



WINTER 2004

COMPASSION

If you're sentenced to spend some time locked up, what do you do with yourself? Sitting in your bunk feeling sorry for yourself gets old pretty fast, so you try to find something to pass the time.

Something I've seen happen over and over as I've visited in jail and prison is that this is often the time when people try out Bible reading and Bible studies. And this is often the time when God starts showing them how important they are to Him and what great plans He has for them.

A woman named Beth, whom I've been visiting, was at that point. After a few months of incarceration she'd started attending Bible classes and getting into informal studies with other inmates.

It was a real joy for me to hear Beth talk about how she'd been discovering the grace of God and for the first time in her life really starting to grasp the fact that God is glad to have her as His daughter and is holding none of His love and acceptance back from her.

One day when I visited her, she told me about this great new Bible study book she'd started working on. When she told me the name of the book, I think I managed not to cringe visibly. I've checked this book out because it's so wildly popular right now. It has some pretty good things to say about what a Christian needs to do to make her life work better, but it gives the impression that if you don't do those things you'll fail to meet God's approval.

The book is full of statements like, "Life on earth is a test," and, "One day you will stand before God, and He will do an audit of your life, a final exam, before you enter eternity." There's almost no mention of God's grace and Jesus' sacrifice on the cross for sinners in the book.

But Beth was really enthusiastic about the book. "It tells you how to have meaning in your life by living in God's purpose!"

I told her some of my misgivings, but Beth was already swept away by the book's promise of a changed life.

The next time I saw Beth that enthusiasm was gone. It was replaced by depression and frustration. As we started talking she told me, "I don't see how I'm ever going to measure up to God's standards! Why can't he cut me a little slack?"

No surprise there. "I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring life actually brought death." ^{Ro7:10}

Trying to change people by just telling them what they should be doing -- it



Photo by Mrs. Kevin Scheibel

didn't work in Paul's time, and it doesn't work now. Telling people rules for living without making sure they understand they're completely loved and

JUST AS I AM

accepted by God for Jesus' sake just the way they are -- it makes things worse instead of better.

I asked Beth, "You think God has a disappointed frown when He looks at you?" Beth nodded emphatically. I told her, "Nope. When He looks at you there's a smile on His face, and He's saying, 'That's my daughter! I'm so glad I have her! I had to die on the cross to win her, and it was worth it! I'm really looking forward to having her live with me in my house forever!'"

Beth said, "Really? Wow. That's

better." And I saw the depression and frustration melt away.

It can be annoying to have to clean up the messes left by well-intentioned Christians

who aren't focused on the grace of God. But, I'm sure there are people who have gotten annoyed with me as they've cleaned up messes I've left behind in my ministry.

The main point is that it's a joy to be able to bring hurting, shame-filled people the good news that they're loved and accepted unconditionally by the God who wanted them enough to die for them.

"God is glad to have her as His daughter. . ."

PROBLEMS OF THE HEART

Mention problems for the heart and we immediately think of heart disease, heart attacks and open heart by-pass surgery.

Then there are those other problems of the heart. Broken promises, a romance gone bad, spurned affection or friendship gone amiss. Thus the term, "broken heart."

What does God's word say about matters of the heart?

Scripture is replete with references of the heart. Listen to Jesus, "Do not let your heart be troubled, trust in God. Trust also in me."

John 14:1 King Solomon had it right, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart." And, "a cheerful heart is good medicine." Prov. 3:5 & 17:22

In His beatitudes, Jesus says, "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God." Matt. 5:8 It can't get better than that.

What does Apostle Paul say? "Set your hearts on things above where Christ is seated." Col. 3:1 "That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith." Eph. 3:17 And again in Ephesians 5:19, "Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord."

The Psalms have many references to the heart.

"May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O Lord my rock and my Redeemer." Ps. 19:14 With King David we pray, "Create in me a pure heart O God." Ps. 51:10

In all our comings and goings we are told in Samuel, "Man looks at the outward appearance but the Lord looks at the heart."

1Chron. 28:9 For that very reason Joshua writes, "Hold fast to God, serve Him with all your heart and soul." Jos. 22:5 And Jesus again talks of love in Matt. 22:37, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind."



