

INSPIRATION *Ministries*

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Friendship



Education

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



Family

Brotherhood

Newsletter Features

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So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.

Romans 10:17 NASB

Letter from the Editor



To those who have taken the time to read this: “Grace to you and the peace from God our Father and Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins so that He might rescue us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be the glory forevermore. Amen” (Galatians 1:3-5).

I have made two teary-eyed drives in my life from Florida to Indiana. The first was in 2007 when driving home to tell my parents that I had gotten into legal trouble. The second time was in 2011 while returning back to my family after a five year sentence in prison. The first was filled with fear and a sense that my life was coming to an end; the second was inspired by the realization that my life was simply beginning.

Like the Apostle Paul, I do not come with eloquent speech or the objective of impressing anybody with my insight or experience. I have come only to preach Jesus Christ crucified because I know nothing else which has satisfied the emptiness I once had in my life. I am before you now, vulnerable, as I have been in front of so many to say I love the Lord Jesus Christ with all my heart.

The desire of the men and women of Inspiration Ministries is only to inspire you in the name of Jesus Christ. Paul said, “For it is God who is at work in you, both to will and work for His good pleasure” (Philippians 2:13). It is God Himself who energizes our desires and actions. Rest assured that we depend on the Holy Spirit to teach us all things, and we pray the same for you.

Inspiration Ministries is excited about what God has in store. We do not have funding and our resources are limited, but the Lord has made it abundantly clear that while we find ourselves waiting on God, nothing is getting done. We all have gifts, talents, and resources the Lord has provided for such a time as this. So, instead of focusing on what we do not have, Inspiration Ministries offers all that we do have to God, and we pray the Lord will perfect our efforts.

In the name of Jesus Christ, be inspired today knowing that Jesus loves you so much that He chose to die for you. *When He could have done something to stop anything, Jesus chose to do nothing to give us everything.* Please read the articles and see what Inspiration has to offer in the name of Jesus. Lord willing, you will hear from us again next month, and until then, experience fullness of joy found only in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Be Inspired,

Andrew Foster

INSPIRATION in a Dark Place

The birth of Inspiration Ministries

by Andrew Foster

My mother once told me that God was digging deep into my life to pour the foundation because He was preparing to build upon it something big to be used for His glorious splendor. When she told me that just a few months ago, it had special meaning because I had an understanding of the direction the Lord wanted to take my life. However, telling me that in 2007 while I was in solitary confinement with felony charges and a ton of time in prison would have been futile. I did not understand why my life was being ripped apart, and I surely would not listen to someone tell me how this was for my betterment.

One thing about solitary confinement is that you are not let out of your cell except to take a shower every other day. You could not go to chapel service or even eat outside your cell. You are literally locked down. I eventually found out I could meet with a chaplain one on one. In October I met Chaplain Milo Trkulja for the first time, and the minute he walked in, the Holy Spirit enveloped me so heavily that I started sobbing before Turk could even say a word. I was not crying because of guilt, my crime, or regret. I was weeping because I was not where I needed to be with the Lord. God used Turk to explain to me the inexhaustible love of Jesus, and I rededicated my life to Christ. That moment will be etched into my heart forever.

I prayed and read my Bible a lot, but it was so hard not to worry about the outcome of my case. It seems like only yesterday that I was doodling in my cell, cut off from the world, and wondering what would be next in my life. I had been a performing arts director for the past five years, and as I was sketching, I wrote at the top of my yellow legal pad, "Inspiration, Inc." Little did I know this was the first seed the Lord planted in my life. It was not long before Inspiration, Inc. became a memory as I prepared for my case.



Eventually, I took a deal for five years in prison. Months flew by, and I was unfulfilled with my relationship with Christ because I had so many other things on the throne of my life. I could not let go of the past, the pain I caused, or the ruin which was my life. I found myself saying things like, "I am going to have a nervous breakdown. I cannot do this time." It was a dark time for me.

