

Our Generation

Vol. 2 Issue 2

April/May 2005

Dear Friends in Christ,

I want to thank everyone who has taken special notice of our work. Your thoughts, prayers, letters and visits are graciously received and a worthy investment into a cause that will not fail.

In Jesus' last days, He reassured His disciples with this victorious declaration, "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." (John 16:33)

The comfort and strengthening power, unique to the Body of Christ, gives confirmation that Christ has truly overcome and is with us until the end of this age. I've been blessed to correspond and share company with both free and bond Christians who possess the revelation-knowledge that Jesus Christ "IS" the crucified and risen Son of God; "IS" the author and finisher of our salvation, who reigns on high at the right hand of God our Father, and "IS" the One who will soon put an end to the enemy who seeks to destroy His Church.

Today, as members of the Body, we endure tribulation with confidence in the promise spoken by Jesus to Peter regarding the establishment and security of His Church, the body of Believers, when He said, "The gates of Hades shall not prevail against it."

We can see how difficult it is, even in victory, to withstand the full weight of Satan leaning against the Church of Jesus Christ.

However, not so visible are the brothers and sisters who are hidden away, sickly, elderly, or impaired. Let us be careful not to forget that our first calling is to be ministers (servants) of Christ and maintainers of His Body. If the Body is neglecting itself and is not well, how can it seek to heal another?

Are there fellow believers somewhere who you haven't seen, prayed for, written to, or visited lately, or those with whom you need to settle a conflict? Jesus gave a stern admonition concerning these inconsiderations, "Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me." (Matthew 25:40)

This letter is dedicated to the victory that we have in Jesus. While the daily battles of life wage on, the Body must be cared for. Let no neglect be lodged in your hearts so we might be found spotless on the Day that so quickly approaches. I challenge you to seek out and find a tired, worn, weak and lonely brother or sister who would profit from being reminded in love of what Jesus has done for us all.

Shout it through the Body so every member might be revived by the hope that we hold on to. Stand fast, let your peace bless another, be of good cheer, and know that God is with you. I pray that this issue of "Our Generation" is a blessing to you – that these words lay seed upon your hearts and give water to your harvest.

In His Love, Troy

“Practice What You Preach”

by Flex Stevens

In this generation’s use of modern words, you’ll often hear someone say, “Keep it real,” “stay true,” “be about your business,” “don’t play games,” and “ain’t fakin’.” All of these phrases serve as a call for loyalty and accountability to the fulfillment to what you have previously dedicated your heart. In this case, it is a call to be honest about the way you live out the Christian faith.

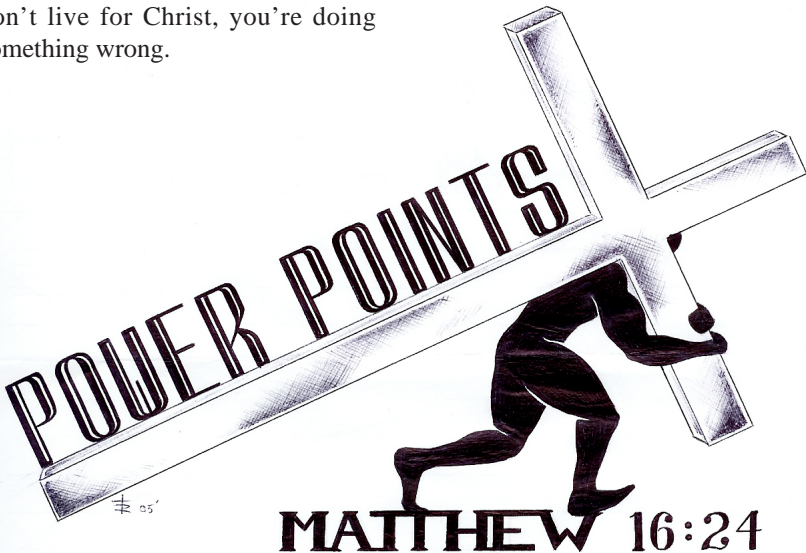
Romans 12:2 clearly tells us to not be like the people of the world. Let God change the way you think, then you will know how to do everything that is good and pleasing to Him.

I’m calling you brothers out - I love you all so much and you stay in my prayers. Because I care, it’s important that I address our actions as Christians living within the prisons.

If your actions are like people who don’t live for Christ, you’re doing something wrong.

Test yourself, do these characteristics match your lifestyle?

