

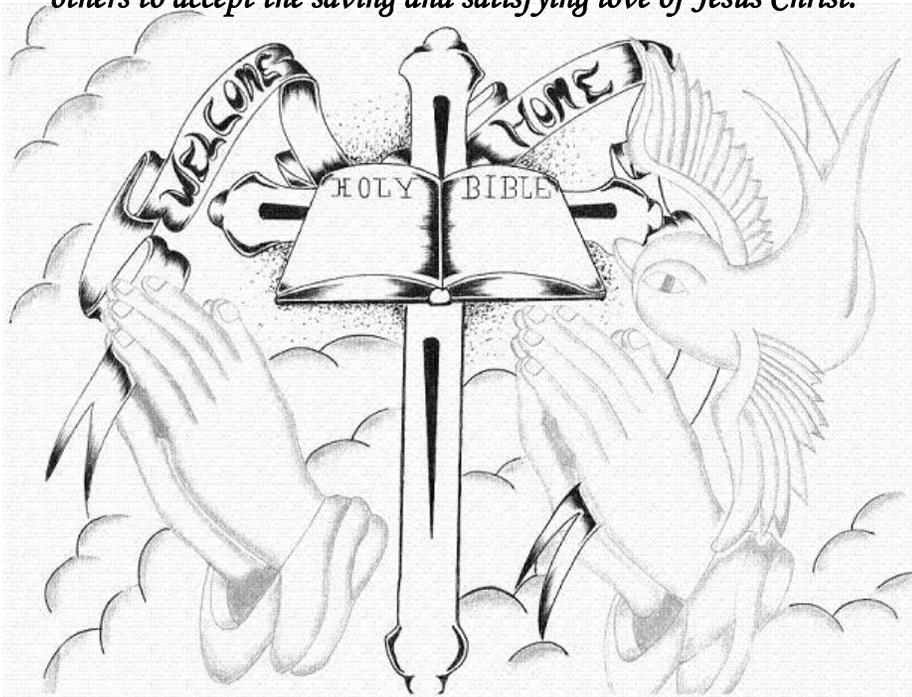
THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF

INSPIRATION

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 2 * MARCH 2012



Unifying the body of Christ in order to most glorify God and inspire others to accept the saving and satisfying love of Jesus Christ.



Newsletter Features

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So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ. (Rom. 10:17)

Letter from the Editor



I pray the love of Jesus Christ be full in your heart as you experience the grace and mercy of our Heavenly Father. May the peace that surpasses all understanding surrounds you when you need it most, and that the hope of eternal life inspires you to new heights in your walk with Jesus Christ.

It brings tears of joy to think about all God has done to make this ministry and newsletter possible. We often can decipher the Lord's will by the fruition of the ideas and plans He gives us. When this newsletter began in January, the ideas were solid and the Holy Spirit was leading, but we had no computer, printer, paper, or postage. In fact the laptop I had was fried and hadn't worked in five years. Some of our staff members were talking and praying for weeks wondering how this was going to be accomplished, but we never doubted because this was God's idea and His ministry. With just a couple weeks left in January, the scene quickly changed, and the Lord made a way.

Within days, my neighbor took out the hard drive and memory chip from my fried laptop and gave me a rebuilt laptop for free. **Answer to prayer #1.**

So, I started writing and formatting the newsletter. Paul Charron and Kimberly Neely were writing, and the Ambassadors for Christ in Chains were hard at work, but we were on a deadline. With February fast approaching, the writers started sending me their rough drafts. **Answer to prayer #2.**

The newsletter was finished, and it was amazing to see how God put every inch of it together. The writing was inspiring and sincere, and now all we needed was to send them out. Problem was we did not know where we were going to make the copies or how to pay for postage. That same week I met with my Godmother, Paula Conrad, a devoted woman of God with a desire to reach people with the love of Jesus Christ, and showed her the newsletter. She was so thrilled with the outcome. Then she walked to her purse and asked me to whom she should write the check. **Answer to prayer #3.**

That same day, we were able to buy materials for sending the newsletters and postage. Amazingly, I received a letter that day with 50 more stamps from my sister in Christ, Kimberly. **Answer to prayer #4.**

The last step was actually making the copies and all the stores wanted \$400-\$500 for copies, folding, and stapling. Yikes!! We could not afford that. I figured we could do the stapling, folding, and taping ourselves, so we needed copies. Of course, God had it figured out the whole time. I set up a meeting with Pastor Steve Ardhuerumly at my home church, Heritage Community Church in Auburn, Indiana. He loved the newsletter, and was inspired by the effort being made to reach the community and into the prisons. We talked about

future collaboration, and the meeting ended with the offer to make the copies at the church for free. Hallelujah! *Answer to prayer #5.*

Inspiration is now back, and we are excited about another opportunity to glorify God and express our love to you in the name of Jesus Christ. God has been faithful to His word in building this ministry, and He has done just that. Many who have read February's newsletter have been inspired to get involved in the effort to spread the Gospel to those who need to know about Jesus. From Indiana to Florida, the response has been overwhelming and we are excited about new opportunities in the coming months.