In April of 2009 I reached my breaking point and was ready to give up on life. I was sitting in the dayroom at 5:30 in the morning one day at Quincy Annex Correctional Institution crying my eyes out. I finally looked up at the ceiling, as if God was right there, and said, "I cannot keep feeling like this. What do you want me to do?" Immediately, a whisper was upon me that said, "Trust Me." It might not seem like much, but I understood exactly what God meant: "Trust in Who My Word says that I am." It started with the Bible. If I believed the Bible was more than a fairy tale, then I would trust in His Word and do what it says. That day a new chapter was born in my life. That was the day I emptied my life of all the baggage and let Jesus sit on the throne of my life.

The next year was one of the busiest of my life. I was teaching GED and participating in the Quincy Annex CI chapel ministry. Soon, because of some releases and transfers, I found myself as the inmate leader of the chapel services. There were bumps and bruises, but I was learning everyday how to be a servant leader. I prayerfully approached each day looking for the Holy Spirit to lead me in whatever was coming next.

Before Easter 2010, some brothers and I decided to fast for 40 days. It was a fast following Daniel's example of vegetables and water because he did not want to defile himself with the king's choice food (Daniel 1:8-16). The last three days, a couple of us chose to go without food. The first day was fine, but the second day I was in agony. I was crying throughout the day, and as I reflected on the pain, all I could think of was "this much, this much... Jesus loved us this much." It melted my heart all over again to realize that Jesus paid the ultimate price for us even while we were yet sinners (Romans 5:8).

It was at the end of this 40 days that the Lord started whispering to my remembrance, "Inspiration... Inspiration... remember that? It is time." My mind took off at 100 miles per hour with a million ideas. I tried to write them down as quickly as I could. The Holy Spirit gave me ideas, insight, and a new found love for the lost. It was time to evangelize Quincy in the name of Jesus.

I asked about a dozen of my Christian brothers to join me one Friday afternoon for a meeting. They were unaware as to what God was putting on my heart. That day I broke down Inspiration Ministries to them. It was electric. We prayed, discussed, and made a plan to tell the compound about Jesus. We were limited on resources and training, but I could not help but think of another group of men in the Bible who had no training and limited resources. It was time to use what we had to spread the Good News.

We started having church on Saturday nights on the recreation field. We sang songs, worshipped, prayed, and took turns presenting the Word or a testimony. It was not perfect, but God used it in a mighty way. Men would

come listen to the messages and music. We started evangelizing one on one in the dorms, held prayer circles, and Bible studies. In the weeks to come we saw the attendance in the chapel steadily increase to 50, 63, 71, and 89 until one morning in May we had 116 men at Sunday church. We saw men give their lives to Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit was showing us how to be men of integrity. We were learning to be leaders while were leading most of the activities on the compound.

We were inspired to get the word out. The Lord gave me the idea to produce and distribute something every single day to the point that if we were unable to hand it out, people would be missing it. So, Inspiration Tracts were created. A Bible verse and inspirational word encouraged men towards a relationship with Jesus Christ. We also started a monthly newsletter to communicate all the activities on the compound. The fact was, we saw the Lord working in everything, so our lives were dedicated to ministering whether we were teaching GED class, singing on the worship team, or waxing the classification floors.

It was not long before the Lord made it clear that Inspiration Ministries was not just a prison ministry. I could not help but wonder how God was going to put it all together. Then I was talking to my brother, Anthony Ponds, about the future and a fellow inmate, Vernon Lee, came over and handed me a card out of the blue. He said his aunt sent it to him, and he thought I would like it. It read, "When God gives us a vision, He gives us the provision!" It was then that I knew this was God's idea, not mine. The Holy Spirit is the CEO of Inspiration and all of us are prayerful that we will simply be obedient to His leading.



I spent the better part of 2011 between Liberty CI and Franklin CI. It is easy to question all the moving around, but instead I focused on the ministry and the task at hand. I was able to build relationships with brothers and the Ambassadors for Christ in Chains grew in membership. I was so privileged to meet men who truly love and serve God, many of whom will be read about in future newsletters.

I certainly do not have all the answers, but I serve the God that does. I die daily knowing that I do not want to be caught up in the world, but dedicated to the great commission given to us by Jesus Christ. Inspiration Ministries is a part of the winning team. We are dedicated to leading others into the Kingdom. Everyday brings new opportunities and experiences, so we are trusting God to build this ministry. We desire to have you on the team. Inspiration is simply a vehicle, and the flag that is raised in our camp does not represent the great things we do, but only the glory of our Heavenly Father. The flag we raise does not say Inspiration; it says the only name worthy to be praised, Jesus Christ.