1. Ungodly language – would you talk to Jesus this way?
2. Ungodly magazines in your cell – are they edifying your mind and helping you with your walk with God?
3. Ungodly conversations – are you helping yourself and others to understand God’s will?
4. Drug use, tobacco, etc. – are you taking care of your body which is a temple of the Lord?
5. The music you listen to – is it what you would listen to if Jesus were standing next to you?
6. What type of pictures or posters are on your wall? Are they appropriate enough for our Lord to see?
7. What do you watch on TV? Would you watch it with the Lord sitting next to you? (cont. pg 2)



I ask you these questions not to condemn or judge. The thing is, I know how the people who are of this world live. I used to be an unbeliever. You probably were too.

When we became “born again” we no longer remain in unbelief, and this is no longer our home. We are here as employees of the family business which belongs to our Father, God Almighty.

I’m tired of hearing “Nobody is perfect” or “I’m weak” and “We are only human.” These are but crutches for the professed cross-carriers who have not stopped leaning on excuses to justify their habitual sinful practices.

We are one body, make it shine! Represent your passion for Jesus. Do the work that God has planned for the Holy Spirit to lead you to do. Be fishers of men and bait your hooks with true Christian character and Biblical knowledge.

Keep in mind we live this life for the glory of God, not for ourselves. Be true....don’t play games....keep it real....

PRACTICE WHAT YOU PREACH!

Point To Ponder

by Richard Wurmbrand

Why all the suffering?

From “100 Prison Meditations”

A legend says that Moses once sat near a well in meditation. A wayfarer stopped to drink from the well and when he did so his purse fell from his girdle into the sand. The man departed. Shortly afterwards another man passed near the well, saw the purse and picked it up. Later a third man stopped to assuage his thirst and went to sleep in the shadow of the well.

Meanwhile, the first man discovered that his purse was missing and, assuming that he must have lost it at the well, returned, awoke the sleeper (who, of course, knew nothing) and demanded his money back. An argument followed, and irate, the first man slew the latter. Whereupon Moses said to God, “You see, therefore men

do not believe in You. There is too much evil and injustice in the world. Why should the first man have lost his purse and then become a murderer? Why should the second have gotten a purse of gold without having worked for it? The third was completely innocent. Why was he slain?

God answered, “For once and only once, I will give you an explanation. I cannot do it at every step. The first man was a thief’s son. The purse contained money stolen by his father from the father of the second, who, finding the purse only found what was due him. The third was a murderer whose crime had never been revealed and who received from the first the punishment he deserved. In the future, believe that there is sense and righteousness in what transpires even when you do not understand.”

Faith in God is the sole answer to the mystery of evil. ∞

The Thorns of Life

by Troy L. Rienstra

When was the last time your soul was so trouble that you cried out in agony as though your heart had been pierced with an arrow? Has it been a while since you've been stricken by anxiety? Sometimes it only take a small undetectable shard of glass to disable you, and possibly deliver a severe infection.

These are the Thorns of Life and they come in many forms, whether large or small, internal or external, explosively painful or just plain irritating, Their purpose is to inflict grief, despair and suffering as a reminder that pain was born out of sin.

Fortunately, God designs all things to work for the good of those who love Him, to those who are called according to His purpose. The person who experiences great afflictions is being worked over by Satan and worked on by God. While experiencing a myriad of trials and persecutions at a level none of us have come to know (II Cor. 11:23-27), the apostle Paul reached the pinnacle of mankind's pursuit. He found himself to be content in whatever state he was in, thereby, God used him greatly with hope that even you would gain the same absolute peace and strength to persevere joyfully through life's journey.

Thorns of Grace

It's interesting to find how thorns and thistles were not a part of creation after God rested on the seventh day and declared it good. They only began to rise up from a cursed ground after

God pronounced judgment upon all mankind for Adam's sin. (Gen. 3:18) Toil, sweat, thorns and thistles all signify the trials and afflictions man would suffer to develop a longing in his heart. Keeping his eye directed toward God, man seeks a restored relationship with his Creator. These useless weeds also marked the trouble that would quickly rise up even in the secrecy of man's own heart and mind to keep him from being fruitful.

In II Corinthians 12:7-8, Paul described his thorn as a "messenger of Satan to buffet" (strike or mistreat) him. What particular form this thorn had taken is not known, however, we do know it was painful enough to drive Paul to plead with God three times for it's removal.



