



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

Plan C!

September 2016 Newsletter

Unusual things happen in jail. Unusual things happen when God begins to move. Sometimes these two are related! I have heard more than one man tell me he first met his biological father in a jail pod, where the two were incarcerated together. What are the chances of that? Is it the worst place for father and son to meet, or (given their life circumstances) the best? Or some combination of both? And what are the “chances” that God will use such a meeting to begin the awakening process in both father and son? God uses the unusual in our lives to tear down the usual, and to build up new!

One inmate I spoke with had just celebrated his 19th birthday in jail. His cellie felt sorry for him, and commiserated with him: “It’s too bad you have to spend your birthday in jail.” But he replied: “It’s the best birthday I’ve had in years!”

He had spent his 17th birthday high, and was too ashamed to go home to his family. He was arrested, and sent to juvenile hall. A long-time enemy, who was already there, lost no opportunity to cause him grief. But then he started attending “church,” and noticed his enemy was there, too. While neither was happy to see the other, out of respect for the others there, they each stayed on their own side of the room. They both began learning about Jesus and His love for them.

On his 18th birthday, the deputies came to move him from juvenile hall to “big boy jail.” Again, not exactly something to celebrate. But as he was being escorted out, they passed his erstwhile enemy. To his surprise, he held out his hand, and simply said, “Be safe!” He returned the greeting, but wondered where the change of heart had come from. In the Butte County Jail, he continued meeting with Christian inmates, and those who came to minister to them in the jail, and finally gave his heart to Jesus! He found a life that was healthy, sober, peaceful, and had hope! He worked out and gained strength physically, emotionally, and spiritually! Yes sir, better is coming, but this is the best birthday he’s had in years!

An inmate wrote to one of those who go in to minister:

*“My dear friend and brother in Christ: I feel the enemy all around me constantly at battle and seeking to destroy me. His Wrath is present on all sides. Some days I am at peace, some not... Please visit (a friend in jail), - our brother needs you ASAP. You are a very calming spirit. The Holy Spirit is shining through you when you are present. Your calming effect with the Spirit is pacifying and comforting. Your story is a strong testimony... I wrote you to thank you for inspiring me. I have so much to be thankful for... You make my day when you come visit. I do not expect probation or a program, though it would be a wonderful blessing. (plan A) ... If I go away to prison, plan B would be to use my skills to grow there. Then **Plan C** (“C” for Christ!) **“Trust in the Lord with all my heart and lean not on my own understanding. In all my ways acknowledge Him and He will direct my paths.”** I’m ready for a new life with Him as my Guide and King. Sincerely, your brother.”*

C. S. Lewis wrote about **“Plan C”**:

“Imagine yourself as a living house. God comes in to rebuild that house. At first, perhaps, you can understand what he is doing. He is getting the drains right and stopping the leaks in the roof and so on: you knew that those jobs needed doing and so you are not surprised. But presently he starts knocking about the house in a way that hurts abominably and does not seem to make sense. What on earth is he up to? The explanation is that he is building quite a different house from the one you thought of—throwing out a new wing here, putting on an extra floor there, running up towers, making courtyards. You thought you were going to be made into a decent little cottage: but **He is building you into a palace. He intends to come and live in it himself!”**

Are you ready for Jesus to remodel your life so He can live in it, and work out His plans through it? Would you like to be one to whom this inmate letter could be written? Ask God what He would have you do to touch a life for eternity!

Plan C – Washing Sins Away!

This September, we baptized 53 men and 22 women! It was a glorious and exciting time! These inmates made their profession of faith and were plunged beneath COLD water in a horse trough brought by one of the Thursday ministers. I wish you could have been there to witness their joy and enthusiasm, like a little kid finally free of a wheelchair! They shouted and prayed and jumped and hugged one another and us (wet hugs). I wish we were allowed to take pictures to share with you, but I want you to know the difference your prayers and donations have made in their eternity!

“We died and were buried with Christ by baptism. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives. Since we have been united with him in his death, we will also be raised to life as he was. We know that our old sinful selves were crucified with Christ so that sin might lose its power in our lives. We are no longer slaves to sin. For when we died with Christ we were set free from the power of sin... So you also should **consider yourselves to be dead to the power of sin and alive to God through Christ Jesus.**” Romans 6:4–11

Thank You, Jesus!

We have so much to be thankful for! Roxanne and I traveled back to Washington State, where we grew up and reared our children. Our nephew and his fiancé invited us up to perform their wedding. We delighted in the deep, moist green trees and hillsides, the majestic, snow-capped mountains, memories of family and friends and children who once came to our house for holiday celebrations, but now have their own families. We rejoiced to hear the plans they are making for the future, and the deep conversations we had with the couple, preparing them, not only for a wedding, but for a lifelong marriage, pointed toward the God Who invented “the way of a man with a maid.” (Prov. 30:19) God is good!

Prayer Requests:

- Please pray for the inmates I have mentioned, and for their families, who often suffer the fallout of their loved one’s poor choices. Pray that God would draw them closer to His love and salvation, and that He would raise up and empower more leaders in the pods, to call the inmates to pray, and to study God’s Word, to “be the church” in jail.
- Pray for our **Certified Jail Ministers**, as they disciple inmates on the glass weekly, and show that someone cares. Please pray that God would raise up more **CJM’s**, and that He would support them and allow them to see the difference they make, not only in an inmate’s life, but through that one, to change a pod and even a community. The board is meeting this week to interview a new **CJM** applicant – may God use him powerfully for His kingdom!
- Pray for God to raise up needed board members who will work to help ARM, guide it, and listen to His voice.
- Pray for God to bring Butte County churches alongside us to reach out to “the least of these, my brothers.”
- Pray for continued donations of Christian books, to encourage those who are spiritually seeking, and help guide those who want to grow in Christ. Pray for continued spiritual revival in the jail!
- Pray also for our daughter, Heather, who was diagnosed with breast cancer, has undergone five surgeries, and is going through a year of chemo and radiation. She has four children at home, and two of them have special needs.
- Praise God for our donors, who make this faith venture possible.
“We thank God on every remembrance of you...with joy!”

Blessings to you all, as you serve Him Who alone is worthy of all worship and praise and honor and glory forever! Amen!

Jan and Roxanne Carlisle

