-hour seminar, and good connections were made with those who attended. I was reminded of the quote, “Blessed are the flexible, for they shall not be bent out of shape!” While chances for disruptions of all kinds abound, we work under the authority of the One who is in total control of it all! It is a privilege to see Him work things out, even though changes can be frustrating at times.

J.O. Davis Correctional Facility Atmore, AL



Irvin Martin

We all at times need to make decisions that require a lot of faith. Stepping out into the unknown we like to gather as much information as we can before we make decisions that will directly affect our future lives.

In the pre-release class that I teach we talk about taking the next step. Although attitude and preparation is important for men and women making the step into the free world, I believe that help from others is crucial in order for anyone coming out of prison to make it. They need someone to mentor them through the transition, but placing themselves in the direct care of a mentor is where many of them fall short. Whether they don’t want to or are afraid to or think they don’t need someone, the results are often that they end up returning to prison. To help the men visualize what it means to place oneself in a relationship with a mentor, I tell the following story.

Many years ago a man stretched a cable across Niagara Falls and then walked across it. Next he successfully pushed a wheelbarrow across the deep chasm of the falls. Then he asked the crowd of onlookers how many of them believed that he could push a person across in the wheelbarrow. They all encouraged him that he could do it. However, when he asked for a volunteer, no one would get in the wheelbarrow. They had faith, they believed, but they could not trust enough to put their own life in his hands.

This is where I see so many of us hesitate. Yet this really is where it all begins. Do I merely have faith in Jesus, or do I really place my full trust in Him to bring me through this life into eternity? Many times in this life I need to get in His wheelbarrow and leave the unknown up to Him. Lord, strengthen me to take the next step.

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Published six times a year, *The Connection* provides news and views of friends of We Care Program. We Care Program is a non-profit, interdenominational organization consisting of Christian men and women who share a burden for and commitment to helping incarcerated men and women. We are accomplishing our mission by recruiting, funding, training, placing, and administering missionary chaplains and chaplain’s assistants in prisons to provide friendship evangelism, teaching, peer counseling, and encouragement.

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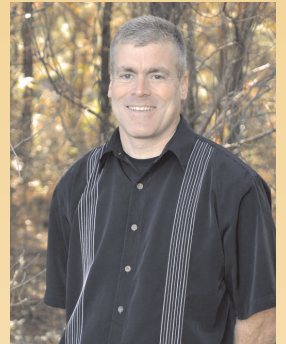
with David R. Landis
President

This year's crusade was my tenth in a row. I have many memories and experiences that are a part of the "Crusade" file in my mind. From the unforgettable bus ride to Alabama my first year, including an ice storm and a mechanical breakdown, to being in a chaplaincy position and feeling the tremendous encouragement of having co-laborers join us for the week of crusade, to being the one who now is in charge of planning the entire event. In all of these situations I have seen the hand of God at work.

But one thing will mark this year's crusade as different in my mind. We prayed more. Starting January 1 and continuing through the crusade and up to a staff prayer day on February 18, our team, as much as was possible in our various service assignments, gathered for prayer at 10:00 AM every Monday-Friday to lift up to God the many different aspects that go along with the crusade event. We prayed for inmates, authorities, chaplains, volunteers, evangelists, musicians, food service, intercessors, lodging hosts, support staff, workshops, chapel services, finances, health and safety, follow-up seminars, future staff persons, and much, much more. Other prayer intercessors around

the country joined us as well, for which we are grateful.

I think most involved in this year's crusade would agree that "Greater Things" were done in Jesus' name. It was a tremendous privilege for me to be a part of God's work once again. But I think perhaps a victory was won within our own hearts as well. Because of our emphasis on prayer this year, I saw greater demonstrations of the Holy Spirit at work within us. More peace, more strength, more patience, more understanding, more joy, more wisdom, more love. And in the end, it was these characteristics, birthed from within through prayer, that was poured out as "ministry." Which brings me to this moment...Today. How much of what I do "in Jesus' name" is truly rooted in prayer? And what effect would it have on my everyday life and "ministry" if I endeavored to make prayer the foundation of everything I did? 🙏



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