C.S. Lewis wrote, “Pain plants the flag of reality in the fortress of the rebel heart. God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks to us in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is the megaphone to rouse a dead world.” When we’re hurting God wants us to stop, listen, and look to Him. Only then can we be taught of our weakness and be strengthened by Christ’s power that comes to rest upon us.

We’ve all been afflicted by depression, oppression, temptation and fear. None of us is beyond sin’s insatiable grasp. But when the storm has passed, we find ourselves spent, immersed in reflection, relieved and receiving comfort in knowing that our sufferings are only temporary. In our recovery we press on from ‘faith to faith...strength to strength.... and glory to glory.’

With words of encouragement the Bible says, “Therefore we do not lose heart - though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.” (II Cor. 4:17.)

When Paul sought God’s intervention, it’s hard to imagine him expecting anything other than what he asked. However, we learn that which he received was so much more than he requested. What God gave was not a “quick fix,” but a solution for all time.

God’s Word spoke to Paul’s heart when He said, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness”. (II Cor 12:9.) This

revelation became Paul’s unshakable reality and his victorious claim to absolute contentment. By this faith he resolved, “I can do all things through Christ Jesus who strengthens me.” (Philippians 4:13.)

Accordingly, Paul “glorified” and “took pleasure” in all his affliction, not with reckless abandon but knowing we each have our own lot of afflictions prepared for us, and knowing that the temporary sting of his afflictions would now be followed by the soothing touch of God’s finger.

Clearing The Land

“But if you do not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you, then it shall be that those whom you let remain shall be irritants in your eyes and thorns in your sides, and they shall harass you in the land where you dwell.” (Numbers 33:55)

This Scripture gives a principle worth applying to every day of your life. The scenario is this - you’ve inherited new land that’s weedy and infertile. You must cultivate, replenish and maintain your lot thoroughly in order to enjoy the fruits of the land. If you don’t follow through with all of your responsibilities the land will remain barren and you will live a hard life.

Satan eagerly anticipates your arrival into each new day. He skillfully plans to use your thoughts and relationships, successes and failures to sever your relationship with God. Initially his seeds go unnoticed while they take root. This is why Jesus said, “Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.”

These troubles are known as “cares of the world.” Thorns sown on the same lot where God has sown good seed from which you should receive an abundant harvest. (Matt. 13:7, 22, 23). For the man who does not toil and sweat in the clearing of his land, hidden thorns will “spring up” from the soil and destroy the harvest of the good seed when the day of growth arrives.

This is why the book of Proverbs says, “The way of the sluggard is blocked with thorns, but the path of the upright is a highway,” and “In the paths of the wicked lie thorns and snares, but he who guards his soul stays far from them.” (Prov 15:19; 22:5)

As Christians we rise each morning and prepare ourselves for labor by communing with God in prayer. We put on His armor, enabling ourselves to stand against and drive out the godlessness that inhabits our new day.

Paul was so overjoyed after receiving the revelation of how sufficient was God’s grace, by this grace he came to know that afflictions and temptation were Satan’s only weapons (Eph. 6:16). He witnessed the most fiery and poisonous darts of the enemy become nothing more than loud and fast burning kindling at the name of Jesus Christ. The Psalmist wrote, “They swarmed around me like bees, but they died out as quickly as burning thorns; in the name of the Lord I cut them off.” (Ps. 118:12)

On any given day and at any time, whether you are awake or asleep, witnessing, ministering, praying or

just relaxing you will experience an assault on your senses, and whether it be internally or externally manifested, it is by the influence of the enemy. The thorns are too many to name, so I will list some of the most common trials: lies, greed, all sexual immorality and lust, hatred, pride, idolatry, addictions, confusion, depression, anger, persecutions, doubt and discontent. Each of these will deliver a powerful injection of anxiety, fear, emptiness and cravings.

Asking For Help

These are humbling times. They keep us from becoming prideful of what we believe to have accomplished by our own hand. In our times of suffering we seem to cry our loudest to God for rescue from the imposition of others’ sins that have been laid upon us, and from our own failure to guard against sin’s grasp that has taken us captive.

The Bible says, when these times come, “Submit yourselves then to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and He will come near to you.” “Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand that He may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxieties on Him because He cares for you.” (James 4:7,8a; I Peter 5:6-7)

Here is where we find an antidote to neutralize the sting of the enemy’s scheme. Christians are inhabited by the Holy Spirit, and when we call to the Father, in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, the power of God is made manifest in our time of weakness. Unfortunately, for the unsuspecting victim the poison causes paralysis,

blindness and a dulling of the senses which leads to a hardening of the heart as they decompose both spiritually and physically.