Something awesome I get to experience in ministry is meeting so many people who are looking to be a part of helping others and sharing the love of Christ. There are food pantries, shelters, halfway houses, and churches all across the country willing to help those in need. One thing I pray Inspiration Ministries can do is connect with a lot of these organizations and people, so we can most effectively minister to others.

I remember being in prison and thinking that things could not get much worse. It is easy to think that being *free* is the answer to all life's questions, but now that I am out I am around men and women losing their jobs, dying of cancer, battling dementia, and balancing careers and parenthood. People are in need and are hurting in the *free* world also. Inspiration is committed to helping those in need, but most importantly sharing the precious gift of salvation with them. God certainly cares about our circumstances in this world, but He desires that we are rich in spirit through a relationship with His Son, Jesus Christ.

The truth is you only need to read the testimonies and articles from our Ambassadors for Christ in chains to feel the tug of the Holy Spirit. I am sure you feel that same pull as I do when we raise our hands in worship to the Lord. There is a love so satisfying which God offers through His Son, Jesus Christ that we must tell somebody about it because without it we know there is no hope.

Inspiration Ministries is interested in communicating with those who are looking to join the effort in reaching a fallen and lost world. We currently have teams in Indiana and Florida trying to gather as much information available to best develop programs to meet the needs of our communities. This involves education, music, shelter ministries, addiction recovery, and counseling.

We are truly in this together, and we pray you will be inspired to contact us and join the effort. God is building this ministry step by step, and we are honored to be involved. Three years ago on an April morning at Quincy Annex Correctional Institution God told me to trust Him for this ministry, and that is exactly what we are going to do. Hallelujah!

Stay Inspired,
Andrew L. Foster

"This is My Body"

by Kenneth Thurman, Ambassador for Christ in Chains

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In Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all others. (Romans 12:5)

A local church, living out together the life of Christ within them, is God's strategy to change a lost world!!!!

Church members need to be taught how to walk with God. They need to know how to hear from God. They need to be able to identify things only God can do. When a church allows God's presence and activity to be expressed, a watching world will be drawn to Him.

Just like individuals, churches are often more interested in what God wants them to do rather than what He wants them to be. Being the kind of people that please God is far more important than doing something for Him. Yes, God does want a church to obey Him by doing what He asks. Yet, He is not interested in a church violating His commands in order to get something done. Individuals often think that a work for God can be done with whatever means are necessary. They don't hesitate to violate God's written will in order to accomplish something. They think it is His will. God is interested in His people being holy, clean, and pure. He is interested in the unity of the church. "There should be no division in the body (1 Corinthians 12:25). He is interested in members loving one another, because the world will know we are His disciples by our love (John 13:35). God is able to accomplish His work through His people in a way that is consistent with all His commands and His nature.

A church comes to know the will of God when the whole body understands what Christ – The Head – is telling them. A church needs to learn to function as the body of Christ. We understand the will of God for our church when we listen to the whole body express what they are experiencing in the life of that body.

As our church allows God to teach us how to effectively live as a body, we will see love and unity spring forth that we may not have experienced before. Effective body life begins with each individual being rightly related to God in an intimate relationship. It continues as all the members are rightly related to Jesus Christ as the Head of our church. Right relationships with God are far more important than buildings, budgets, programs, methods, church personnel, size or anything else.

The Bible uses the Greek word *koinonia* to describe fellowship within the body of Christ. That word means "participation with others in a common purpose." The Latin equivalent is "communion" pointing to the Communion that is shared with other believers as well as with God.

God's desire for every local church is for all to agree, be made complete in the same mind, and be made complete in Christ (1 Corinthians 1:10).

What will promote unity? Humility, gentleness, patience, tolerance, and love diligently preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Our responsibility is to preserve that and do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but regard one another as more important than ourselves. Fellowship within the body of Christ involves sharing in each other's lives. A believer cannot experience God in all the dimensions God has for him or her apart from the body of Christ – a local church. In the body and together on missions to the ends of the earth, Christians begin to experience the fuller dimensions of life in God's kingdom. As we experience *koinonia* with other groups of God's people, we experience greater dimensions of God's presence at work in the world. God already has in place channels through which we the church can touch a world for Him. We need Him to break down our barriers that may prevent us from experiencing the fullness of God through *koinonia* with others. Go to Him and watch for His initiative. He will show you how, with whom and when. Just keep in mind what the psalmist says: "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." (Psalm 133:1)

Taming the Tongue

by Lowell Davis

And in the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so it is the tongue among our members, that defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell (James 3:6).