MEETINGS WITH THE CHAIRMAN

by Paul Charron



I'm a strong and devoted believer in God and in Jesus Christ as my Saviour. However, I'm discovering that the journey to becoming like Him is much harder than it seems. As a matter of fact, it's nearly impossible! But, that's the whole point in being saved by Him! We CAN'T save ourselves because we're incapable as humans to do this. Most of us think we can do it or are oblivious to even trying or why we need to be saved. I can't do it and neither can you. So now what? Is this journey of being a "Christian" an impossible dream? Are we being sucked into another fantasy world where everyone is supposed to be "good" and nice to each other? NO! We're invited to believe in the One who created us so that we can become what He originally designed us to be. It's a lifelong journey of discovery, consistent and persistent effort, and an unravelling of understanding over time.

It's the last thing, the unravelling of understanding over time, which has me challenged (and growing) at the moment. I've been a knowing and growing believer since 2000 and was raised Catholic as a child. I really didn't even have a glimpse of what God and the Kingdom were all about until I got "saved" in the Christian church. Now, in my 12th year of this journey, it seems I have many of the same questions I had when I started. I'm sure most of you are the same. If you don't have any questions about your faith then you're likely either fooling yourself or have become very complacent and don't care about what you believe. I want to make this point so that as you walk down this road, you don't get discouraged to the point of giving up on the entire journey. That's the worst thing that could happen. I want to make you aware, that the greatest preachers, pastors and leaders in the church are always unsure of something in their faith. It's not that we don't believe it as much as it is that we don't understand it. Some things in our faith are beyond our worldly view. It also stands that God has our eyes partially blinded for a reason. I believe He will only give us what we can handle and what we can't handle, he'll condition us for over time so that eventually we will be able to handle it and that's when He'll use us for that purpose.

A few of the major things I'm currently challenged with in my understanding are; what the Church is supposed to look and feel like, what are we supposed to do as believers and followers of Jesus Christ in growing the Kingdom, and my biggest one is, how do we truly help the unchurched

come to the true understanding of Jesus and the Church without being preachy, Bible thumping, collectors of members for our Church gang? I certainly don't have the answers to these and many other pressing questions, but I do believe strongly that God wants me to continue seeking Him while I try to find the answers and get a better understanding of who He is. This, to me, is pursuing God and that is exactly what He wants from us as His children. It's the unending, unwavering pursuit of knowing Him more, thereby becoming closer to Him and ultimately fulfilling our roles as His children. He knows we're going to "fail" along the way, He knows we're going to doubt our perception of His judgement, and He knows we're going to doubt what and how we believe along the way. He only wants us to ultimately continue on the journey, believing in His Son Jesus Christ as our Saviour and to love and serve others selflessly.

The first big question that I'm wrestling with is what the church is supposed to look and feel like. My wife and I are currently in the midst of trying to discern whether we should stay at the church we're in which is 22 miles away from our house, to go help a new start-up church tied to some close friends of ours or to find another church in our local community. All three church options are good ones and each of them has good theological teachings and a solid proposed vision. So what is the decision maker? We've been praying about it and are fasting in unison with the new church start-up team to hear what God wants us to do and where He wants us to serve. The one thing we do know is we will serve somewhere, and that, I believe is the key. We've boiled the decision maker down to what we're discerning is the heart of what church is for us. We believe that the church is the people and not the building, programs, music, preaching, classes or events. We aren't supposed to just GO to church, we ARE the church! With that being said, I believe we need to serve and be immersed in our own community if we're going to truly BE the church. This view is leading us towards a new start-up location of a large, well established church in our community. We want a place that we can refer our neighbors to locally if they come to the point of wanting to pursue God or have a faith need that we can't supply. It's the way we're all designed to function naturally - as a tribe or community, helping and serving each other (but that's another topic altogether).