It's comforting to know that by the power of God, Christ suffered, endured, and overcame every affliction and temptation known to man. The Bible says, "For we do not have a High Priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are – yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need." (Heb. 4:15,16)

How fitting was it for Jesus to wear a crown of thorns that rose from an accursed ground as a product of the very sins He came to conquer! The Lord of Glory crowned Himself with every infirmity and temptation, bringing an end to the curse and reign of sin and death. "He took it all away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross." (Col. 2:14b, 15)

All of this was done so we might be fully restored in fellowship with God, replacing our weakness and misery with love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control and eternal life. Thanks be to Christ Jesus, the living Son of the living God.

While sin remains as a force in this earth, the pricks of thorns will persist in their attempts to separate you from God. If you believe Jesus Christ gave you victory over sin's mastery,

try to take Paul's position, learn to glory and take pleasure in your weakness by calling upon the name of the Lord. Follow the example he wrote of to the Philippians, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God." (Philippians 4:6.)

You will find, as many others have, that it won't be long before the power of Christ rests upon you and carries you through. For when you are weak, you are strong in Him. Remember, each day represents new land you've inherited from God, and Christ Jesus has given you the strength to clear away the thorns of godlessness. In Him the thorns become like kindling, as fuel to the Spirit's fire.

I pray that you receive the sufficiency of God's grace through Jesus Christ in this promise from His Word: "No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, He will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it." (I Cor. 10:13)

So, thank God for thorns and thistles that keep us from wandering from the straight and narrow path. ∞

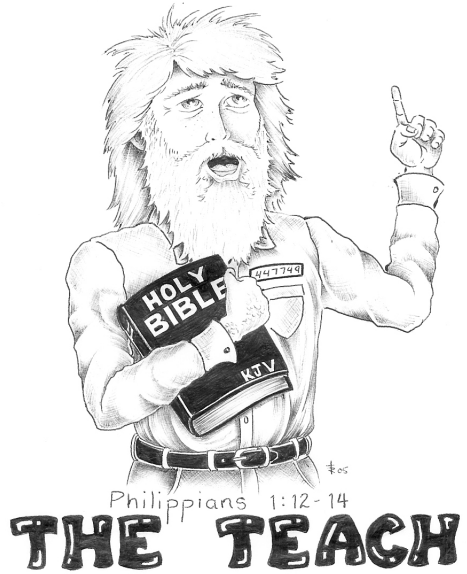


The Teach

by John Shulick

*What I Believe Every Christian
Must Believe*

1. The Bible is the Word of God, not that it merely contains bits and pieces of it. (I Th 2:13; II Tim 3:16; Heb 4:12; II Pt 1:16-21.)
2. God is a person who created all material and spiritual substance, and that out of the created material, He personally formed the worlds and each creature therein. (Gen 1:1, 2:7,19; Ps 8:1-9, 102:25; Jn 1:3,4; Eph 3:9; Col. 1:15-18; Heb. 1:1-3; Rev 4:11.)
3. God created man in His own image and likeness in one day, fully mature and highly intelligent – not that He descended from molecules through the lower forms of life, to a monkey and then to a human being. (Gen 1:26-28, 2:7,19, 9:6; Acts 17:26; I Cor 11:7-9; James 3:9.)
4. All angels and spirit beings were created by God fully mature and intelligent. (Ps 104:4; Eze 28:15; Col 1:15-18; Rev 4:11.)
5. God created man, animals, fish, fowls and plants to reproduce themselves after their own kind. (Gen 1:20-31, 2:5-7, 19-25.)
6. Jesus Christ, the Messiah, is the Son of God in a sense distinct from all other men – the only begotten of the Father – not merely a son of God in the same sense other men are. (Gn 3:15; Is 7:14, 9:6,7; Mt 1:18-25; Lk 1:34-35; Jn 1:18, 3:16; Php 2:5-11; I Tim 3:16; Heb 1:1-3, 8; Rev 1:8-11.)

