

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.*

February Newsletter 2014

“My food,” said Jesus, “is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work. Do you not say, ‘Four months more and then the harvest’? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest. Even now the reaper draws his wages, even now he harvests the crop for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together. Thus the saying ‘One sows and another reaps’ is true. I sent you to reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work, and you have reaped the benefits of their labor.” John 4:34–38 (NIV)



So, what is your food? What is it that makes your life worth living? Many people would give many different answers to that. Some are good things: family, feeding the hungry, making the streets safer. Others, not so much: popularity, public acclaim, power, wealth, pleasure. But the overriding principle to which Jesus calls us, under which all other things fall, is the work of His Father, the kingdom of Heaven. And He tells us that the time is here, now, though perhaps not where we had in mind. Jesus was speaking to His properly Jewish disciples about the harvest He wanted to reap among the (gasp!) Samaritans. No, surely not, Holy Teacher! Not Chamantown! Not south side Oroville! And most surely not the county jail!

Those who come on Thursday evening find that, just as Jesus said, many others have sown and labored patiently. When inmates find themselves in the sudden train wreck of the jail experience, all the wise words of faithful witnesses of their younger days come filtering back to them, and faith sprouts among the wreckage of their lives. We go in to hear their confessions, speak hope to their despair, and feed their souls in their time of greatest need. We are not effective because we are so brilliant, holy, well trained, etc., but because God has prepared them for this time. We are humbly reaching out with compassion and God’s Truth in Jesus Christ, and God chooses to use us as His instruments. We are privileged to watch the action, like people on the field at the 50 yard line at the Superbowl last Sunday, as God does His work in inmates’ lives right before our amazed eyes! If you have never gone into the jail and spoken the consolation that Jesus gives to those who are broken and ready, you have missed a thrill the like of which there does not exist in heaven or earth!

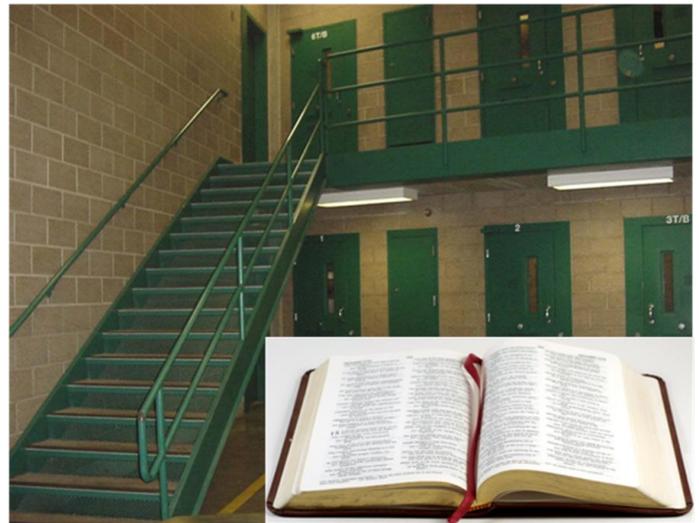
When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.” Matthew 9:36–38 (NIV84)



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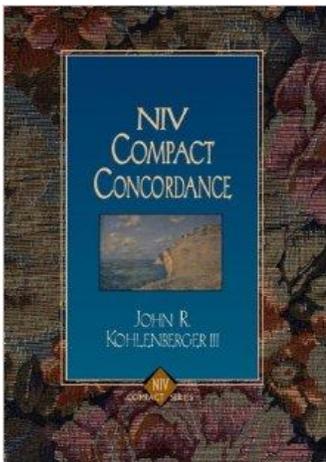
Thursday Jail Visitation–New Faces!

Every Thursday evening, a group of God’s faithful show up at the Butte County Jail to carry the encouragement of the Word of God to inmates who want to hear what God has to say to them. Occasionally we have enough “ministers” to send one to each of the fifteen men’s pods (cell blocks), but too often there aren’t enough gospel visitors to go around. It breaks my heart to know that there are men and women who were counting on hearing from God through a jail ministry visitor, who will not see one this week. They are not told why; all they know is that nobody showed up for them this week.



BUT, this last Wednesday, February 5, some **30 new potential jail visitors** showed up to pack out the jail orientation put on by Admin Sgt. Brian Meyers. This orientation, along with a thorough background check, will qualify them to visit inmates in the jail with us. If you’ve read any of our newsletters, you know the kind of transformation that God brings into people’s lives when someone cares enough to speak God’s truth from their heart. Please pray that these visitors will be quickly screened and notified, so they can join us in bringing the gospel to inmates each week. The impact on the inmates’ lives, and on the visitors themselves, will be eternal! Sgt. Meyer told me he would have to offer the orientation more often, probably quarterly! Praise God!

Concordances for Study Leaders



As I visit in the jail, I am always looking for inmates who have started leading Bible studies among their peers. Often, they have no tools but the basic Bible text itself to work with – no study guide, no instructions, no reference books, just a burning desire to know Jesus better, and to help others learn with them. When I find a natural leader like this, I meet with them one-on-one to find out how I can help equip them to fulfill their calling. I have distributed donated study Bibles, Bible handbooks, and study guides, but probably the most important tool they could get would be a real concordance (bigger than the one in the back of a study Bible) or a topical Bible (like Nave’s). This would equip them to research almost any question that starts with “What does the Bible say about...?” I found that we can purchase used copies of the NIV Compact Concordance, which lists all occurrences of major words (not “is,” “and,” or “the,” for example) for about \$4 each. The NIV is the translation we distribute to the inmates. Please pray and ask God if He would have

you partner with us in equipping these leaders, to consider a one-time gift to enable us to buy fifty of these concordances, so we can provide these God-gifted leaders with discipling tools they can put to use right now.

Prayer Requests:

- Praise God for disciples who have stepped forward as Certified Jail Ministers, meeting inmates weekly to work through a Navigators curriculum. Pray that relationships would grow, and that the Lord of the harvest will raise up workers, inmate leaders, visitors, mentors, pray-ers, and givers to bring the gospel to prisoners. Pray that churches and Christians in Butte County would rise to Jesus’ call.
- Thanks so much for all of your prayers for my physical health in the last several months! God has brought healing to my legs – I am running again! Praise God! Please keep praying – for health and for our finances, too.

May these stories of God’s new life and transformation in the jail bless and encourage you in your walk with Jesus, and may He use you, too, for His glory!

