



A mother tells me how she had journeyed back to the place where her son had died to try to figure out what had happened in the last days of his life. Pain was etched on her face and her voice quavered with grief as she told me what she discovered in the town where her son spent his last days.

A father tells me about his son and how proud he was of his son's curiosity and scientific talents in performing experiments. I'm not quite prepared for the shock when he tells me that his son killed himself when one of his experiments blew up in his face. Twenty years had passed since his son's death and still the father sobs as he tells the story. Tears run down his cheeks.

A young man in a moment of youthful exuberance, wanting to impress his friends, tries to pop a wheelie with his motorcycle and sustains a major brain injury. I take turns going into the ICU with his fiancé, his mother, and his dad where he lies attached to a ventilator. As the word later comes that his brain has no function and the decision is made to donate his organs, I stand with the family once again to pray and say goodbye.

At times like this, there is no doubt that children cause their parents great pain. But as I listen to parents lament their child getting a divorce; is dropping out of school; is losing job after job; is wasting her talents; is saying hurtful things to his parents, I realize that all parents have hearts that are pierced by their children.

Somehow, somewhere, some time, every child will wound his parents with his words, her actions, or his choices.

If you are a parent, you know what I am talking about. You know the cuts a child can inflict on your heart. Some cuts have only nicked you. Some cuts have gone pretty deep. Some cuts have left you bleeding and the bleeding has never stopped since the day the sword was driven into your heart.



Photo by Mrs. Kevin Scheibel

Pierced Parents

By Chaplain Steve Stern

For some of us, the sword is guilt. We can't stop telling ourselves we should have seen the disaster coming. We should have done more. We should have been stricter. We should have spent more time with that child.

For some, the sword is disappointment. We tried so hard. We gave so much. We explored all options.

Still it all came to naught. And for some of us, the sword is a grief that nothing can console as we look at a life of promise cut short, and there is no way to make it better.

I don't know if I have been talking to too many parents lately or what it is that has laid this pain on

my heart, but I want to share my thoughts with all the parents who are having a hard time.

I want you to remember Mary, shortly after she had given birth to her son Jesus. Eight days after his birth, Mary was with Jesus and Joseph in the temple to circumcise her son and dedicate him to the Lord. At that moment an old man by the name of Simeon came on the scene. He spoke some wonderful and some painful words to Mary and Joseph. He told them that Jesus would be great. He would be a light to the gentiles and the glory of His people Israel.

But He would also do

(Continued on Pg. 2)



HE IS WITH US!



Photo by Mrs. Kevin Scheibel

I found my thoughts going back to the Great Depression and how very little my parents had compared to the affluence in which we all live today. If you grew up in the 1930's, you have your own memories of the great depression.

I grew up in a home situated on Pine Lawn Cemetery. The house isn't there anymore, but as I look back, it was a wonderful place to grow up. Life was a lot simpler back then.

Finally my Dad lost his position at the cemetery. He had to sell his Model A Ford, and we moved into the city. From that point on, life seemed to go down hill. Our family had to go on county relief. Dad eventually got a job with the W.P.A. A few years later my Dad passed away.

When life seems the darkest, the Lord assures us He is with us even in the troubled and dark days of our lives and that He will never leave us or forsake us.

In one of my Bible classes, we are studying Moses leading the children of Israel out of Egypt after 400 years of bondage and slavery. Life was cruel and harsh. The people must have felt like God had deserted them, otherwise where was He as they cried out in anguish? God heard their cries, came to their rescue and delivered them. He assured them not

only would He not leave them, but He would be with them in a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night.

"I carried you on eagles wings and brought you to myself. You will be my treasured possessions, a holy nation." Ex. 19: 4-6

Do you ever wish God would make His presence known to us today, lead us in troubled times and call us His treasured possession? He does and we are. He leads and guides us by His precious Word.

When we seek comfort, assurance, hope and peace, we only have to go to His Word and there is Jesus leading, guiding and directing our lives on a daily basis, in good days as well as the difficult. Peter assures us, "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God." 1 Peter 2:9

Those words were true when our family experienced the harsh reality of the great depression. They have been true for my wife and me and our three sons as they went on to establish families of their own. Those words are true for all of you who are reading these words, and you know what? The greatest, the best is yet to come!

Franklin Gauger
Lay Ministry Coordinator



Pierced Parents

(Continued from Pg. 1)

something that would pierce Mary's heart. The sword that would pierce her would be that she would have to see Him die on a cross.

Those words must have troubled Mary on the day they were spoken. They must have cut her to the quick on the day she saw those words come true.