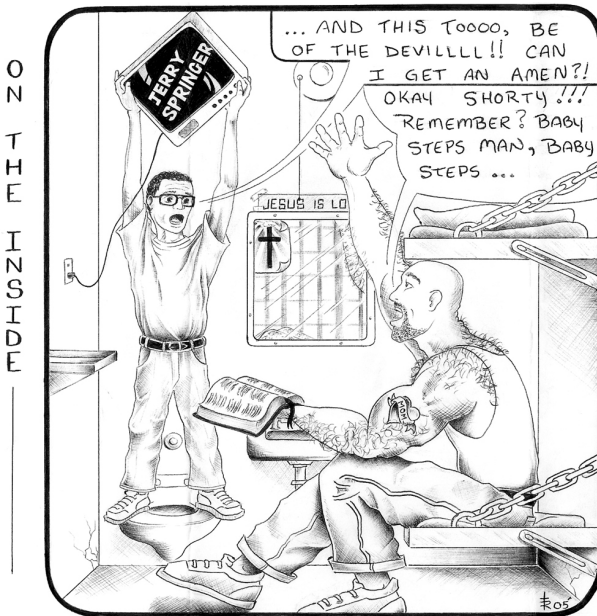


7. The Holy Spirit is a person, separate and distinct from the Father and the Son. All three persons have their own personal bodies, souls, and spirits which make up the Divine Trinity. (I Jn 5:7.)
8. The conception of Christ was supernatural, not natural, as all other human beings. He was virgin-born, and of the Holy Spirit – without a human father. This is what is termed the Immaculate Conception – the doctrine that the virgin Mary conceived without human or spiritual copulation. (Gen. 18:14, 20:18; Ps. 113:9.) These verses were cited to demonstrate that just as God the Father supernaturally opened and shut the wombs of certain women, God the Holy Spirit used the same glorious, holy and supernatural power to plant the Holy Christ Child in a virgin's womb. (Gn 3:15; Is 7:14, 9:6,7; Mt 1:18-25; Lk 1:34-35; Jn 1:1-14, 3:16-18; I Tim 3:16; Heb 1:1-3.)

9. The death of Christ was expiatory, not exemplary. He died for all men. His blood is the only propitiation or atonement for sin and by His stripes (beatings and crucifixion) we are healed. (Is.53; Mt. 1:21, 8:17; 26:28; Jn. 3:16; Acts 4:12; Ro.8:3; I Cor. 1:18-24, 5:7; Heb. 1:3, 2:9-18, 9:11-28, 10:5-29; I Pet. 2:24; I Jn. 2:1,2; Rev. 1:5, 5:8-10.)
10. Jesus Christ rose bodily from the dead, not spiritually or as a spirit being. He is alive forevermore in His Glorified, Resurrected Flesh and Bone Body and represents all believers before God the Father as their High Priest and Savior. (Lk 24:39; Jn 10:17,18; Acts 1:3,11, 2:22-34, 4:10-12; Ro 1:4, 8:11; I Cor. 15; I Th 4:13-16; Php 3:20, 21; Rev. 1:18; Zec. 13:6.)
11. Jesus Christ ascended into glory bodily and will come to earth again in like manner to rule the world

eternally, put down all rebellion, restore man's original dominion and establish his messianic kingdom over all nations in Mount Zion. AT which time, one third of the nations of Israel will be converted back to their Messiah, Jesus Christ. (Is. 20:19; Zec 13:8-9, ch.14; Lk 24:50-52; Acts 1:11; I Cor 15:24-28; II Th. 1:7-10; Jude 14; Rev. 19:11-21.)

12. Man is a sinner who has fallen from his original righteousness, high, and intelligent responsible place of headship over creation. Apart from God's redemption, grace is lost forever. Man is not the unfortunate victim of his environment, one who through self-culture can make good. (Gn 3; Jn 3:16; Ro 3:23-25, 5:12-21; Heb 1:1-3, 7:25, 9:22; I Jn 1:9, 2:1,2; Rev. 1:5, 5:8-15.) ∞



Just Thinkin'

By C. Iwaz Justthinkin

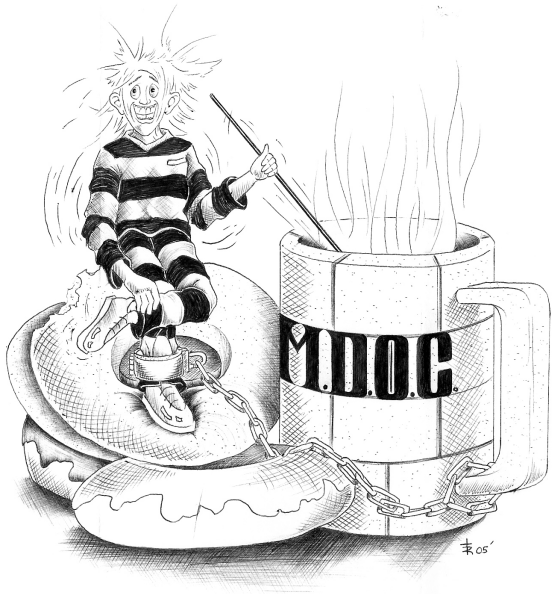
The Grand Rapids Press recently published an article by Judy Putnam titled "Coffee Break has New Meaning for State Prison Budget."