The second major question I have burning in me these days is now that we ARE believers on this journey, what do we do about it? Do we simply go around looking for poor people to feed, homeless to give shelter to, and widows to comfort? We're also supposed to reach out to those in prison - I guess that one should be pretty easy! It all seems to me that we're still trying to just put a check mark in the box that leads us to believe we've done enough to be saved. That's NOT the point! We're saved by His grace and

His grace alone. Once we begin to believe that, then all of these activities that I mentioned become outpourings of who we become on our journey. We simply need to love God more than anything else and love one another as ourselves. Jesus said that these are the two most important commandments and if you really think about it, everything the Bible talks about us doing falls into those two categories. It's really quite simple, although I still struggle with the details of how to love others when I don't feel like it. I guess that's just part of the journey. Another area we won't be perfect at until we're with Him. Sure keeps us humble, too, if we're willing to admit it.

The third big question I'm having is how to help the unchurched come to Christ. This, as I mentioned earlier, is my greatest mental and spiritual challenge these days. It's coming out of me in many areas of my life right now, like in our decision on where to serve in a church community. Just about every current and new Church that I've come in contact with has said that one of their goals is to reach the unchurched. I completely agree with this goal, but what I'm struggling with is the approach in how to achieve it. All of what I've seen so far in efforts to accomplish this vision is pointed at getting new believers into the Church. I'm coming to the awareness that the true approach is to meet the unchurched right where they are. I know this isn't a new concept, but I don't see it happening in light of the desire to fulfill this goal. It's not a matter of gathering new converts to fill up our churches or increase the numbers that attend so we can boast about how big our church is, it's about serving one another, being light and salt and allowing others to WANT to come into the Church community when they're ready. I know this isn't likely to be a popular perspective because it can seem to be soft in action, but I see Jesus as living it out this way over and over again in the Bible. He hung out with the tax collectors and prostitutes in their homes and communities. He didn't drag them to the temple before he began to talk and relate to them. He didn't commune with them just to get them to go to the temple either. He truly had the heart to love them - just love them!! How simple! How awesome! How Jesus! This is what I believe we're supposed to BE and DO as an outpouring of who we're becoming in Him. I'm sure this view will grow, develop, and morph as I grow in Him. That's the journey and I'm finding more and more JOY in just being on the journey.

Behind the Walls

Unifying the Body of Christ

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

Inspiration Ministries wants you to know that we understand what you are going through because we have been there. We have not simply ministered in prisons, but many of us have slept in those bunks, eaten the chow hall food, and gone to the same chapel services. In many cases, many of our brothers and sisters are still there with you as Ambassadors for Christ in Chains (Eph. 6:20) representing, most importantly, the Lord Jesus Christ, but also Inspiration Ministries. Others in the ministry are the family and friends of those who have had their share of valleys, and who, themselves, have experienced the satisfying and life changing love of Jesus Christ.

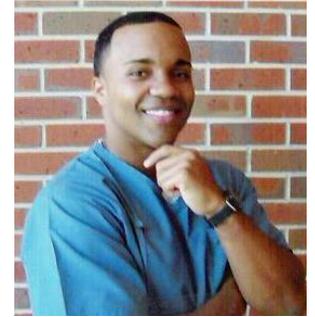
I write to let you know that we are in this together. The body of Christ is not separated by the walls we are behind or the color clothes we wear; Jesus has made one body functioning together in different parts of the world. For that we should be thankful because you can be sure somebody around you right now needs to hear about Jesus. The familiar song says, “I need you to survive,” and it could not be truer.

So, in the name of Jesus, we are here for you. We correspond with several inmates around the country. We are building connections concerning re-entry into society for those preparing to be released. We are developing programs and services to implement behind the walls. Most importantly, you are in our prayers. You are often going to read articles and testimonies from brothers and sisters who have been or are currently incarcerated.

Our goal is to inspire you to pursue more than just staying out of prison and doing the right thing. We want to inspire you to love God with all your heart. We want you to join us in telling a lost world about the free gift of salvation offered only through an intimate knowledge of Jesus Christ. We want you to know that God’s purpose for your life has not halted because you are in prison. We want to help you realize that it is just beginning. Be inspired, brothers and sisters, knowing it is often our darkest moments when God is preparing us for His good, acceptable, and perfect will.