And yet, the sword that would pierce Mary's heart would also heal her heart and the heart of every parent in the world because His death would pay for every mistake parents and children make. It would pay for our weaknesses and inability to foresee what could all happen to us in life. By His wounds, we are healed. He has borne all our sorrows.

Even Jesus hurt His mother. Not because He wanted to. Not out of carelessness. Not by accident, but because He had to so she and all of us parents can find a way to go on after we have been wounded. So we can find forgiveness for ourselves. So we can forgive our child for the wounds he or she has inflicted upon us. So we can believe that some day, our pain will give way to glory.

Our loss will be replaced with gain. Our eyes will see Jesus and next to Him our child coming to greet us and welcome us home.

Chaplain Steve Stern

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NEEDY CARRIE!



Photo by Mrs. Kevin Scheibel

Most fellow pastors and friends know me by my nickname - "Digger." It's a nickname I've had for 58 years since I was a freshman at Northwestern College Prep in Watertown, WI.

I got that nickname because my grandfather, uncle, and cousin were funeral directors and because I brought some funeral trade magazines and paraphernalia along to my dormitory room. I still have funeral paraphernalia, models of antique funeral coaches and a collection of funerary books, some of which are humorous.

I don't consider myself to be morbid. Although my childhood was connected with the funeral business, the Lord led me into the holy ministry. If I hadn't become a pastor, I would have become a funeral director.

Some of my funerary books are rather comical. One book entitled: "Famous and Classical Epitaphs" quotes these words chiseled in a tombstone: "I told you I was sick!" That epitaph reminded me of an incident that happened while I was conducting a Bible study at the state's women's prison.

Carrie had been coming to one of my weekly Monday morning Bible studies. She was a quiet, mousy person who always kept her head down. She wouldn't look anyone straight in the eyes. She knew little about Jesus or the Bible, but seemed eager to listen and learn.

One Monday morning, Carrie was late. She slipped into the room very quietly, sat down at the table, opened her Bible and study guide booklet. She looked paler than usual and I asked her if anything was wrong and was she okay. She said nothing.

We continued our class work and discussion. All of a sudden Carrie threw up and whatever she was trying to keep down was splattered all over the table, on the books and on three other women at the table opposite her. It shocked all of us and she blurted out loudly, "I told them I was sick!" I have

never seen anyone so embarrassed and she broke down crying.

What a commotion followed! I went out the door for help. I was back in seconds and tried to comfort Carrie, but then two officers rushed her and the rest of us out of the room.

I waited in the hallway and watched as an inmate cleaning crew came to clean things up and spray a deodorizer to get rid of the awful odor. That ended my classes for that day. I left and went back home and prayed that none of us would catch what made Carrie sick.

The Lord was good to me and the others, because none of us became ill with whatever "bug" Carrie had.

Carrie didn't return to my Bible studies and I could understand why. You can imagine how she felt and how some inmates never let her forget what had happened. I prayed that she would return and asked the state chaplain to relay that message and invitation to her.

After a few months, Carrie made a request and came back to our Bible study. The others in our group seemed happy to have her back.

At the close of the Bible study, Carrie waited until the others had left and then told me, "I couldn't stay away. I need so much what you teach from the Bible."

I was able to offer her what she wanted and needed - the message of a Savior who loves us, who

takes away all our sins, failures and shame and who is not ashamed to call us His very own now and forever.

I pray that our dear Lord will enable me, as an institutional missionary, to minister to and serve many more needy Carrie's.

"I told you I was sick!"

Chaplain Dave "Digger" Tetzlaff





Photo by Mrs. Kevin Scheibel

"To whom can I speak and give warning? Who will listen to me? Their ears are closed so they cannot hear." Jeremiah 6:10

I think I can relate to Jeremiah, at least a little. I keep running into people with whom I can't seem to communicate. I'd like to talk with them about how Jesus loves them and died for them and wants to change their lives, and sometimes they're even asking me to tell them about Him. But then we run into a language problem.

I'm talking about people who speak perfectly good English. But just because a person speaks English, it doesn't mean he and I can have a meaningful English language conversation.

Sometimes the breakdown in communication comes from something

like schizophrenia. A while ago I tried to tell a man in the mental

health pod at the Milwaukee County Jail that Jesus loved him.

"Their goals are much more vague"

He smiled and told me, "I'm Jesus."

I told him, "You mean I've actually been praying to you all these years?" and he gave me this look that seemed

to say, "And your point is....?"

Then there are people who will talk with me about their problems but not because they're looking for solutions or comfort or encouragement, or even because they just want to get it off their chest and be done. Their goals are much more vague and much more strange.

For instance, a few months ago a woman talked with me for a long time about how badly the hospital had misdiagnosed her case and how things were worse rather than better. After listening for quite a while I interrupted and said, "Since the hospital isn't responding to your complaints, what about talking to a lawyer?"