Our Words and the Word of God are the most powerful sources of change in the realms of Heaven and Earth. Like a fire they can either be spreading destruction or be a warming source for the soul. We must be filled with the Word of God. Our thoughts have a way of becoming words, and those words then become natural and supernatural courses of being that must complete their existence once they are uttered. Let the utterances from our lips be of the things of God.

We need to be mindful as we throw around idle words that we learn to do as Jesus knew to do. He never let that little member, the tongue, speak things of destruction. He simply answered, "As it is written." I encourage you to follow His example by speaking life and not death. Make it your desire to be a person who builds up instead of tears down. People around you are always looking to be inspired, and speaking words of encouragement into their lives may make all the difference in the world.

Behind the Walls

Unifying the Body of Christ

"I was in prison, and you came to me" Matthew 25:36c

There has been a whirlwind of activity lately with Inspiration Ministries because of the boys in blue. The testimonies of our Ambassadors for Christ in Chains and the letters we have received from other inmates has inspired men and women on this side of the walls and given a whole new meaning to chain gang religion.

Perhaps when most people leave prison they do everything they can to forget that it ever happened, but the fact is that some of us can't forget, and we don't want to. It was while we were wearing those blues suits and eating that chow hall food, that the Holy Spirit spoke to our hearts and revealed His purpose for our lives. The fact is we wouldn't trade Jesus for all the freedom, money, or fame in the world. It is in Him that we have been made complete and discovered an incomprehensible joy.

We are so thrilled to share more writing from our A.C.C. These testimonies and messages are so inspiring that our staff couldn't help but tear up as we typed and proofread these valuable experiences and the work of the Lord in so many different ways. These stories always remind me that when we rejected Jesus Christ most, He still chose to be crucified for our sin and take the punishment we deserved. That is a Savior worth living for, and a story worth sharing.

Inspiration Ministries is committed to understanding all the opportunities available to minister to the needs of those in prison. We are putting together teams and being patient for a time when we will bring Inspiration on the other side of the walls. Be in prayer with us as people join the effort and resources are gathered. Inspiration understands the change God wants to make in your life, and His desire is to do that now. We want you to know that we love you and are here to encourage you every step of the way.

Take the time to read the following articles and let the Lord inspire you to share your own with us. What God has done for us, He surely will do for you if you will only allow Him. The truth is that you are the warriors on the other side of the walls, and we are just here to support you. You are the ones living in the battle field, fighting the enemy daily, and lifting the banner of Jesus Christ among the chaos around you. Inspiration Ministries is proud to call you brother and sisters. God bless and stay strong!

My Story: Less Than a Year

by Rigdel De Lardilles
Ambassador for Christ in Chains



I was born in Guantanamo, Cuba, but I also have a strong Chinese heritage. My mother's name is Temis Fat, and my father's name was Rigdel De Lardilles Chang. My mother was fourteen when she became pregnant with me, and Dad was probably around eighteen. They were married, and for some reason, he left to come to the United States before I was born. My birth on December 23, 1984 forced my mother to grow up very quickly. When I was about six, my mother and I left Cuba for Panama and we remained there for two months. We then went to a half-way house in Costa Rica where the world left its first ugly scar on my soul at the age of seven.

To put it simply, the older kids who also lived in that house had abused me. People say children don't understand the hardships of life, but I remember a time in Costa Rica when we were struggling financially. I sold my toys in the street for money to buy bread, milk and eggs. It seemed I had sold my childhood, which in hindsight, had already been stripped away.

So my mother and I grew up together. We spent a year-and-a-half in Costa Rica. I met my father sometime during our stay in Panama, though I can't remember it. This came into play later.

My mother left for the U.S. a month before me due to a discrepancy with our passports. I was forced to remain with the family in Costa Rica for an extra month by myself. I arrived at the Miami airport in 1993 at the age of eight.

My father went to prison sometime during 1995-96 for approximately five years. His family turned their backs on us and now it was me, my mother, my new baby brother and my grandmother, who had recently joined us from Cuba. I was the only one that spoke English, and we found ourselves abandoned. Making matters worse, due to the type of criminal lifestyle that my father lived, we were robbed. Our entire house was cleaned out and we were forced to relocate to Hialeah bordering Miami Lakes.

My middle school years were very chaotic due to my unruly behavior. I attended three different middle schools, and you couldn't tell me anything. At the age of fourteen I began to smoke marijuana and drink heavily. Then my mother married my step-father my freshman year and we were on our way to Hawaii where he was stationed as a Marine. It looked like a new beginning for everyone, but I continued to abuse drugs and alcohol.

We came back to the mainland just before I turned eighteen when Ariel, my step-father, received a medical discharge due to a serious back injury. I turned eighteen in Miami and celebrated at a hotel in South Beach, compliments of my ex-con father, who had now become my accomplice in crime. At this point, I

was consumed by cocaine and he was my favorite supplier.