Do or Die

by Anthony V. Ponds
Ambassador for Christ in Chains



One night in July 2005, as I sat alone in a cold jail cell, it was sometime after midnight. The light dimly lit the room as it shined down upon my bed, which was a green plastic boat that sat inches off the ground. I was in deep contemplation, utterly broken, lost and confused and this is when my entire world was flipped upside down. That point in my life was a culmination of many events and was the beginning of an extraordinary journey. I am 26 years old and I have already served seven years in prison.

~A LOOK BACK TO THE MIDWEST~

I was born to a single mother in Milwaukee, Wisconsin in 1985. My adolescent mother was unable to provide for me, so I was placed in a foster home. My most vivid memories of this foster home were of church. We were at church on Sundays, midweek, and camp; we were the first ones there and the last ones to leave. On the other hand, I vaguely remember a lot of gang violence and nights riddled with gunshots and sirens. However, I had a pretty typical childhood, as well as a foster child could.

During this time, my mother made her way down to Florida due to circumstances surrounding a relationship in which she was currently involved. She managed to maintain two years of employment and this made her eligible to receive her full parental rights back. The foster home experience ended very abruptly, and I remember fighting and crying about moving, not knowing where I was going. I was comfortable where I was at. This would lead to the last words I would hear my foster mother say to me as I kicked and screamed, “Don’t worry, you’ll be back!”

~NOT SO SUN-SHINEY STATE~

Now I was in Florida to start over. I arrived in the third grade, and I spent the next three years getting adjusted as I bounced around three different elementary schools. Interestingly, now that I was back with my mother, I felt that I had never left. I did not deal with emotions much until I was approaching middle school. I met a friend named Kyle and spent a few

Sundays with him and his mother at church. My first life altering thought came to mind: I understood that church was good and that we should be good, so I made a commitment to make something of myself in life. However, church soon would be out of the equation; I was burnt out. I was not forced to go, nor was I encouraged. I figured I could be a good person without actually making a commitment to church or religion. Soon, major thought number two came to mind: I did not want to be just another black statistic. These two thoughts played a role in my future development.

In middle school I was interested in sports. I was soon playing two-hand touch football on the sidelines while another friend had his full-pad practice. His mom saw my energy and athleticism and wondered why I was not playing with the team. My mother simply did not have the money to pay for my participation. Within a few days, my friend's mother came to our house offering to pay the expenses so I could play football. Of course, my mother was grateful and gave me permission. I went on to play middle school football, basketball, and track. I was off and running.

~A GLIMPSE OF HOPE~

There always seemed to be a glimmer of light before my eyes. Through this, I was able to look back and see how God's hand was directing me towards the plan he had for me. This source was my grandparents and aunt. Though my mother was the black sheep, my grandparents and aunt found rest in Christ and had a relationship with their Heavenly Father. The life my grandparents lived was something to be desired. They were, I believed, the definition of success. Because of this, I aspired to reach these same heights.

~NO PRICE ON POPULARITY~

High School was an easy transition because I gained popularity being involved in other activities such as homecomings, proms, politics as the Vice President of my sophomore class, and I even got a job at 15 years old at Publix. I took it all seriously because all the things I participated in were defining who I was.

Toward the end of my high school years, my home life once again started to become very rocky. Before my senior year began, I was living with friends, one whose father was a pastor. Regardless, I spent the first semester of my senior year applying for college, playing football and basketball, and participating in student government. I thought success was defined by how far you could get in life. I figured it was measured by how much you could accumulate: money, friends, possessions, and reputation. At the end of the year, sports were over and I was ready to start a new chapter in my life at Florida A & M University. Still, my self-centeredness and desire to be liked by everyone deteriorated my relationships with friends and girlfriends. It started to become all about me.

~JUST FOR FUN~

At this point, time was all I had before college started. Being 18 years old did not necessarily help my decision making. I then turned to partying and drinking on the weekends to occupy my free time. It was during those weeks that I was introduced to drugs. The boundaries I had once set for my life were crumbling quickly. I began to justify my behavior, thinking this is how the average young adult acted. I did not have a drug habit; it was just for fun. This only led me down a road that started balancing the "good life" with the street life. I had it all together, but little did I know it was the beginning of a downward spiral.