That stopped her in her tracks for a few beats, but then she picked right up again and went on talking about how horribly the hospital had mistreated her, as if she hadn't just mentioned a possible solution she could try.

It started to become apparent that her goal in telling me her problems wasn't to seek help or comfort in her problems; she was looking for someone else to take over all responsibility for her problems.

Other people seem to want to talk with me about their troubles because they're impressed with how busy they are, and they'd like me to be as impressed. And still other people

want to talk with me because apparently they like hearing their own voice, and my presence is as good an excuse as any for them to have a monologue.

All these people are using the language I use, but their purposes for using language are completely different from mine.

I'm grateful for the people I can have a conversation with,

who will listen and ask questions and voice their doubts and objections and even their contrary viewpoints when I talk to them about God's grace. But there are other people who lead me to ask, "Lord, is there any purpose to my talking with this person?"

I believe that sometimes His answer is, "No, you've done about all you can do here."

But there are other times when he seems to be leading me to keep on with my frustrating attempts to bridge the language barrier.

And sometimes it becomes apparent to me that it's going to be something other than English that bridges the language barrier.

They like hearing their own voice"

Last week, a woman I've been visiting in and out of institutions for the last few years asked to talk with me. Within a few minutes it was obvious that this was going to be the same conversation we've had for years, mainly consisting of her telling me how badly her latest boyfriend is treating her.

The obvious answer – "Leave him!" – is sitting impatiently inside my mouth waiting to be screamed. But I know it wouldn't do any good, so I say nothing while she goes on and on about the boyfriend's insults and selfishness and neglect.

And then, to my surprise, she ended the monologue and told me, "I don't expect you to have any answer for me, I guess. I just needed to vent. I know God hears me, but sometimes it's nice to have someone like you listen."

Apparently I communicated something about the grace of God to her without saying a word.

Communication comes in many forms. Sometimes we use words; sometimes we use actions; sometimes we use silence. The frustrating part is trying to figure out which form to use.

Chaplain Phil Merten



EXIT (Continued from Pg. 3)

where many people are searching for the "EXIT" from sin. The list of non-Christian religious studies at Wisconsin's prisons is long; Islamic, Native American, Pagan/Wiccan, Buddhist and Jehovah's Witness. And each week hundreds of men and women participate in these non-Christian studies, hoping, believing that they have found the EXIT that leads from this life to life eternal. What a blessing it is from our gracious Savior that we can go into institutions and share the Gospel with people who are confused and searching for the EXIT that leads to life in heaven!

I encouraged Bob to continue coming to our weekly Bible study at Dodge Correctional. And he has by God's grace. I also assured him that our ministry would keep in touch with him when he is transferred from Dodge to another prison and that I myself or another one of our chaplains would be very pleased to begin an intensive study of God's Word with him. Bob said that would be great. I pray that I will be the one who has that privilege.

May this ministry continue to lead those who are institutionalized to the "EXIT." It's only because of Jesus and through the work of the Holy Spirit that we find the "EXIT" from sin, death and hell.

Chaplain Charles Iles, Sr.

She nodded and said, "YES."

Nicole was waiting for me in one of the "professional" rooms. It turned out that she was raised Mormon but hadn't gone to church for many years. When I asked her if she died tonight, did she know if she would go to heaven, she shook her head no. When I asked her if she knew the basic message of Christ and the Bible, she said that she didn't.

I asked her to read Genesis 3 about the Fall, but first I told her about creation. Then we talked about the promise to send a Savior, and how God is triune, and how He sent His Son to pay the price of the sin of the whole world. We read 1 John, chapters 3 and 5, where Scripture talks about faith in Christ being the only way to have eternal life.

At the end of the time I asked her if she believed that Jesus was her Savior and the Savior of the world and she nodded and said, "Yes." It seemed plain and matter-of-fact to her at that point. I just about jumped out of my skin with joy and thanksgiving!

She told me that she is divorced and that her ex-husband is the father of their two children, including the tiny one inside. (While we were in Bible study she desperately needed to use the bathroom. Right before I left she was getting sick. What an awful place to be pregnant . . .) She's from Detroit, so when she gets out of jail I'll try to make sure she contacts one of our churches there.

I have not had the experience before of having someone come to faith because she heard the word of truth. It is a miracle how the Lord works. I have to pinch myself that it really happened. I am so thankful for this ministry and the opportunity to see the Lord work through the power of His Word. He is always amazing!

Thank you for your prayers and support. Through His Spirit, they build up His Kingdom.