I joined the military at the age of eighteen trying to escape some serious gang involvement. Basic training was at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, and I was stationed at Fort Carson, Colorado. My mother was proud, and it looked like things were finally beginning to look up. My mother was happily married, living in a good neighborhood, and her eldest son was in the service. However, the beast in me was lying low, getting ready to set me up for my greatest downfall yet.

I resisted the temptation of drugs and alcohol for some time. I was almost through my first year of service when I was introduced to methamphetamines, and my life took a violent turn for the worse. I ran away from the military on several occasions, stole a car from another soldier, and broke into the house of some civilian for "fun." I was living with strippers while evading the local police who were on the lookout for an AWOL soldier. I eventually turned myself in and was court marshaled under dishonorable conditions.

When I twenty years old, I returned to Florida after five months in military prison at Fort Knox, Kentucky. I got a job working with my step-father at an electric company. Once again, things were calm for almost a year. At the age of twenty-one, I tried to balance my work life with my party life, but everything finally came crashing down. I went out one night and didn't come home.

With sparing the details, I got drunk, messed around with an underage girl, and the police caught us. I went to jail, and my family bonded me out with \$10,000. Things got worse from there. I was out on bond for almost a year. Sex, drugs, and alcohol marked my life; acts of violence were inevitable. I was caught with a gun in a Wal-Mart parking lot. I was drunk, celebrating with friends after a successful scare tactic on some punks, but they called the cops on us after I pulled my gun out in the middle of the confrontation. The police took my gun and let me go, if you can believe that. But still things did not slow down.

On March 12, 2008 I was sentenced to ten years in prison, leaving behind my unborn child with a girl I met while I was out on bond. My first year in prison was rough, facing ten years with a hard heart that blamed everybody for my hardships; except me, of course.

During my first year, I went to the box for getting a tattoo. There I received my first Bible, which I never opened. I came out of the box and was sent back to Quincy Annex CI. I was relocated to A1 dorm towards the end 2008. I met a peculiar group of men who called themselves Christians. I was not interested, but they were persistent. I was confronted one Sunday morning during breakfast by the Chaplain. He invited me to church, but my response was "No." He then asked me if I thought there was a God, to which I responded, "I hope not."

On December 30, 2008, the Hound of Heaven came calling and my time of visitation was at hand. I had no idea what the Lord had in store. One early afternoon I was lying in bed staring at the ceiling. People always knew that I was either running around the dorm, or I was stressing. I really can't explain what happened to me that day, except that I was overcome by such fear and desperate need, along with the conviction to respond. I sat up in bed and looked around

the dorm, not yet knowing what I was looking for. Then I laid eyes on him: Anthony Ponds. He was one of the Christians to whom I was immediately attached. When the time came for my reckoning with the Almighty, he's the one that was chose, I believe, by God to make the proper introductions. I jumped off my bed and made my way to his bunk where I sat. I did not say a single word until he finally asked me, "What's up?" Truthfully, it wasn't until that very moment that I myself knew how to respond and the only answer I had was, "I need Jesus." After talking a few minutes, Anthony asked if I was ready to meet Him, to which I immediately answered "Yes." And I did. I prayed, confessed, cried, was convicted, afflicted, and healed all in that moment. It happened so quickly, and it is hard to describe, except to say that a great burden was lifted off my shoulders. And I haven't looked back yet.

There have been trials of my faith here in prison, but God has been faithful, and He who began a good work in me has promised to complete it. I understand how important it is to live my life in such a way that it brings glory to my risen Lord. It's taken a lot of purging of my old self during this battle, and Jesus has supplied my spiritual needs in ways I never thought possible. He has given me strength when another step seemed impossible, and has forgiven me when I thought, "Surely this time I have gone too far."

The word of God has been tested and found true. What all life's circumstances couldn't do, God did. He has changed me, not from the outside, but from the inside where the real problem was. I have been walking faithfully with my God for three years. My heart's desire and my work here have been devoted to the salvation of the souls around me, to building up the church, and giving my Father all the glory through the grace that has been given to me through faith in Christ. I give Him all the credit.

A short six months after the Lord plucked me from the fire, I was hired to work in the Chapel after volunteering for a while. I recall sitting in the Pastor's office when the conversation turned to that Sunday morning breakfast when he invited me to church. He recalled the "I hope not" response I made about whether I believed there was a God. I was now able to give him the answer that I could not give him that day. The fact was that I had hoped that God was not real because I was going straight to Hell. It was the fear of God that led me to surrender. It is the love of Christ that keeps me faithful.