Photo by Mrs. Kevin Scheibel

When we are tempted in our hearts to sin and go astray, remember, "God is greater than our hearts. He knows everything." 1 John 3:20

If we experience problems, troubles, sorrow in life, if our heart is breaking, we have God's word that He holds the answers

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart."

in His very word. "You will find God if you look for Him with all your heart." Deu. 4:29

Trust and believe in the word,

focus on and be obedient to His word, and finally may you be found, "Doing the will of God from your heart." Eph. 6:6

Franklin Gauger
Lay Ministry
Coordinator

Letters

Dear Chaplain Tetzlaff,

Thank you for taking time to come and visit me. After you leave me I have the most wonderful, peaceful feeling come over me and it lasts a few days. Nothing bothers me during those few days - NOTHING!!

So anyways, I woke up today with a smile on my face thinking "good" things and decided to read my book, "The Book" and write a note to thank you for making this all possible for me!

Every other night, sometimes every night, a corrections guard comes and drops off printouts off the computer. Some he even wrote himself. All spiritual with Jesus in mind and all from the heart!!

Well, I just wanted to say "thanks" it means so much to me - your coming to see me. See you in 2 weeks.

Marie

Dear Chaplain Iles,

I truly appreciate your taking the time to come out and share the Word with God's saints, who are in bondage. I'm enclosing a small offering for the ministry. God bless you, and we love you, here at Winnebago.

Your brother in Christ, Tony

Dear Chaplain Tetzlaff,

I thank the Lord for you in coming here to Oshkosh (Correctional), teaching the way to eternal life, through Christ Jesus.

Stay encouraged to never stop spreading the love of God, and the Good News of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, to a lost and dying world.

Please find enclosed \$2.00 as my tithe and offering to help continue telling the whole world about such great a salvation we have in Christ Jesus.

May God's eternal blessings be yours, from now until eternity.

In sincerity and in truth, Matt

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On the first Saturday in December there is a flurry of activity here at the ministry office. It's the scheduled date for our annual Christmas Gift Collection. Hundreds and hundreds of Christmas gifts are dropped off by individuals and from the collection efforts of scores of congregations.

And so for the weeks after the collection, the WLIM staff work to do their part to distribute the wonderful gifts which are given to give to others.

While it does take time and effort to get these gifts to the intended recipients, I don't know if the correct word is "work" to describe the activity that returns such joy. Perhaps "privilege" is a much more appropriate term. I thought that I'd relay just a few examples of what I was able to encounter in performing this privilege of being the gift deliverer.

I sent letters to the people I know in prison, who

Yes, Virginia, there is....love!

have families in Milwaukee and offered to deliver presents on their behalf to their loved ones. They only needed to let me know the names and ages of those to whom I'd be delivering gifts along with the address and phone number, if there was one.

The forms were returned along with messages such as: "Thank you for giving me the chance to give instead of receive." and, "I thank you for what you are trying to do for me. I thank you for not forgetting about me like some of my friends did." Most were very willing to have me drop off gifts to their family and took me up on my offer with much appreciation.

Having the names, I now could assemble the bags of gifts. While I did this, I prayed that God would guide me to know what may be most appropriate and appreciated by the special recipients: wives, brothers and sisters, sons and daughters, mothers, aunts, uncles.

There was also a special request from Thomas, who is in prison.

Thomas wrote, "The two other people are not my real family, but all my life they have been like mothers to me. . . If you can, please deliver to them also. Thank you very much!"

This seems to be the way things go. When people are locked up, they often think of those that have really mattered in their lives, who have meant well for them and have led them in positive directions. For Thomas, this was true.

And so I went on the journey of delivering his gifts. I couldn't find the first woman on his list. The person living at the address he gave didn't know the woman's name I was inquiring about. I went to the second address expecting better luck.

As I was walking up to the home, a little girl on the stoop asked who I was looking for. I told her the name of the woman on the form and the little



Photo by Mrs. Kevin Scheibel

girl said that she was just driving up in a van.

And sure enough, there she was, the woman who had been like a mother to Thomas. I told her that I had come to deliver a package to her. . . a gift that Thomas wanted her to have.

Her reaction to the name was almost to one of a ghost. She said that yes, she knew Thomas and that she had wondered what had happened to him. I told her that he was in prison, and that she meant a lot to him.

Her surprised look now turned to one of genuinely being touched. I handed her the gift bag and as I went back to my car she said, "Tell him we love him too."