Karen Schroeder - County Jail Lay Ministry Volunteer



Photo by Mrs. Kevin Scheibel

“Where did she go?” was the anguished cry of the parents whose little girl was now declared brain dead. Mindy’s story was short and tragic on earth. The three-year-old girl was healthy and active. Her inquisitive mind wanted to know about everything.

One day, she decided to climb

Where did she go?

up onto some cases to get a better view of what was on top. A heavy case fell on top of her in such a way that she was not able to breath. She was rushed to the hospital with only a few signs of life. The hospital staff could only give the parents critical and life ending support.

The family had been delinquent in their faith, but they did call in a priest for baptism and anointing rites. Apparently the rites were performed without much explanation.

On the next day when I met the mother and father, they were alone with their daughter. Sobbing, they told me that Mindy was now gone and only her body remained. Next, they needed to prepare for the withdrawal of all life support and invite the rest of the family members for a final visit.

With little comfort, the father also began to tell his wife that Mindy was now in purgatory. The mother, but with great doubt, argued that she was now in heaven. Crying, they went back and forth on the subject.

Finally the mother tearfully looked at me and asked, “Where did she go?”

At that point, the door now

opened for me to talk. I told them that they could talk to their priest about their Catholic questions, but I could share with them what I believe about Mindy’s baptism.

“Yes!” they wanted to know more about her baptism. It was at that point that I told them that Mindy’s baptism was a

“I thanked God for His wonderful gift.”

most special handle of comfort on which they could hold. Jesus has given a wonderful way of bringing His saving love from the cross to us in baptism.

To help them understand, I pointed to the medicine bag, the IV tubes, and to Mindy herself. “The medicine is in the bag; the tubes bring the medicine; and

Mindy receives the medicine.” Next, I talked about God’s spiritual medicine of forgiveness of sins and heaven; baptism and Mindy herself. Her baptism was like the IV tube. By baptism, God brought to Mindy His saving medicine of undeserved love and gift of heaven. The Bible says: “The promise is for you and your children.” Acts 2:39

“Yes, I know where Mindy went!” was my confident answer. Through baptism, Jesus gave Mindy His gift of spiritual life and salvation. Jesus won it for us by His death upon the cross for all of our guilt.

Baptism is one way God gives His eternal medicine. Mindy’s baptism was our God-given handle of hope and comfort to which we could cling as we mourned the death of their child.

In addition, I also encouraged them to take some spiritual medicine for their own faith and life in the difficult days to come. God’s Word is also like a tube for spiritual medicine. Since it was almost Christmas, I urged them to begin reading in the Gospel of Luke about the Christmas story and then learn more about the life and promises of Jesus, their Savior. I explained how God’s Word offers us spiritual medicine so we also can be with Mindy in heaven.

In a prayer for them, I thanked God for His wonderful gift of baptism and asked for new spiritual strength and direction for the parents.

The mother and father continued to cry, but now it was with confidence that their daughter, Mindy, was in heaven.

Chaplain Ken Wenzel





Photo by Mrs. Kevin Scheibel

It's a small sign, no more than two inches high and four inches long. One word. EXIT. That's the sign on the INSIDE of the men's restroom door in the visiting room lobby of one of Wisconsin's state prisons.

To be honest, I thought it was some kind of a joke when I first saw the sign. Why would you need an exit sign on the inside of a restroom door? How many public restrooms have more than one exit? And even if there were more than one exit, why would you need to explain that to anyone? How many people have gotten lost in a restroom and couldn't find their way out?

It seems ridiculous . . . an EXIT sign on the inside of a restroom door!

But then again, maybe it's not ridiculous. The Word of God tells us that by nature we are all lost in sin. And God's Word teaches us that we can't find the way out of sin by ourselves. It's only because of Jesus and through the work of the Holy Spirit that we find the "EXIT" from sin, death and hell.

A couple of weeks ago Bob spoke to me after our weekly Bible study at Dodge Correctional Institution.

"We can't find the way out of sin by ourselves."

He told me that while he had been in a county jail he had a cell mate who wasn't a Christian. Worse yet, Bob's cell mate energetically attacked almost everything that Bob remembered learning from God's Word when he was a child.

"It was," Bob told me, "very confusing."

When I asked him if he was talking about his cell mate or himself, Bob admitted that he was the one who was confused.

Sad to say, that's not unusual. In fact, Satan, who is the father of lies, is always working to confuse and mis-

by Chaplain Charles Iles, Sr.

lead every sinner including those who have been brought to faith in Jesus. The last thing Satan wants is for anyone, "to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth." ¹ Timothy 2:4

And sometimes it seems as if Satan is especially active in jails and prisons

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OUR MISSION:

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



**“I am with
you always,
to the very
end of the
age.”**

Mat. 28:20



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