If you have ever looked into the mirror and cried because you did not recognize the face that stared back at you; if you have ever walked out into the middle of the street at night to scream at God; or if you have ever been in a room full of people and felt so utterly alone that the thought crossed your mind that death would be better, then I have news for you: you're not the only one. Love is waiting at the cross and His arms are still stretched out waiting for you to run into them. Remember, the day is today and the hour is now.

God in the Box

by Robert Waterhouse
Ambassador for Christ in Chains

As a child I used to pray to God, but it seemed like the more I prayed things just got worse. I knew there was a God, something deep down inside of me told me there was. But after a while I just felt like He didn't care about me and I was on my own.

So I hated Him. Violence was my game and Dead Serious was my name. I thought that was life. But little did I know there were more plans for me.

I was born in Brookhaven, Long Island, New York on April 19, 1988 to a very young, beautiful fifteen year old mother. The household I was brought up in was full of violence, drugs, and alcohol. I was brought up with Pops beating my mom a lot. Then he went to prison when I was three years old. His best friend and my mom got together and he beat her, me, and my brother, Jay. Things just got worse from there.

From a young age I started getting mixed up in mischief and violence myself. I really learned violence was when I was thirteen years old. We had moved down to Florida a couple of years before, and we were staying in a two bedroom house with ten people living there, seven of us being my mom's sons. She had seven boys by the time she was 26 years old, three from my dad and four from my stepfather. One day, my little brother, Jason, and I were walking into the house, coming home from middle school. My mom was out, and my stepfather was home early from work. He was sitting on the couch in the living room, and I could tell he was high, either from crack or straight cocaine. So I didn't say anything to him when I walked by, just went up the stairs and put my stuff in the room I shared with Jason. The next think I knew, I heard a rushing up the stairs and a choking noise. I walked out into the hallway and at the top of the stairs my stepfather was choking my little brother. Jason was up against the wall with his feet lifted up in the air. Right then and there, something in me snapped and I couldn't take it any more. I cocked back and smashed him in his face as hard as I could. He went stumbling down the stairs, and I could see the terror in his eyes. All he could do was tell me how much he hated me and wished I was dead. I didn't care anymore. I'd known since I was three years old he hated me because I wasn't his son.

Something was different this time. I wasn't scared any more. I actually felt powerful, and I loved it. Finally, after all these years of being beaten and scared of this man, the tables had turned. There was a new understanding between us. I learned the love of violence. I felt like if I could make this man, who I had been scared of my whole life, understand through violence, then that's how I would make everyone understand. And that's what I did; anytime I felt like I didn't have control of a situation, I tried violence and got understanding.

Not too long after that scene, we lost our house and my mom and stepfather split up and got messed up in drugs real hard. We went to live in a homeless shelter, with friends, at family members' houses, pretty much anywhere we

could. I was working with some uncles and friends, trying to make a little bit of money to help out my mom and six little brothers. I was only fourteen years old at the time, and my brother Jay was twelve. He was doing the same thing. I ended up getting caught selling weed on school grounds and catching a riot expulsion at another middle school. So I went and did seven months at my first juvenile camp. And you can probably guess...I just learned more violence while I was there.

During the course of my first incarceration, my mom overdosed on pills. My little brothers ended up finding her and called 911. The state came and took my brothers away. When I got out, they wanted to stick me with some people that I didn't know, but I wasn't having that. I stayed with this girl and her mom who I met in the homeless shelter before I got locked up. Soon I went back to the normal routine of selling a little weed and some pills, robbing somebody here and there, robbing houses, and searching through cars in parking lots and neighborhoods. I was fifteen years old with no job, no steady place to live, just out of Juvie, and I had nothing going for myself. My stepfather was still off on his drug sprees, I didn't know where my mom was, and my little brothers were everywhere. So I maintained how I knew to maintain. I ended up in and out of J.D.C. (Juvenile Detention Center) a couple more times, and I started this little street gang called Ruthless Brothers with my brother Jay and my homeboy, Nate. We started it in J.D.C., took it out to the streets, and just went wild. We were jumping people, fighting kids in the neighborhood, carrying guns, and robbing people...pretty much anything to get paid. At the end of that I got locked up in Juvie again and had to go do a year in a level eight high-risk juvenile facility. I was only supposed to do a year but I caught charges for "Inciting a Riot," "Gangland Activity," "Destruction of State Property," and "Battery" while I was there. So, when I got to Miami-Dade J.D.C. the judge gave me one chance: He told me I could take a plea for eighteen months or up until I turn twenty-two years old in a maximum-risk juvenile center, or I could deny this offer and try to fight it as an adult and he would make sure I got no less than fifteen years. Needless to say, I took the plea.