The objective of the article was to address the state of Michigan's budget deficit dilemma and to suggest that the solution seems to lie partially in the cancellation of the convicts' consumption of coffee.

I just think this whole consideration has been wrongly titled. It should be more suited to the context, something like, "Conflict Involving Cons, Corrections, Cash and Coffee Could Cause Crisis without Consulting Christ." With the removal of "free" coffee served to cons at breakfast chow, preliminary calculations estimate the Department of Corrections would save a whopping \$250,000 this year alone, and \$500,000 each year hereafter. Isn't that cra-a-a-zy??? I have to agree that's quite a bit of money.

However, it doesn't seem the Department officials are in total agreement with the coffee cut. Mel Grieshaber, executive director of the Michigan Correction Organization, said, "If the budget improves, give them back their coffee!"

All should be made aware that most cons cop their coffee from the canteen



because the kitchen's coffee carries a taste of contaminated water, and shortly after contact, the palate becomes partially paralyzed for some time. This poses to be very problematic to the prisoner's preference.

Personally, I believe the Corrections Committee knows how easily convicts themselves can be conned. With the absence of coffee, cons may conspire to form a coup and contest the cash vs. coffee conundrum by going on strike. Or, even more crucial for the corrections industry, criminals might quit committing crimes because there is no more coffee being served within the Corrections system's kitchens. Cons are big on tradition and they don't like change. Even the captives of ancient days could count on a cup of coffee and a ration of crumpets if they were cooperative.

I would now advise all cons to consider the following before catching another case: the cost of living within corrections is increasing; prison store proprietors are planning to implement a tax punch; ninety plus percent of the prison population is unemployed; and unfortunately, I predict the next article written by Putnam in the Press will read, "Prisoners to Receive Perks Instead of Paychecks for Their Labor Pains."

Back to the budget business - if the tabled consideration is to give the cons back their coffee after the budget crunch is completed, common sense would say that coffee is not the core cause of the cash crunch. Currently, it costs a bit over \$25,000 annually to keep one con in captivity, many of whom are eligible for release. Here is the part where I do not intend to dog anyone in corrections for doing their duty, but the fact of the matter is "somethin' gotta give." Cons are not commodities, and as much as they're a canker to their communities, they can still be conformed into compassionate, considerate, constructive, and contributing citizens. Of this I'm completely confident.

So if you need to reduce the budget, it would only be logical to decrease the number of deadbeat digits that are laying around consuming all of the coffee that's causing such chaos and intense concern within the Capitol.

The second step would be to see if Granholm, our greatest Governor ever, would reinstate the philosophy of prisoner rehabilitation and reform. After all, that only seems like the right thing to do when the recidivism rate continues to rise - 2 out of 3 releasees

return, sadly but rapidly, right back to where they once resided among a majority of reprobate re-offenders.

Closing more corrections compounds isn't the answer either. You have to remember, one-third of the cons cut loose are career criminals, and they're going to commit more crimes. Let's not forget to mention they'll also be creating newer and crazier cons for the country to be concerned about.


In conclusion, we can converge upon these very important points. Corrections without Christ is costly, contradictory, and far from conducive to the construction of a con's virtuous character. The discontinuance of criminal considerations is crucial. The compulsory behavior must be disconnected. Curbing cons from receiving yet another conviction is the ultimate goal, and it should be approached without compromise.

Here's an idea. What if local churches collaborated with corrections to persuade prisoners to a point where perhaps they would become productive? Consider this. Since coffee is no longer served to cons in corrections' kitchens, I believe caring and concerned Christians could contribute to a cause that carries a nifty name like "The "Christ for Cons" Coffee Fund." The coins that are collected will be used for the purchase of coffee and croissants served only to the cons who attend Christian services. Admit it - you must concur that this is clearly a cutting-edge course for calming the cravings of decaffeinated cons, while at the same time quenching the conflict within corrections, and creating a congregation to introduce Christ to some cold-hearted cats.

