

AMBASSADORS OF RECONCILIATION MINISTRIES



*Life is messy, but Jesus gives hope
to all who need to be set free
behind bars of steel
and walls of bitterness.*

January Newsletter 2015

New Year, New Start, God's Way!

When I visited the jail on the first day of 2015, I looked up “**new**” in the concordance in the back of my Bible. The verses I found were so powerful, that I had the guys read them with me. I just started at the beginning of the admittedly limited list that even a good study Bible would provide. In Psalm 40, we read that God hears my cry, pulls me out of the mud and mire, and puts a **new** song in my mouth. As a result of our **new** song, many see, and put their trust in Him! In Ps. 98, we sing a **new** song because of the marvelous things He has done revealing His righteousness and salvation to the nations (that’s us, unless you’re Jewish!) All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God! Even the bitter ends, like the jail pod where we were studying that evening! His Righteousness and Salvation were touching all of us there, calling us to shout for joy, burst into jubilant songs of praise! What a way to begin 2015!



When we turned to Ecclesiastes 1:9, Solomon told us that “There is nothing **new** under the sun,” and he was in a position to know, because he has tried it all! The key to understanding what Solomon is saying here is “under the sun,” that is, here on this earth. If we try to make sense out of life and who gets what reward on this earth, we’re in for a let-down. Just going on our natural, worldly experience and logic, we can’t make sense of it all. Asaph said in Ps. 73:16 that it made his head hurt to think about it (my own paraphrase), until he learned to look at it from God’s point of view. Once eternity enters the equation, it all makes sense! Solomon finishes the book by telling

us that, although there is no meaning or purpose in earthly things by themselves, “Here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether good or evil.” Eternity is our source of meaning and purpose, where all wrongs are righted, and where evil is ultimately and fully dealt with. Isaiah tells us of the Savior who will establish that justice, and he declares “**new** things” by the word of God, even before they spring into being in the form of a humble, human yet divine, Messiah! We will be saved as His righteousness blazes forth for all to see (Isa 62:2), and we are given “a **new** name;” He will make us a crown of splendor in God’s hand. His mercies are **new** every morning (Lam 3:23), and He will make a **new** covenant with us (Jer 31:31).



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And finally, at the end of days, the Almighty will do away with this tired, old earth, and create a **new** heaven and a **new** earth (Isa 65 & 66), a theme echoed again in:

*Revelation 21:3-4 Then I saw a **new** heaven and a **new** earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away.. Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.*

“Follow My Example...”

In the pod I just mentioned, I asked if there was anyone leading studies during the week. There was one inmate who was willing to do so, and I used this study as an example of how to put a study together without being a Bible expert. I provided him with a concordance and a Nave’s Topical Bible, and explained that these were to be pod resources, available to anyone who had a question about “What does the Bible say about this?” They are also to equip him to grow and study deeper, to become a better student himself, and thus a better leader. I develop spiritual gifts and leadership among the inmates by teaching them to put into practice the command of Jesus, making disciples who make disciples who make disciples. You can help by providing the study materials, the concordances and topical Bibles (about \$4 each, used on Amazon)! Please help us grow these leaders who get the gospel out! And If God is calling you, join me in discipling an inmate on the glass as a Certified Jail Minister. Their hunger for God will revitalize your faith, and your investment in their lives will be eternal!

Books That Help

I visited a pod that had not had books for a long time, and I took with me several excellent donated volumes on Christian life and teaching. The excitement they generated was electric! We tend to take them for granted on the outside, but they are gold to inmates who long for deep and challenging teaching, and don’t have the means to order them. They long for the input of wise counselors who can help them grow in knowledge and practice of the Christian walk, and that’s what these books do! So if you have any Christian books at home or at church that are not being used, please let me know. I will put them into the eager hands of inmates whose thirst for the Word, and for mature guidance on how to put that Word into practice in their lives, will transform old books into **new** life!

Prayer Requests:

- Praise God for more Certified Jail Ministers stepping forward, discipling inmates once a week in the jail. Thank God for His transformation in their lives and in the inmates they serve, and pray that He would raise up many more to carry His Word into the lives of new believers.
- Praise God for the impact of visits on inmates’ lives, especially during the holidays. Many are missing family, and it means a lot when God’s people care enough to visit them on these special days.
- Please pray for donations of Christian books, concordances, and study Bibles for inmates who lead in their pods. Pray also for wisdom and workers to expand into the Juvenile Hall, and for financial support.

We pray a blessed 2015 for you all, and may God use you, too, for His glory!

Ian and Roxanne Carlisle