I ended up doing two more years in Okeechobee Juvenile Offender Correctional Center (OJOCC), maximum security. I got into some trouble when I first got there. Same routine...gang stuff. After a while I ended up reading some old school gangster books. The Godfather and The Biography of Al Capone were my favorites. My new ambition was to be the next mob boss. I got out at nineteen years old after almost three years, but this time I had a mind frame to take over and dominate. Three days out, I robbed this small time want-to-be dealer for some cocaine, cooked it up, and my Brother Jay were a team again...back in the fast lane, living in the streets, and working our way to the top.

We were selling half a kilo every few days. So we started distributing to the gang, giving them all guns to carry, and teaching them the ropes. I got to the point that if you couldn't kill somebody, then you couldn't hang around me. That's just how lost I was. Eventually, I ended up shooting a man as I was

coming out of one of our trap houses. Thankfully, he lived, and I was arrested a month later. After fifteen months in the county, I took a plea for twelve years. The first ten years were mandatory because of the 10-20-Life rule on account of the charges of attempted murder, burglary battery, another battery and selling cocaine to a C.I. within 1,000 feet of a convenience store.

A couple weeks later, I was in prison, Franklin Correctional Institution, and I was looking for trouble. As soon as I got here, I got into a fight with three dudes and did some damage. That gave me a name around the compound. I was in and out of disciplinary confinement (the box); however, a trip to the box in January 2010 changed everything.

During these thirty days in confinement, my roommate ended up being a little Mexican guy who only knew about four words of English. He read his Bible a lot and didn't really talk too much at first. When he did, all he talked about was the Bible. Of course, I got him to talk about other things because I didn't want to hear anything about the Bible. I was too busy thinking of how I could possibly use him as a connection into Mexico. In reality, I couldn't even understand him and most of the time he was playing charades to tell me all about these characters from the Bible.

In the box we could not have anything except religious books and Bibles. All I had was a Bible I brought with me from the county jail. I had tried to read before, but it seemed to be talking foolishness to me. I was stuck in the box with no books, I had a roommate that only talks about and reads the Bible, and I had about twenty more days to go. Finally, I thought, "I'm going to read this Bible and see what the big deal is about this thing." I had all types of religious groups try to explain this book. I recently had a Muslim try to convert me. He was showing me all the errors. Regardless, I figured I would check it out for myself.

I started reading on page one. Some things I understood, but plenty that I didn't. But I kept on reading, thinking maybe things might make more sense later. I had a bunch of questions, and it was fascinating at the same time, especially when the Israelites were coming out of Egypt. While they were in the desert, God starting working on me; I wasn't aware at the time, but He was showing me obedience. I was seeing how the Israelites were living and I was like, "Man...God is with these people all the time, but they're still always whining and complaining, and when they think He leaves them for a second, they go worship golden calves and doing all types of foolishness. But if they would just chill out and do what He says, they would be straight. They would make it to the promise land and live good and in peace." I started to realize that we often do the same thing right now.

So I kept on reading; it was starting to get more interesting, especially when I got to the book of Deuteronomy, chapters 28 & 29; they are about the curses and blessings of the Lord according to obedience.

So while I'm reading these blessings, I'm like, "Okay, if these people are obedient, they will receive these blessings and live in peace." But when I get to the curses, something different happens. As I'm reading these curses, something

starts speaking inside of me, powerfully. It tells me “These curses are yours, and that's how you're going to die!” It was so powerful that I couldn't even read anymore. I got angry, very angry. My bunkie was asleep, and I really needed some help right then. All I could do was break down and pray. I have prayed a bunch of times in my life, but every time I prayed before, nothing happened. That was why I had a grudge against God because I knew He knew me...He created me. But when I needed Him the most, He never did anything to help.

So out of nowhere, without even thinking about it, I start praying. “Father God, please let me know something. I know you're real; I can feel Your desire to live inside me. Everything in creation proves that there is a God. But please let me know if this Bible that I'm reading is Your word. Let me know if the man Jesus Christ that I've heard about my whole life is really Your Son. Let me know if there is a better way I can live. Let me know something, God. Please, God, let me know something.”

When I was done praying, I felt like a million pounds had been lifted off me and I had this crazy energy flowing through my whole body. It's kind of hard to explain...it's an unimaginable feeling. At the same time, I had this voice speaking into my mind telling me, “Go back to what you were reading,” over and over again. I tried to push it away, but it kept getting stronger. So, finally, I gave in. I knelt down on the floor at the end of the bunk and opened the Bible back up to Deuteronomy chapter 30.

As I read, something took over as if I wasn't reading for myself anymore. I was being filled with this Truth. That was the first time in my whole life that I ever understood anything that clearly; it was like God was reading it into me. He was physically and spiritually offering me life and death, prosperity and destruction, and He was telling me to choose Him **now**, so He could bless me abundantly, and if not He would let me die.

I didn't know what to do. I thought I was going crazy. I'd never had anything happen like this before. So I broke down and went to praying again. “God, please, I feel like this is You. I want this to be You. I want to accept You, but I don't want this to be my emotions. I'm tired of my emotions; I've been listening to them my whole life. Please, Lord Father God, show me that this is You.”