There were also two brothers who were surprised by a bag of gifts from their big brother in prison.

And, a six-year-old boy, whose mom and dad were both in prison, was given gifts from both of them - toys, clothes and such. However, what truly made his eyes sparkle was the audio tape his mom had made with her own voice reading a book about Winnie the Pooh to him.

I know that the gifts and Bibles which were delivered were truly appreciated by the recipients.

I know that this Christmas, if only in a small way, some lonely prisoners were able to be a part of their family's Christmas because you gave out of love and because Jesus gave of His love.

Yes, Virginia, there is love and it's found in you, WLIM's supporters, and it's also found in those living in institutions. But most of all, it's in our Savior, Jesus Christ, who gives the gift of eternal life. . . not just on Christmas Day, but every day.

Deaconess Sarah Owens

"Tell him we
love him too."



Photo by Mrs. Kevin Scheibel

I had a trip planned to Martin Luther College in New Ulm, Minnesota to work with the staff ministry students on doing one-on-one ministry. I knew I was going to be within forty miles of where I was born and raised when I made those plans.

As the weeks went by between the planning and the actual trip, thoughts kept coming to my mind. Thoughts that said, "Steve, you should stop out at the farm. You should check out the village where you went to church. You should visit your parents' graves."

I felt a push to make this journey. I felt a longing to look on familiar fields and think of the people who had tilled and tended them.

I thought of an old expression, "You can't go home again." I thought of how Dorothy was told in the *Wizard of Oz*,

"You aren't in Kansas, Dorothy."

I thought to myself, "Steve, you can't go back to your childhood. You can't drive up and see dad walking across the yard with a pail in his hand. There won't be a pie cooling on the counter in the kitchen. You can't go back to that."

**"He knew I had to
do something that
I could love."**

But the thoughts of home persisted and when I finished my work at MLC, the car headed west and I went along for the ride. I looked at farmers harvesting soy beans along the way and then turned down the gravel road that led to the farm.

Two men were unloading a truck load

of corn into a grain bin. I they finished the unloading introduced myself to the now owned Dad's farm. He and in his mid forties. He brothers now farm a couple sand acres in this immediate

We talk about the harvest drought. We talk about what changed and added. He speaks of the decline of the rural population

He also says he knows how

You Can't Go Home

wife to live in this remote area. I come aware he is lonely and worried about the future. I begin to realize how much he appreciated hearing from a family that had moved away. It comforted him to know he was remembered by those who had moved away.

Then he went back to work. The chicken house, the granary, the tool shed are gone now. The house looks so small and I wonder how six people live in that amount of space.

Memories began to wash over me. I looked at the house. I remember a boy sitting at a piano bench. Hitting lots of wrong notes. Spending time. Frustrating his mother. Finally let him stop taking lessons. The boy never became an accomplished pianist, but he still loves music. One of the things that nourished his soul.

I looked out at the fields. Remembered chopping thistles, plowing, hauling manure, plowing, cultivating, and harvesting.

I was taught to be a farmer. I became a pastor. I know the work was disappointing, but he continued to farm because he loved it. He had to do something that gave him as much as he loved what he was doing.

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But the work habits he learned on the land, the patience, the perseverance, the attention to detail, serves him well as he tills and tends the soil of human hearts. Planting the good seed. Waiting patiently to see what God will cause to grow.

I think about my ministry over the years to people who are hurting and grieving because of the loss of a loved one or those who have received the news from their doctor of their own mortality. A ministry where I've had the privilege to touch the lives of many men and women who are lonely and

depressed. Ministry to people who physically cannot move about because of health issues or because they are behind prison bars.

Countless opportunities for the Holy Spirit to work in the hearts of the troubled. Countless opportunities for lost souls to find the way back to their roots and their home.

I got back in the car and drove to the highway and on to Wisconsin. As I drove, my thoughts found solace and peace. I had gone back to my roots and reinforced that I had been raised and nourished well.

Going back can reconnect you to what is valuable and lasting. It can help you see that what was learned remains when Mom and Dad are gone. It helps you draw strength to face life's challenges. It makes you determined to do what you can to teach what you have been taught to your own children and grandchildren.

