

The Connection

THE NEWSLETTER OF WE CARE PROGRAM

JUNE 2005

Prison Is My Cross



We Care missionary chaplain Dave Bucher with friend Troy

My name is Troy Walker and I love and live for my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Since as early as I can remember, the theme of my life has been inferiority. I've never felt equal to any of my peers or even my siblings. Very early in life I began a struggle—a struggle to somehow compensate or overcome my sense of inferiority. I chose many schemes and vices to aid me in my struggle, but despite them all the struggle went on.

My struggle spilled over into my early teens and there I picked up a vice that was too big for me. A vice from whose grasp I would never recover. On the surface this vice was called alcohol but beneath it was something much darker called dependency. Dependency has many names and faces, from alcohol to drugs, from sex to violence, from money to power, and many more. But though it has many faces, it has but one heart and that is to have a person dependent on something outside of themselves to be whole. Whoever chooses to dance with dependency must also accept an eternal truth and that is: if you must depend on something outside of yourself to be whole, inevitably you lose. I've chosen to allow Jesus to come into my heart. I've chosen to allow Him to rule and lead my life. I've chosen to depend on Him to make me whole, and for the

first time in my life, I win. I'm not inferior anymore, I'm complete, I'm whole. The struggle that began in childhood and led me through alcohol, violence, drugs, crime, and finally prison has ended. It ended at the cross.

This place has long since stopped being a prison to me; it has become my cross. A place where the old meets the new, where a decision must be made to go on in my struggle or to allow the man who was plagued with the struggle to die. I've chosen the latter and because of my choice, the Lord has allowed me to see the futility of the other. Outside of Jesus, the struggle that I was engaged in could never have been won. Jesus is the only way.

I've seen many things here on my cross, things that add to my conviction and determination to go on with Christ. One of those things is that the love of God crosses all borders. Borders of race, culture, economic or social status. Borders of family background or denomination and even borders between

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Fulfilling the Great Commission in America's Prisons

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My Cross (Continued from page 1)

God crosses all borders. Borders of race, culture, economic or social status. Borders of family background or denomination and even borders between prisoners and free men. I've seen this no greater than I've seen it in We Care volunteer David Bucher. He's traveled many miles from home and crossed all borders that I've named to serve our Lord. Despite being from the other side, I still see warmth in his eyes. I see care and concern for me as a person. I not only feel that he's my brother, I also feel that he's my friend. I don't feel inferior and I feel that he genuinely loves me just as I genuinely love him.

My name is Troy Walker and I love and live for my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

The Cross

by Troy Walker

*On this cross called prison this old man is dying,
Struggling to survive, in agony he's crying;
But these nails called conviction and surrender
won't let me come down,
Pierced hand and foot to this cross I am bound.
I know I must decrease and you, my Lord, increase;
All my reservations and protests must cease;
Despite the pain and suffering I must let this death be.
My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?
To me to live is Christ and to die is gain.
At all cost, by all means, on this cross I must remain.
My heart stands in awe, and beneath my breath I'm sighing
While on this cross called prison, this old man is dying.
Die pride, die vanity and greed until there's no self left
Because baptism into Christ is baptism into His death.
Nevertheless I live, yet not I but Christ liveth in me.
From this cross the world lies naked, and I can truly see,
I can view the curse and the blindness of man;
O my Lord God, I do, I do understand.
On this cross called prison I gladly give my life
To be released from this world of chaos and strife.
You, Jesus, You're all I want, my whole heart's desire,
You're the fuel that drives me, the flames of my fire.
In silence I watch as this world grows dimmer,
Through the pangs of my death I see glory's light glimmer;
The world's hold on me is no more; its lure has diminished,
In my heart I shout, I roar, I proclaim, "It's finished."*

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Published eight times a year, *The Connection* provides news and views to 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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“The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound.” (*Isaiah 61:1, NKJV*) Recently when this verse was preached at my church, God impressed upon me the calling that He has placed upon me and why He called me to Tutwiler.

The Spirit is upon me. God has poured out His Spirit and anointed me. He has appointed me, His child, to do the same things that He appointed Christ to do. It’s up to us as His children to carry on the appointment and to fulfill the calling while Jesus is away preparing our heavenly mansion.