As I go back to reading I start seeing scenes from my life, and they're relating to what's going on in the book. Finally, after a couple of hours, I couldn't take it anymore. I had to lie down. I felt a dream coming on, and the next thing you know I feel the room being filled with this presence and I'm terrified, so terrified that all I can do is pray, “Please, Lord Father God, I don't want to feel that no more. Please make it go away. Please, Lord Father God, I accept You.”

Suddenly, it all went away. I was filled with peace. I got this deep sense of knowing that this spiritual battle I just went through is real. This material world deceives us. The oppressor deceives us with the love of these things, separating us from our true purpose in life. Everything in this physical world is temporary. But in the spiritual world, there is no time limit; it is life in eternity; true reality.

I knew God was real. I'd accepted Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior, but I didn't know how to live for Him. When I finally got out of the box, it wasn't easy walking with the Lord. I struggled daily with obedience. Then, one day I was sitting in the day room looking at the television, not paying attention to anything. I'm praying to God, “Lord Father God...man, God, You proved to me that You are real. I know You are real. But, God, I don't know how to live the way You want me to live. All I know is how to hustle and survive on my own. Please, God, give me an example of how you want me to live.”

At that moment, this Christian brother, a warrior for Christ, comes up to me and puts his hand on my shoulder. He says, “Yo, Rob, God's spirit led me to you and He told me to ask you to come pray with us.” I knew he was sent from God. God answered my prayer. When I stepped into that cell, there was about fifteen guys. Most were warriors and some were just like I was...trying to become one. I felt like I was home. Even though I was in prison and in a cell, I felt like with these brothers, God's children, was where I was supposed to be my whole life. And through the strength and encouragement of these brothers, and learning to be led by God's Spirit, almost two years later I have grown to be a warrior for Christ, an Ambassador for Christ in Chains. God deserves all the glory because the war has already been won, in the name of Jesus.

What is Love?

by Rigdel De Lardilles, A.C.C.

“The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love.” (1 Jn 4:8)

I was talking with an individual about love when he shared with me what I believe to be the definition of this word for my generation. He said, “What is love? I love my car, I love good food, and I love my kids and my dog.” With that, he left the conversation. The question remained: What is love?

The Bible says that the definition of love is God; God does not just have love, He is the embodiment of love. There is nothing that He does, from the provision of salvation to the just punishment of those who reject Him, which does not flow from His indescribable love. Love finds its greatest definition at the cross “for God so loved the world that He gave” ...gave, gave what? Himself! And He did it for those who did not deserve it (Romans 5:6-8). This love has nothing to do with how lovable the recipients are (us), but it has everything to do with God loving us in spite of us. And once we have been filled with this unconditional love He sends us out...to now go and do likewise.

Once Lost, but Now Found

James Lawrence Summers, Jr.
Ambassador for Christ in Chains

All glory goes to God in everything that has taken place in my life...the good, the bad, and the difficult.

I was born March 21, 1980 to a mother who was facing life as a heroine addict. As a child who was given to the state at birth, I lived a very hard and confused life that filled my heart with anger, always feeling hopeless. By the age of nine I had been in and out of numerous foster homes due to my rebellious behavior and my mother's unstable lifestyle.

Not long after my tenth birthday, my mother retained custody of me and my two brothers and moved us to Florida so she could spend some time with her children before she passed away (she had contracted HIV and lung cancer). Being ten I didn't understand at first, but shortly after we got to Florida, circumstances started to get my attention.

At ten years old, my heart was becoming cold. Watching my mother die hurt my heart and had me questioning everything that took place in my life. I understood more about death than I should have at that age, so when my mother passed away I didn't respond to her death as a child but as a little man, one who failed to realize it is okay to cry when you lose someone you love.

Shortly after my mother passed away, my oldest brother got sentenced to prison time in New York and my step-father, who had contracted HIV from my mother, lost interest in me and life in general. So, feeling like I needed to be strong, I started acting like I had it all figured out when, in reality, everything in my life was out of place. I always tried to be something I wasn't. As a result, I attempted to fill the void in my life, but nothing seemed to make me feel complete. As a matter of fact, they all made me feel more incomplete.

Then one beautiful day, three years into my fifteen year sentence in which I have eight years left, I got on my knees and cried out to the Lord. I spoke to Him like a little child would speak to his father, and He touched my heart with His unconditional love in that place where there had always been a void. He made me realize that everything that had taken place in my past, while being unfortunate, was used to help me grasp the importance of love and forgiveness.

God is waiting to touch that place in your heart. All you have to do is to be willing to stop focusing on the problem and focus on the solution. By all means, don't cry because it happens, smile because you made it. May the grace of God be unrestricted in your life and may you inspire its work in others' lives. We are called to freedom and to love God while we serve one another.