Putting this matter in proper perspective, it is Christ who is the Creator of corrections, their compounds, the cons and even their coffee. If coffee would cause cons to commit to church, they would hear the constant call to concede, confess, and to become completely re-created. How cool would it be to see cons together in a congregation comprehending how Christ came down from heaven, not to conspire with crooks, or to condemn those who are contrite, but to convey compassion, granting clemency to an entire world of confused criminals at the cost of being crucified on a cross between a con who came under conviction, and a con who was content with condemnation.

Here's a cure you can send straight to the Capitol for corrections' cost-counters to contemplate.

The budget crunch will concede when the Capitol and Corrections come to the conclusion that an accommodation must be cleared for Christ to enter into the compounds so He can change cons' careers. Problem solved. And the price for the solution has already been paid.

I just thought you might like to "C" it from a converted cons' Christian perspective. And, by the way, Mr. Grieshaber, sir, if you are serious about giving the cons back their coffee, could I suggest that a consensus would prove the cons would much rather have a menu change. Could you add something like fresh crab legs, crème brulee, or even some of the fine caviar on a cracker that's served in corrections officers' cafeterias? (Wink, wink...) Anyway, I'm a Christian and I was Just Thinkin.' 

The Warrior's Prayer

(Author Unknown, Submitted by Joel Bengelink)

Heavenly Father, your warrior prepares for battle.

Today I claim victory over Satan
by putting on the whole Armor of God.

I put on the Truth!

May I stand firm in the Truth of Your Word
so I will not be a victim of Satan's lies.

I put on the Breastplate of Righteousness!

May it guard my heart from evil
so I will remain pure and holy,
protected under the Blood of Jesus Christ.

I put on the Shoes of Peace!

May I stand firm in the Good News of the Gospel
so Your peace will shine through me
and be a light to all I encounter.

I take the Shield of Faith!

May I be ready for Satan's fiery darts of doubt, denial and deceit
so I will not be vulnerable to spiritual defeat.

I put on the Helmet of Salvation!

May the two-edged Sword of Your Word be ready in my hands
so I can expose the tempting words of Satan.

By Faith Your Warrior has put on the Whole Armor of God!
I am prepared to live this day in Spiritual Victory! AMEN!

**“Look to other books for information,
but look only to the Bible for transformation.”**

Any creed can be affirmed by the lips without being embraced by the heart. But once a creed is embraced by the heart, the mind is captured by it. The mind held captive by the Word of God is a transformed and trans-forming mind. It is a new mind that yields a new life.

To be a Christian is to be one who believes. The content of that faith is at once radical and liberating. It is the Truth that sets us free.

R. C. Sproul

The Brush

contributed by May Green



Life started out like a canvas
and God started painting on me.
But I took the paint brush from Jesus,
and I painted what I wanted to see.

The colors I painted kept running,
and the objects were all out of size.
I had made a mess of my painting,
my way now seemed so unwise.

So I brought my painting to Jesus,
all the colors and pieces were wrong.
In the markets of earth it was worthless,
but His blood made my painting belong.

He worked with no condemnation.
Never mentioned what mess I had made.
Then He dipped His brush in the rainbow,
and signed it: “The price had been paid.”

When I gave the brush back to Jesus,
when I gave the brush back to Him,
He started all over life’s canvas to fill,
when I gave to Jesus the brush of my will.

Letters From Readers

Dear guys;

I love your newsletters. They really minister to me on a level that surprises me. It was a wake-up call for me that God has people in prison that have a ministry to me. The general thought and temptation is to believe that it is the godless inmates who require ministry. But that's completely backwards. It is the Body of Christ wherever it is found that requires ministry and also has a ministry to supply the rest of the Body.

It is easy to neglect people tucked away in prison. That's why Jesus commanded us not to do that. I always assumed that He meant not to neglect evangelizing of prisoners. But He said in Matthew 24 that if we neglect prisoners we would be neglecting Jesus Christ Himself. Not sinners. Christians. Completely different intention. It's our loss if we ignore the gifts He's placed in the Body for our edification no matter where they're found.

I really think most of the Church doesn't get this. People who are not in prison are practicing the very arrogance of I Cor. 12:13. Arrogance is a serious sin with God and I've had to repent. I know I've thought this way, before I realize that there are real born again believers "in prison." I never thought about this before, even though I've been reading material written by genuine Christians from prison for the last 33 years.