To preach to the poor. Those who are behind bars are poor in one way or another. *To heal the brokenhearted, grieving.* There are many in prison who are grieving from broken relationships, grieving because they have been rejected and abused. They have suffered physical, emotional, and sexual abuse which has left them with broken hearts and with little or no self-esteem.

To preach deliverance, liberty, to the enslaved captives. We are sent by God to preach and teach the deliverance that only Jesus can give. We are to tell them that no matter how bound they may be or how long they have been enslaved as captives to sin and Satan’s ways they can be free in Christ. Our calling is to teach them that through true repentance and acceptance of the blood of Christ that was shed at Calvary, they too can be free from the wages of sin that lead to death and eternal separation from God.

The opening of prison to them that are bound. So many are bound by Satan’s tactics. Matthew 13:14,15 states, “And in them the prophesy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says: ‘Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, and seeing you will see and not perceive; for the heart of this people has grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, lest they should understand with their heart and turn, so that I should heal them.’” (*NKJV*) They are bound by visible things like drugs and alcohol, but many times they are also bound by things such as pride, anger, bitterness, hatred, jealousy, and envy. Those things may not be visible to the human eye, but God still sees them, and their course only leads to death. We are to preach deliverance to those that are bound and point them to Jesus, the only way. No, it is not an easy road, but God will walk with us.

We are called to teach them that now is the appointed time to set their life in order and to stop depending on themselves and their way of doing things; to try to help them look at their track record and see where they have gone wrong; to show them that going down the “My Way Highway” is one of the devil’s deceiving lies. They need to realize that God sees each and every one of them as the children that He sent Jesus to die for to set them free. “If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.” (*John 8:36*)

Having joined our staff in December, 2004, Anna Miller serves as an assistant chaplain at Tutwiler Prison for Women in Wetumpka, AL. She receives joy from her friendships with the women and from teaching God’s word to them. In her spare time she enjoys birdwatching, reading, and putting together jigsaw puzzles.

Opportunities

Children, Seniors and Anyone in Between!

Summer Read-A-Thon

Don’t forget to solicit sponsorships and **read, read, read** during the month of July. Beginning August 1, collect your pledges and mail them to the We Care office along with your read-a-thon form from the previous issue of the newsletter. Forms may also be downloaded from our website. Pledges received by August 31 qualify reader to be eligible for prizes.

Young Adults!

Young Adult Internship

Interns in this program will be placed in various prisons to work alongside our staff chaplains. Emphasis will be placed on spiritual growth through the development of inter-personal relationships with unbelievers, discipleship of new believers, and fellowship with the Body of Christ within prison walls. The team will also be assigned to various community service projects and be encouraged to grow in personal spiritual disciplines.

The internship, open to young adults ages 20 and older, will run from October ’05 through March ’06. Each team member will need to raise some program expenses and have health insurance coverage (room, board, and monthly allowance provided). Applications are now being accepted.

Men!

Missionary Chaplaincy

There is an urgent need for assistant chaplains in the Montgomery, Alabama area. If you feel God calling you to this type of ministry, please contact us.

Questions? Contact David Landis:

251-368-8818

dave@wecareprogram.org

From the Field

Marysville, OH

Ohio Reformatory for Women

During her 1st visit, she cried most of the hour we talked. At her 2nd visit she cried less but felt very strongly that she was “no good” and that “no one cares.” She focused mainly on the negatives although she mentioned, in passing, a few good things that had happened that week. Recalling my own depression, I gave her an assignment. Write down the good things and keep adding to it daily. Then whenever the mental negatives start taking over, look at the list.

I was unprepared for her next week’s appearance. Grinning from ear to ear, she pulled out her list. “I had a good week.” I was amazed at her insight. With her permission, I copied a few items:

- Real Christians that take the time for a baby in Christ like me.
- Being able to appreciate the squirrels.
- Having the courage to see the truth even through the pain.
- For being better than my head tells me.
- For the desire to change.
- For His help in keeping my mouth shut on talking about others.
- For realizing God allows Satan to come so we can prove that we stand with the Lord at all times, good or bad.

Even her Christian CO had commented on her changed attitude and had been given the opportunity to read her list... And I realized I had once again underestimated Him. - *Wilma Mullet*

Atmore, AL

Fountain Correctional Facility

I have been blessed recently to see God working in one particular man’s life. After over 40 years of hard criminal life, he gave his life to the Lord. He has now found purpose to live after several suicide attempts years ago. He is now filled with joy, as he is free from the bondage of sin.