This brief trip to my childhood home changed my mind about going home again. When I go back again, I know my eyes will tear once again because they won't see the man with the pail walking across the yard. They won't see the woman playing hymns on the piano in the living room. But in spite of that grief and longing I say to you, "You can go home



The Truth and Nothing But the Truth

(Continued from Pg. 3)

volunteer what he had done before the judge.

Ronnie went on to explain that he felt happy and sad at the same time. Happy, because he told the truth. He said he wanted to go to Heaven, but feared his faith in Jesus would suffer if he had lied. He said he was happy because he was at peace with himself and his Lord, but sad because the judge sentenced him to 18 years in prison.

I shared Romans 8:28 with him to assure him that all things do work together for good to those love God.

Doing the right thing is not always easy. It wasn't for Ronnie. It wasn't for Joseph.

Joseph knew the Lord was in control. Of course, it didn't make his life any easier. It seemed nothing but bad happened. Rejected by his brothers, sold as a slave, and, after spurning Potiphar's wife's advances, ended up in prison. Why? The Lord was preparing him for his life as leader and governor of all of Egypt.

I'm sure Joseph's faith was tested over and over during his "bad" years of slavery, prison, etc. Yet, he didn't give up. Yes, "bad" can be the raw material for "good."

I believe Ronnie doing the right thing - Joseph doing the right thing - can be meaningful to us also. Doing the right thing in life doesn't always mean good things will happen.

Yes, 'bad' can be the raw material for 'good.'

In my years of hospital ministry, I've been asked countless times, "Why me? I've been a church going Christian all my life, why all the trouble, why the cancer, why the heart trouble etc? Why me?"

Perhaps Joseph asked himself similar questions during his troublesome "bad" years. Yet the truth remains in Romans 8:28, "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."

May your faith remain unshaken during the "Why me?" times in your life. Rest assured, doing the right thing will sooner or later come back in the right way no matter what happens. Yes, all things DO work together for good to those who love God.

At the end of this life and the beginning of our heavenly life, we will finally have the answer to the many, "Why me's?" of this life.



Captain Ken Lenz

YOU NEVER KNOW- PART 1

At one of the prisons where I serve as a WLIM chaplain, I frequently have the privilege of meeting with inmates who wish to become members of the WELS. We make use of the adult instructional manual, "The Wonders of

YOU NEVER KNOW!

God," to study the most important teachings of God's Word.

These pastoral visits with inmates may last one hour. No longer. They take place in the visiting room along with all of the other visitations by family and friends of inmates. And the visiting room guard tells me where to sit for my pastoral visits. Usually it's in the first row, the row closest to his station.

For a long time I was just a little bit irritated that we had to study God's Word in the visiting room, amid all of the commotion of the other visits that were on going. But then the Lord taught me an important lesson. You never know who's listening!

At the end of one pastoral visit several weeks ago, the visiting room guard motioned for me to come to his station. After the inmate left the room, he told me, in a soft voice, that he had been listening to my study of God's Word with the inmate. He hoped I wasn't upset!!

He briefly told me about a very difficult situation in his life and asked if he could continue to "listen in" whenever I studied God's Word with an inmate.

I assured the guard that I was not upset and that he could



Photo by Mrs. Kevin Scheibel

continue to "listen in." I also encouraged him to contact the pastor of our local WELS congregation. He said he might. I pray that he will.

But I also thank our Lord for teaching me an important lesson. When you share the Gospel, you never know who may be listening!

YOU NEVER KNOW- PART 2

It was a Tuesday morning, so I had to be at the Dodge Correctional Institution in Waupun. (Except for an occasional training day, I am at Dodge every

**"You never know
who's listening."**

Tuesday morning.)

On this particular Tuesday morning, I led both the men's Bible study and the women's devotion. Everything had gone as usual. Our Lord had blessed me with two wonderful opportunities to proclaim both the

Law and the Gospel.

But then, something un-expected happened at the end of the women's devotion. After the benediction, I invited the women to join me in singing "Jesus Loves Me, This I Know."

As we began to sing, the male correctional officer, who always accompanies the women to the chapel. . .the officer who always sits at a table in the back of the chapel quietly doing paperwork, drinking coffee or playing Solitaire during the devotion. . . the officer who was already unlocking the door to the chapel so that the women could return to their unit. . . BEGAN TO SING WITH US!

His voice was soft, yet clear. I heard him. And so did the women!

A couple of the women turned their heads ever so slightly toward the back of the chapel. A couple looked surprised, even puzzled. And several smiled. I smiled too as I kept singing.