God gave me an illustration about Body ministry – you know – preferring one another, enriching other Christians' lives by that which He supplied me as a cell in His Body. He said it was like the blood saying, "I'm not going to the feet today, because the feet are in shoes." And any blood that was in the feet would be prevented from circulation (sharing with the rest of the body.) Then the whole Body would die of PUTRIFICATION. All because one part didn't recognize (discern) another part of the body. – R.S.

Happy Birthday to:

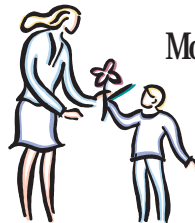
Troya Rienstra on March 31

Mark Aukeman on April 4

Adam Litwin on April 4

Troy Rienstra, Jr. on April 6

Luke Rienstra on May 15



Happy
Mother's Day
May 8

Noteworthy

This is a special request for all readers of this newsletter –

PLEASE PRAY AND FAST ON PENTECOST FOR PRISONERS AND PRISON ADMINISTRATORS to receive, facilitate and advance the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The Restorative Justice Consultation held at the end of February was a gathering of people of God from Canada and all over the U.S. to consider how the Christian Reformed Church should faithfully reflect God's principles of justice and mercy at many different levels where conflict and deep-seated resentment have taken root. There will be more news in future newsletters about the results of this consultation and the recommendations to the denominational gathering in June.

Our Generation

This newsletter is published to bridge the communication gap between believers in prison and those in free society. The goal is to find out where God is at work in Our Generation and to promote mutually beneficial relationships between 'bond' and 'free' churches.

We want to offer a platform to raise issues of concern, matters of interest, and offer an opportunity for all to display your talents and abilities. You are invited to contribute your voice to our network.

We welcome submissions regarding matters of justice in reference to prison conditions; resources for those incarcerated and/or recently released; articles on faith practices, struggles, and experiences; drawings and poetry; questions that you would like our readers to ponder and try to answer; reports from mission fields; and prayer concerns.

All submissions will become the property of the editors of Our Generation who will use discretion in their publication. Please send your inquiries or materials to: Troy Rienstra 202107, Standish Maximum Facility, 4713 W. M-61, Standish, MI 48658

You may also e-mail (copies of e-mails will be sent by mail to us since we do not have access to the internet in the Michigan prison system) or send mail to Our Generation c/o Rich and Carol Rienstra, 1922 Camille Dr., SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49546.

Evangelism on the Edge

Christians for Prisoners & Prisoners for Christ - is a national grassroots movement towards the fulfillment of The Great Commission. Of 2.1 million prisoners incarcerated within the U.S., only an estimated 160 thousand of them are professed Christians. Many of these men and women who have received Jesus Christ are Spirit-filled and inspired to begin living out the Great Commission right where they are.

Therefore, it is essential for the churches (prison, local, and national) to unify for the advancement of the gospel! Through the local churches animated and active participation with prisoner/prisoner discipleship, Jesus Christ will greatly reduce prisoner recidivism and create devoted Christians who will serve the Lord powerfully in this generation.

What are the immediate goals for this alliance?

- To have in-prison churches be “adopted” by the local churches
- For Christian prisoners to be tutored in discipleship
- For prepared Christian prisoners to be ordained into the missionary ministry for (24/7) service to their communities as ambassador/mediators to their parent (sponsoring) church.



What are the immediate needs?

- Prayer warriors, lift up the unification of the Body of Christ
- Churches, individuals, and organizations, commit to the adoption (or co-adoption) of in-prison churches
- Interested volunteers and skilled teachers will be needed to mentor prisoners
- Seasoned ministers and gifted leaders are needed at local and state levels to implement and manage the CFP/PFC agenda

REACHING THE GOAL

The success of Our Generation relies greatly upon the believer's passion for sharing the gospel of Jesus with the world. We have hope that you will participate in one of the following ways:

Churches: Commit to making multiple copies of this newsletter and providing them to a sister church.

Small Groups: Commit to making copies for the local prisons, jails, mission outreach programs, and military troops.

Individuals: Pass this publication on to a friend to share the message we are trying to communicate with the world about what God is doing in and through Our Generation.

If you have any questions or would like to assist in the production and distribution efforts, please contact Our Generation. c/o Rich Rienstra, 1922 Camille Dr. SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49546; e-mail rienstraog@hotmail.com.