Just two weeks after his decision to follow Jesus, he invited a young man, whom he had never met before, to attend a chapel service. That young man

surrendered his life to the Lord that evening. Neither of these two men have any knowledge of the Scriptures, but they both saw a need to change. They both are excited and hungry. I challenged the other Christian inmates that it is our responsibility now to pray for, mentor, instruct and encourage these young believers along the way. Will you join us in praying for these young believers, as well as find a young believer yourself to mentor? - *Randy Bruckhart*

Recently, before going into the Faith Honor Dorm one day, I spoke with Randy Bruckhart in the Fountain chapel to see if there were any special needs or news. Randy mentioned that an inmate had made a decision for Christ within the last several days. I proceeded to the Faith Dorm and asked the man at the front desk if he could help me find the one I was looking for. With a smile he said, “That’s me!” What a joy to chat with him and



Staff person Lester Huber devotes one day per week serving as a mentor to the 240 men in the Faith Honor Community at Fountain C.F. His stability, compassion, faithfulness, and listening ear are an encouragement to many.

listen to his testimony of how, after being in prison for 22 years, God finally got through to him. He is now involved in a Bible study, doing Bible correspondence courses, and sharing Christ with his friends. Many inmates have commented about what a different person he is.

I anticipate many more visits with this man. Please pray with me that his excitement and faith will continue to grow.

- *Lester Huber*

What do you get when you take two men with tractors from Grace Fellowship, We Care volunteers, a volunteer from the Christians in Action Ministry, and a handful of inmates and staff from Fountain Correctional, and stick them on the prison ball-field with four truckloads of red clay and a new set of bases? Can you say the best softball field in the state of Alabama correctional facilities as a blessing from God?

Why do we do this some might ask? Pushing these guys into sports and having fun instead of being punished? This is an easy question to answer and understand if one believes that when a man is born again, he is a new creature in Christ and all things are new. According to Florida Department of Corrections statistics, assuming they are similar to Alabama statistics, more than 85% of first time offenders never visit the chapel during their incarceration while well over 85% of them participate in athletics events during the same time.

Taking these thoughts into consideration, when teams from the staff and friends of We Care and other Christian sports teams compete with inmates on the field, lives are changed. Joining them in a game of slow-pitch softball on their field and showing unconditional love will influence many first time offenders towards Jesus Christ. This is just another way to share God’s love in addition to what most prison ministry volunteers do.

Our prayer is “God use this field to your glory.” - *Ron Hock*

J. O. Davis Correctional Facility

Many of the guys in prison are involved in weight lifting. Some of them work out every day, exercising different muscles each day. Others work out only several times a week. Some of the guys have big bulging muscles from having worked out for quite some time, while others are only getting started. Many of them work out in groups of three or four, while others choose to exercise alone.

As I observe these guys working out and occasionally join them a little, I realize that in many ways our spiritual walk can



be compared to physical exercise. In order to grow spiritually, we have to exercise those spiritual “muscles” such as prayer, Bible study, meditation, etc. Developing our muscles doesn’t occur overnight, but rather happens as we are consistent over a period of time. The key is consistency. We can exercise as much as we want to for a day, but if we don’t persevere, it won’t do us much good.

One thing that will hinder us is comparing our development with those

around us. Paul said in II Corinthians 10:12 that those who compare themselves with others are not wise. Making comparisons will either bring self-pity when others appear to be ahead of us or pride when we appear to be developing our muscles more than others. Comparing ourselves is dangerous and will destroy us if we don’t guard against it.

Another important lesson we can learn from weight lifting is that by working together in groups we can help to motivate each other and cheer each other on. When we try to do it on our own, we will never reach our full potential. Let’s do everything we can to help each other out so that we can be all that God created us to be!

- Ernie Glick

Holman Correctional Facility

Being assigned to minister to the men on death row is the biggest challenge I have ever had. What I have learned most importantly is that my availability, not just ability, will change men’s lives when love is shown on a consistent basis. Love is something many of these men had not experienced that I had growing up and have taken for granted. Because of other volunteers, prayers of loved ones, prison staff, and other incarcerated men, many of these men have been born again since being incarcerated. There is no doubt in my mind though, that many have just walked away/fallen from their initial experience with the Lord. I believe the Lord has shown me that the constant encouragement that He allows me to give stirs them up to battle discouragement that seems to dwell there.