During the more than three years as a WLIM chaplain, no correctional officer has ever participated in any worship service, devotion or Bible study with inmates at any of the institutions where I serve. But this officer did. In a very simple, yet wonderful way he joined the women and me in praising our loving Savior!

Only our Lord knows if and when something similar will happen again. But it was another very encouraging reminder to me that you never know who's listening when you share the Good News of our Savior Jesus!

Chaplain
Charles Iles, Sr.



Men and women in jail dissatisfied with their old way of life do at times reaffirm their childhood faith or become a new Christian.

They see their lives spinning out of control. There was much guilt, no hope for the future. Finally turning to Jesus, they often want to know more about Christian living.

There are many Bible passages about Christian living, so I decided to read and study Ephesians 4:22-24 for the Bible class I was teaching at the jail.

Toward the end of the class, we talked about speaking the truth and not lying. Since some were awaiting their court day and appearance before the judge, I suggested the real challenge for living their Christian faith was not lying, but speaking the truth before the judge. For many prisoners, a life of lying is almost second nature.

After the class, Ronnie, one of the inmates, approached me. He



Photo by Mrs. Kevin Scheibel

The Truth and Nothing But the Truth

By Chaplain Ken Lenz

said he had fabricated a very convincing lie and was sure he would be set free. If he told the truth he could spend 20 years in prison. What should he do?

I admitted that I had never faced such a situation, but I suggested the we talk about both options, lying or telling the truth. If he lied and was set free, would he really be free?

I said you claim Jesus as your Lord and Savior. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." If you lie, your are saying, "Jesus get out of the way, I 'm going to do it my way." That 's not a very pleasant thought.

I assured him Jesus would not bless a lie. Besides, what would the victim think? *Justice failed. The legal system failed. Lying pays off. As a victim, I'm still suffering, the perpetrator is free. Not fair!*

Now, I suggested, let's consider what might happen if you told the truth. At this point, I mentioned the story of Joseph in Egypt. Ronnie said he was familiar with the story.

I reminded him how Joseph stood for the truth. When tempted by Potiphar's wife to commit adultery, Joseph said, "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" He stood for the truth - God's truth. Standing for the truth, Joseph lost 14 years of freedom but was blessed with a long and fruitful life.

I said we can only guess what might have happened if Joseph had denied the truth. I did go on by saying I sincerely doubt that Joseph's life would have been so richly blessed.

I assured Ronnie that if you tell the truth your faith in Jesus will fill your soul with peace. You would know you did the right

thing even if it means you do time in prison.

Ronnie came to the next Bible class. He was quite silent and didn't even look at me. Naturally, I feared the worst. After class, he came to me for a private meeting. He said he had his court day.

All I said was, "Yes?" I didn't want to ask him, "Did you lie or tell the truth?" I wanted him to

(Continued on Page 5)

"If he lied and was set free, would he really be free?"



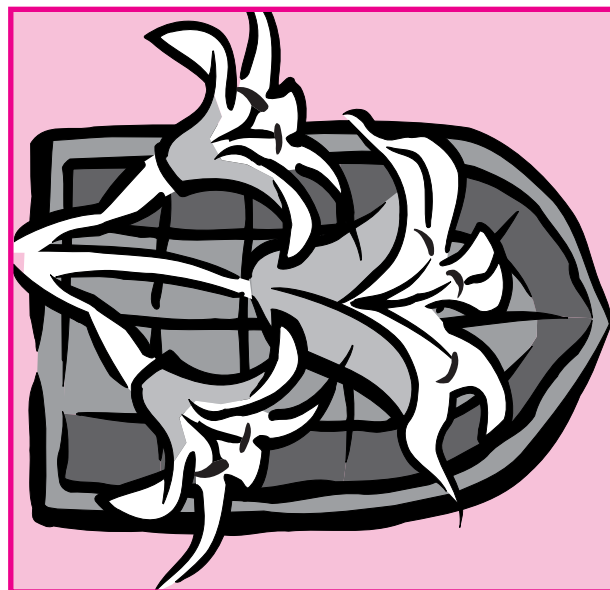
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To Share God's Law And The Saving Gospel of Jesus Christ With People Who Are Institutionalized.



“He
is risen,
just as
He said.”

MATT 28:6



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