



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

December 2015 Newsletter

God With Us!

What makes Christianity different from all other religions?

The very idea that the exalted, almighty, all holy, all powerful God, maker of all things visible and invisible, Who needs nothing from us, Who cannot even look upon sin (Hab. 1:13), Who knows the end from the beginning, and numbers the very hairs of our head, should so lower Himself that He would not only walk among us, but actually become one of us, a frail human. He was born the helpless infant of two homeless peasants, enduring with them their poverty, their exile, the disdain of their community, the rejection of His nation, and ultimately, the pain and humiliation of a tortured death at the hands of Roman mercenaries. This is not the stuff of romantic fairy tales, imaginative explanations of why we experience the world as we do. This is gritty reality, God revealing Himself in startling contrast to human inventions. This is something no one could make up, or would even if he could. It was not the way most Christmas cards paint it. It was cold, dirty, strikingly incongruous with the grandeur of omnipotence, and even the PR was bungled. Who would give the first press release to a band of shifty, distrusted, nomadic shepherds? Like *they* had any connections! No, if we had made it up, it would have played very differently.

This was God revealing to us that, while all the superlatives above are very true about Him, they miss the most important truth of all. **God loves us!** Every one of us, enough to join us, suffer with us and for us, in order to reach out to us and save us. His heart, His **very nature**, is that of a servant. He suffered to make us His children, the heirs of His glory! And He calls His children to demonstrate their family likeness – His humility and compassion for the lost and hurting, the hungry and sick, the poor and imprisoned. He emptied himself so that we might inherit all the fullness of heaven, a place by His side in glory! Yes, He calls us to get dirty, going where life is messy, to bring His healing to others. But He only calls us to go where He has already gone. For us! **God with us!**

God With Us – at the Butte County Jail!

If God is with us, then we should see a difference, right? Prayers will be answered, won't they?

“Chelsie” was praying for a young inmate “Bob,” and asked me to connect with him when I visited his pod. Several men gathered around me, ready to begin our study. I called out “Bob’s” name, and a head popped up in the

“Your attitude should be
the same as that of Christ Jesus:
Who, being in **very nature God**,
did not consider equality with God
something to be grasped,
but made himself nothing, taking
the **very nature of a servant**,
being made in human likeness.

And being found
in appearance as a man,
he humbled himself
and became obedient to death
— even death on a cross!

Therefore God exalted him
to the highest place
and gave him the name
that is above every name,
that at the name of Jesus
every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth
and under the earth,
and every tongue confess
that **Jesus Christ is Lord**,
to the glory of God the Father.”

Philippians 2:3–11

back of the pod. I beckoned him to come, and he did. I told him that “Chelsie” was praying for him to receive Jesus’ salvation, and he might as well give up right now! “At least stay for the study, since you’re here!” I said. So he sat right next to me through the whole visit, and we finished the study with a trip through the “Romans Road,” a step by step guide to salvation in Paul’s letter to the church at Rome. When it was time to close in prayer, I asked “Bob” if he was ready to pray to receive Jesus as his Savior. He said “yes,” and “Chelsie’s” prayers were answered! He has since been released and is being disciplined in “Chelsie’s” church.

One of our Thursday evening ministry visitors was meeting with a group of Christians in a pod, and he challenged them to be in prayer for men in their pod who need Jesus. He asked them, “Who is the least likely to ever come to faith in this pod?” All the guys immediately turned and pointed to one man who was pacing in the back of the pod. So they prayed together for that man. About five minutes later, that individual came over and sat down at the table with the group. He was agitated, but wanted to talk about spiritual things. All eyes in the group were wide open, staring at him! About ten more minutes, and the minister asked him if he was ready to accept Jesus as his Savior. He answered “yes,” and the whole group gathered around him, laying hands on him and praying with him! They learned a few lessons that day: 1. Never underestimate the power of God to work in anyone’s life! 2. Never assume anyone is beyond God’s reach! And 3. Never doubt God’s willingness to answer the faithful prayers of His people!

Bringing God With Us to Alternative Custody (ankle monitor) Releasees!

Paula Felipe is gathering names of prospective mentors to inmates on Alternative Custody Supervision. If she has at least ten people expressing interest, she will prepare a Mentor Academy to train new mentors in January 2016. That academy would also be available for current mentors as a refresher. So if God is tapping on your shoulder, be sure to let me know, or contact Paula directly, at pfelipe@buttecounty.net, or by phone at 538-7822

God With Us in 2015!

I’m thankful that 😊 My mom, Elsie, turned 93, and our youngest granddaughter, also an Elsie, turned 7. Both live in the area, so we can see them often. 😊 Our oldest grandson, Tommy, graduated high school in the Seattle area. We were able to spend a few weeks there, visiting many old friends and relatives for the first time in 20 years. 😊 We reframed a portion of our roof, with help from many of the men I used to meet with in the jail. It is good to see them doing well on the outside! 😊 ARM is growing and maturing as a ministry. We will celebrate 4 years of incorporation in April. We have recruited and matched 6 **Certified Jail Ministers** with at least one inmate each, and 3 CJM’s with 2 or more per week! I have also begun focusing on raising up and equipping leaders in the pods, so that the inmates will have someone to call them together for prayer and Bible study, someone to go to for spiritual help every day, so that the Church, the Body of Christ, may grow and fulfill its call in the Butte County Jail! We also praise God for supporters who donate books and finances to keep this ministry going. 2015 is the first year we have been able to catch up with our expenses, and I could begin drawing some salary.

Prayer Requests:

- Pray for continued donations of Christian books, to help guide those who are spiritual seekers, and those who want to grow in Christ. Pray for spiritual revival in the jail!
- Pray also for Roxanne, who has suffered physically this past year. Pray that our God would ease her pain and restore her ability to minister the Word to women in jail and in our community.
- Praise God for our donors, who make this faith venture possible. “We thank God on every remembrance of you.”

Blessings to you all!



Jan and Roxanne Carlisle