My daily duties include greetings, prayer, and handing out Christian magazines and books. These are just a few things that occupy two full days a week of ministry to almost 180+ men sentenced to death row. I probably get to speak regularly to almost one half of them. I am also joined to serve the Lord there with several Christian officers who walk the walk of a believer.

Since I began visiting death row in December of 2004, I have personally been involved with helping two men come to the Lord and quite a few men recommit their lives to Him. Just showing God’s love with my availability and time to these men is helping the inmate-led services and other volunteer services get more men involved with a relationship with Jesus Christ. Thank you, Lord, for sending me to Death Row. *- Ron Hock*

Cherrylog, GA Fannin County Jail

Joe began ministering at the jail several years ago and quickly became known as an excellent Bible teacher. Residents came out in large numbers every week, and several made decisions to follow Christ. Joe believes strongly in discipleship and it bore fruit.

Late in 2004, Joe felt the call to become more active in the ministry of a local congregation and recruited Jimmy to come each week in his place. Over the months there was grumbling that the new man seemed in a hurry to get through the lessons and be on his way. The men were saying that he didn’t seem interested in them, but came perhaps only to win favor with God.

Finally I decided to brief Joe about the situation. We agreed that perhaps Jimmy isn’t the man for that ministry, and Joe volunteered to speak with him following a period of our praying for God’s intervention and leading.

A week or so went by and abruptly several of Jimmy’s severest critics began telling me he had changed, that he was taking more time and appeared to really care about them.

So I assumed Joe had had that talk, and called him with the good news. But no, Joe said, he hadn’t spoken with Jimmy. And then we rejoiced together about the power of prayer, that the Holy Spirit had met the need abundantly as always, to the glory of God. *- Del Yoder*

Perspectives



David R. Landis
President

Surprise. Disappointment. Anger. These were some of my emotions when I saw “Ronny” get off his bunk in the prison dorm where I was visiting. Surprise...the last time I had contact with Ronny was several years earlier in the local prison where I work, and he was soon to be released. Disappointment...as an active volunteer prison chaplain, I had lots of interaction with Ronny. Although I knew he had issues that would need to be dealt with upon release, I thought he was doing fairly well spiritually and would “make it” on the streets. Anger...the master of all lies, Satan, had struck again and Ronny was his latest victim.

So...I prepared myself to be a listener, and after the awkwardness of my surprise and his feelings of embarrassment and shame, Ronny slowly opened up and shared his journey back to prison. Loneliness...an old girlfriend...giving in to temptation...feelings of guilt and failure...knowing his relationship with Christ was taking second place...not able to walk away from the temporary pleasures of sin...a downward spiral that led back to life behind the fence. I shared with Ronny God’s never-ending love and desire to be in right fellowship with His children. I assured Ronny that God was ready and willing to forgive no matter how ashamed he was in his backslidden condition. Thankfully, Ronny acknowledged his need to surrender to God’s plan for his life, and we ended our time together praying for strength for the journey.

Like Ronny, I too have had to return to God. I drift. I return. I forsake my first love. I return. My mind wanders. I return. I might not even have the purest motivations for returning, but like the prodigal son, my desires have failed to bring the happiness I thought they would...my sinful state was not as peaceful as I remembered my Christian state was...my sin did not offer as much satisfaction as I thought it might...I simply couldn’t make it on my own. I remember what was, and it seems better than what is. So I return.

Unlike God, my initial attitude towards Ronny’s return to the fold were less than holy. He failed. He should have known better. More jailhouse religion. Fortunately, God’s love is total, unconditional, and welcoming. No questions. Just a consuming desire for the return of his sons and daughters. Like the prodigal’s father, He is always waiting with open arms, waiting to embrace me, and Ronny, and you.

I'd love to hear from you.
Contact me at
dave@wecareprogram.org

The Bottom Line

As the current fiscal year (July 1, 2004 - June 30, 2005) comes to a close, we can’t help but thank God for the generosity of His people who have faithfully demonstrated care and support for the work of We Care Program. May God richly bless each of you who have demonstrated support in various ways.

11 months ending May 31

Budget	\$522,500
Expenses	\$530,655
Income	\$547,385

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