INSPIRATION Tracts

Writing for Inspiration Ministries

It is awesome to receive mail about what the Lord is doing in the lives of so many. God is inspiring men and women in prisons and on this side of the wall to forfeit the things of this world and pledge obedience to the One who deserves all the glory from our lives. It is such an honor to have conversations with musicians, teachers, and counselors who are using their talents and gifts to love God and others.

The most amazing part is that often our inspiration comes from the Word of God. No matter how many times we have read the Bible, the Holy Spirit speaks to our hearts and teaches us to be like Christ. We pray that these tracts and other spiritual nuggets will inspire you as they have us.

Please feel free to write us as you diligently seek God's face to share your heart and what the Lord is teaching you through His Word. I guarantee the Lord will use it to inspire others.

Biblical Nutrients

by Anthony V. Ponds, A.C.C.

"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth." (2 Tim. 2:15)

Our Biblical nutrition can be enhanced when we look beyond our own literary perspective for a better understanding of God. Our English definitions are limited. Similarly, you may drink juice extracted from an orange, but there may only be a limited number of vitamins brought out while nothing is taken away from the pure original content of the orange.

God's Word, in its original form, provides the supreme thirst quenching nutrients. Translating the original into English gives us the opportunity to understand God in our language, and it extracts spiritual vitamins God provides for us in order to grow rooted and strong. Even more so, through its original form the Lord supplies a plethora of rich nutrients to enhance our spiritual maturity, so our famished souls can be divinely satisfied.

For example, Romans 1:16 says, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes..." Here the Greek word *dunamis* is used. This word specifically means miraculous power and is where we also derived our word dynamite. As if to say the Gospel is full of explosive, miraculous power for which we should not be ashamed.

As you take in His word and study the pure original, you draw its full flavor. Digging into the Word of God enables you to be slaves of Christ through loyal obedience. This will allow you to proclaim that you are not ashamed of the Gospel, for it is the power of God. Stand strong, speak boldly, and be inspired to live for God. Amen!

Don't let anyone think less of you because you are young. Be an example to all believers in what you say, in the way you live, in your love, your faith, and your purity. (1 Tim. 4:12) NLT

God can and will use anybody! It may be someone young in the faith, an older out-of-season person, or perhaps even an ex-con. Timothy was told by Paul to let **no one** discourage him because he was young. Those same words should be an encouragement to us now. Do not let the world or those in it discourage you. Many will question and back bite, but nothing can contend with your character.

Be the example Paul commands us to be. The opposition will be silenced in time as they continue to see Jesus living in you. By doing this you may save someone (v.16). Love is displayed and demonstrated as we live our lives as we were called to live. Keep that in mind, but also plant it in your heart, so you are always able to display the love of Jesus Christ.
--J. Summers

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. (Ephesians 6:10)

When God allows things to happen in our lives to make us stronger, He is creating a tool that will be able to handle the most difficult tasks. When you have a hard job that needs to be done, you don't grab a delicate tool, you grab the strongest tool. We are strengthened to do the *hard* work. That's why as we grow, it seems that we're only called to do more hard work.

We must realize the trials we go through are to build us up. The more we grow in our relationship with Christ, the more He'll use us for His purpose.

For by grace you have been saved, through faith; and that not of yourself, it is the gift of God. (Eph. 2:8) NASB

"Father, thank you that your mercy is fresh and new every single day. So, I receive it by faith." This is a prayer we should pray often, understanding that this truth will break bondages that have held you back for years. Quit going around feeling down about yourself. If you are living your life as if condemned, you are not receiving God's mercy. You may think you do not deserve it, or that you are unworthy; however, that is what grace is all about. None of us deserves it. It is a free gift. We are not worthy in ourselves. The Good News is that God has made us worthy as sons and daughters of God. You are not a weak worm of the dust; you are a child of the Most High God.

Praise Him because yesterday is washed under the blood, and tomorrow is a fresh start. Hallelujah!

For the body is not one member, but many. (1 Corinthians 12:14)

Christians often discuss the problems found in the church today. Interestingly enough, they forget that they too are part of the church. It is easy to talk as if we somehow are above the problems that beset the church. We forget that if we are doing nothing, we are only adding to the problem.

We must always remember that the turn around in our communities is going to start with the church. When God shows you a problem, it is not up for criticism; it is up for remedy.

--R. De Lardilles

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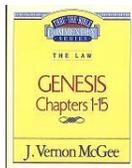
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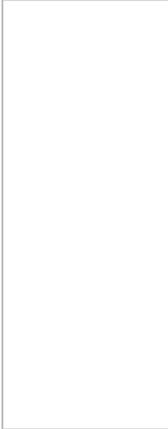
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