My party lifestyle only grew worse once college started. I was now using and distributing drugs regularly. After my first year of college, I returned home for summer break. I found a part-time job to supply my drug habit. As the month of June in 2005 approached, my mother had a trip planned to go to Minnesota for the Para-Olympics. She asked me to watch her house for a week. At 19 years old, all I could think about was money, friends, and a house to myself. It was party time! Then, something took place right before I left that would later ring in my head as a divine warning. As I was packing my bags, my friend's dad I lived with, who was a pastor, began trying to get my attention. I was preoccupied and in a rush to get to my mother's house. He stopped me and said, "*Do not let this be the worst week of your life!*" Impossible, I thought, this would be just the opposite, the best week of my life. Needless to say, one of us was wrong. Finally, making it to my mother's house, it turned out to be a very eventful week. The cops were called several times due to noise complaints from parties, weapons, and violence. There were people arrested, but we all seemed to have no care in the world. However, it was the seventh day that eventually defined this week of chaos.

~FINISHING WITH A BANG~

I understood the week was getting out of control with my friends, and I wanted to settle down. This final day, some friends and I were waiting for the arrival of a buddy who just bonded out of jail. As the night continued, mischief started to stir. One of my soon-to-be codefendants jumped up and said he had an idea. He wanted to rob somebody. Thinking it was a joke, I began playing around, wielding a gun. Then things got serious when another rose up and said, "I know who we can rob." I was the first person they approached, asking if we could use my mother's car. I immediately said no. Then they pressured me to ask my friend Brian about using his car. He was willing at first; however, soon he approached me with a distraught look on his face telling me he did not think it was a good idea. I had never seen that

look in someone's eyes before and I agreed with him. Unfortunately, one of our accomplices' persistence got the best of us and we went. Arriving at the scene, I exited the car with two others. This is the big moment. At the door of the hotel room, a fight broke out. I immediately ran into the hotel room, but then ran back to car. While waiting for the two others, I heard a gunshot; it seemed to echo in the air forever. My head dropped. They returned to the car and one repeatedly said, "I had to shoot in the air to get him off you." Thinking it was just a robbery gone wrong, we parted ways for the night.

Hours later I was in the police station being questioned about a robbery. I eventually told him about my participation. To my dismay, after I gave my statement, the officer stated my charges. He said, "You'll be charged with first degree murder and attempted murder for your part in the robbery/homicide at the Westside Motel." I was shocked, confused, broken, and lost. I did not know anyone died or was injured. He then went on to explain to me what really happened while Brian and I were waiting in the car for the other two. When that shot was fired, the bullet killed a man, traveled through a door, and hit a woman. I was now on my way to the county jail to be booked for murder.

~DESPERATE MEASURES~

My first couple of weeks in jail were spent in deep hopelessness. I did three things: cry, eat, and sleep. To me, my life was over. I did notice one thing; I was in a pod with many Christian men. One morning, I was finishing my breakfast with tear-filled eyes, and a man approached asking if he could tell me about God. I refused and angrily said, "I am facing the rest of my life in prison; I do not want to here about God." The man apologized and went on his way. God certainly had other plans that night. As I sat contemplating where I went wrong in my life, desperately crying, it finally hit me. Every time I rejected God played like a movie in my mind all the way up to that moment. The light came on, and I knew. I thought I was on my way in life, and I was all wrong. Sitting there in my despair, I felt trapped in an inescapable situation. I was even more broken because I realized that I was the real problem, and the One I needed most was Who I had rejected in everything I did. I could not do anything else, but cry myself to sleep.

The next morning I got up to eat breakfast and to my surprise, I was approached by the same man. He said he did not want to bug me; he just wanted to talk to me about God. Initially, I was hesitant, until it burned in my heart. It was as if God was speaking directly to me, "You have rejected me all your life, *do or die!*" I knew I could not refuse. That moment I surrendered. I listened to the man tell me about God and His Son Jesus Christ. I do not remember the specifics. I remember Jesus, His gift of

salvation, and I began to cry. He invited me to church, and I accepted. My life was new, and I knew I had met God.

I remember beginning a new life with God like it was yesterday. The first lesson I ever received was love. Love was missing in my life, and I never knew how to demonstrate that I loved. Now, because I have received the unconditional love of God, this is what I wanted to express. Almost seven years later, I look back to see what God has brought me through. I can see His sovereignty and His ways daily. He has blessed me with a family of brothers, a burden for the lost, and He continues to complete in me the good work that he started. I can say, even with half of a 15 year sentence complete, I have not seen the righteous forsaken.

Just a Thought

by Kimberly

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things have passed away; behold, new things have come. 2 Cor. 5:17 (NASB)

How many times have we looked back on our life and wished we could change it? A decision, an act, a word spoken – something that we see in hindsight was a terrible mistake. We cannot go back in time to erase the things we wish we would have never done. But this verse reminds us of God's greatest blessing – forgiveness. God sees every wrong act and hears every harsh word. Before He formed us, God knew every sin we would commit. And knowing how off-track we would get at times, He still molded us into His own image, breathed life into the dust, and brought us into being. The Father offered us His only Son to ensure we would come into a true and right relationship with Him. Satan will try to keep us buried in the mistakes of our past, but by clinging to our former sins, we forget the miracle of the cross and allow ourselves to become ineffective in service to our Lord. If Christ has died for us and God has forgiven us, how can we justify refusing to forgive ourselves? Embrace God's love and forgiveness today, and watch as He transforms you into His own beautiful new creature.

Change for the Better

by James Summers, Ambassador for Christ in Chains

In our fast-paced world, everyday life has become an exercise in managing *change*. Our circumstances *change*; our relationships *change*; our problems *change*; our minds *change*. As a matter of fact, presidents win elections by telling us one simple fact: *change* is coming. Isn't amazing how much *change* means to our daily lives, yet at times we still don't understand how to handle *it*. We often want things to *change*, but when they do, we are not ready. The beautiful thing is that *change* is always available to us and always willing to assist us in challenges we face. Why, I ask myself, are we often intimidated by *change*, and choose not to embrace *it* as we allow *it* to take *its* natural course in our lives? Why do we push something away that we want or need so bad, and why can't we realize that *change* is the only thing that is consistent in our lives, and that we might as well take advantage? We should be the ones to begin making a difference in how *change* takes place in our lives, as well as the lives of others?



Let us stop talking about *change* and start making *change* a reality in our lives. Let us learn to appreciate *change* instead of fearing *it*, and learn to have patience with *change* when the going gets tough. Let us learn to love *change* unconditionally, and understand the importance of *change* being on our side. The reason *change* is always so flexible is because *it* wants us to achieve. Don't limit your perspective when *it* comes to *change* because there are no limitations dealing with *change* on any level. Keep it simple, but honest. Don't ever get too far ahead of yourself; however, be encouraged by *change*, whether good or bad, and keep looking forward to more. Please don't just keep allowing *change* to keep taking place in your life without having any say. Make a decision to make *change* a priority that will make an impact, not just an impression.

You don't have to wait on the *change* that is coming; you can take advantage of the *change* that is already here...

...and *change*!

INSPIRATION Tracts

Writing for Inspiration Ministries

I remember walking around in the dorm one night, and somebody called out to me, "Hey, Foster, where is my inspiration for the night." All I could do was smile and thank Jesus. God promised to use our tract ministry and to see the men want their tracts each night was a sight to be seen.

It has always been a work in progress. Nobody has a journalism degree or some especially learned writing skill. To be honest, half of our staff members have earned their GED in the chain gang. Honestly, all that does not seem to count for much when you are being led by the Holy Spirit.

Inspiration is continuing its tract ministry, and we want you to help us. We publish tracts in our newsletters, but we also distribute several by mail all over the country. We have four featured here that you can cutout and hand deliver to a family member, friend, or somebody on the street. One thing about it, the Holy Spirit is going to do the work and communicate to the reader exactly what He desires. Often we are used as the messenger. This is just another opportunity. We do not claim profound intellect, only a love for God and His wondrous ways.

Sometimes the Lord just puts something on your heart, and we want you to share that treasure with us. It may be some song lyrics, a poem, or message. We may print it in the newsletter or use it as part of our ministries by mail. The longer tracts are approximately 175 words and the shorter 100 words. Do your best to prepare it for print. Longer written pieces will be read and evaluated for usage. If you write something for us, tell us about your walk with Christ. Remember, we are in this together.

We encourage you to diligently seek God's face for your inspiration. The fact is, most of the time, a reader will pay more attention to the deliverer of the message than to the tract, so we pray that you will inspire others to see the power of God working in your life. Men and women often do not hear what you say because they are too busy watching what you do. Let them see your good works, so they may glorify your Father in Heaven (Matthew 5:16). Please send all written material to the following:

Inspiration Ministries
138 East 7th Street
Auburn, Indiana 46706

You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had. (Philippians 2:5) NLT

An attempt to capture God's desire for each of us might read like this: *God loves you just the way you are, but he refuses to leave you that way. He wants you to be like Jesus.*

God does in fact love you just the way that you are. If you think His love for you would be stronger if your faith were, you are wrong. If you think His love for you would be deeper if your thoughts were, wrong again. Do not confuse God's love with the love of people. The love of people often increases with performance & decreases with mistakes. Not so with God's love. He loves you right where you are.

Let me encourage you this day to look to Jesus for your example, encouragement, and inspiration. He was relentless in His love for others. He could not help but point us in the way of salvation because He loved us so much. To be like Jesus we need to spend time getting to know Him, the best friend you will ever have. -- A. Foster

All things are possible to him who believes. (Mark 9:23b) NASB

Just imagine if we decided to truly believe the Word of God and do what it says. Our jobs, marriages, and ministries would change instantly if we would simply believe that they can. Jesus said all things are possible when we make one decision: *believe*. Believe the best is yet to come. Believe God always has our best interests in mind. Perhaps our prayer should be like the father's in the context of the verse, "I do believe; help my unbelief." Be inspired to believe that Jesus always keeps His promises.

...casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you. (1 Pet 5:7)

Your words, dreams, & thoughts can have the power to create changing conditions in your life. If you keep saying you can't stand your job, eventually you might lose it. If you keep saying you can't stand your body, your body may become sick. If you say you can't stand your car, your car may break down when you need it the most. If you keep saying you can't trust anyone in your life, you'll always feel like everyone is out to betray you. If you keep saying that no one in your life believes in you, then your own negative thoughts about your self-worth will only attract experiences to confirm those beliefs.

So please turn all of your thoughts & conversations around. Don't let go of God's promises because the minute you settle for anything less than what God has for you, you will get even less than what you settled for. Life is like a stick of melted butter; once it cools down, it can be reshaped. --Unknown

For I am not ashamed of the gospel... (Romans 1:16a)

Oh, how I desire to make this my proclamation to the world! I find myself on fire in church and "between the altar and the door," things change so quickly. The boldness I had while raising my hands and shouting the name of Jesus dwindles as I face the reality of the world's rejection of the gospel.

However, Jesus said He came to overcome the world. Hallelujah! Be encouraged to love Jesus exactly the way you desire. You will love it...

...He will love it.

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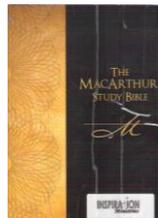
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Resource to Check Out

Free John MacArthur Study Bible

- 1) Send a letter requesting a Fundamentals of Faith workbook:
Mount Nebo Prison Ministry
P.O. Box 1848
Gilbert, Arizona 85299
- 2) You will receive a simple application. Complete the application and send it back to Mount Nebo.
- 3) In a couple weeks you will receive the Fundamentals of Faith. It is 13 chapters and 93 pages.
- 4) Complete the workbook and send it back to Mount Nebo. The postage will require seven Forever or .44 cent stamps.
- 5) In 4-6 weeks you will receive your graded Fundamentals of Faith and a paperback John MacArthur Study Bible.



Contact Us

Inspiration Ministries wants to communicate with you. Tell us about your relationship with Jesus Christ. Let us know how we can pray for you and your family.

Or Email

Inspirationministries@live.com

Write to:

Inspiration Ministries

138 East 7th Street

Auburn, Indiana 46706

Please write or email us if you would like to be added to the mailing list. If you are incarcerated, join together with some people and send a list of names to cut down on postage. Also, those who can email, let us know if you would like to receive E-Inspiration once it becomes available.

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Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Matthew 28:19-20