

Our Generation

Vol. 2 Issue 3

Summer 2005

Dear Friends in Christ,

Christians for Prisoners and Prisoners for Christ is pleased to announce to all the readers of *Our Generation* the development of a Web site, thanks to a technologically talented friend of ours - Petya, a Calvin College student from Russia. The address of this Web site is <http://www.christiansforprisoners.org>

The purpose of having a Web site is to connect readers to the history, goals, and writings of *Christians for Prisoners and Prisoners for Christ* and to assist with the spread of the message of what God is doing in and through Troy Rienstra and other Christian prisoners. We hope that the Web site will assist many in passing on the good news contained in the *Our Generation* newsletter. For one thing, there will be a good 'original' file on the Web site from which to make copies for churches, persons in prisons and jails, and for friends committed to the ministry.

Due to Michigan Department of Corrections' restrictions on internet usage for inmates, many of you reading this newsletter will not be able to check out what is on the Web site. This is an unfortunate situation, because knowledge of the internet is almost as basic a right and necessary a skill as reading. We and many others feel this digital divide is a justice-related issue that should be addressed as part of any correctional and/or reentry program.

Anyway, for those who want or need a brief guide through the *Christians for Prisoners* Web site, it includes the following: a typical "home page" which gives an overview of the site and the ministry. Another 'page' (entitled "Troy's Story") includes the true story "Troy - Called to Prison Ministry" written by a retired pastor and published in a journal *The Christian Courier* last year. The "Missionary Assessment" of 50 inquiries for prisoners to answer if they seek to be partners with *Our Generation* is also contained on the Web site.

The Web site has links to many different resources: i.e. the Michigan Department of Corrections, studies on restorative justice, Prison Fellowship, and Prison Congregations. Previous newsletters of *Our Generation* are available. There is a page where the pictures and addresses of several prisoners related to *Our Generation* are noted.

Please, if you do have access, take a look at <http://www.christiansforprisoners.org> and send your thoughts and suggestions to *Our Generation* 1922 Camille Dr., Grand Rapids, MI 49546 or e-mail rienstraog@hotmail.com

We hope this new development will be a means to promote the message of *Christians for Prisoners and Prisoners for Christ*, and will help to break down barriers and build bridges between bond and free Christians.

Sincerely, Rich and Carol Rienstra

STUDY THIS

by Troy L. Rienstra

Are You Willing to Commit?

A farmer was expecting a visit from an old friend. His barnyard animals were eager to participate.

The birds chirped: “We’ll provide the music.” The horse neighed: “I’ll provide the transportation.” A group of hens clucked: “We will offer the eggs.” The cow moored: “And I will give you the milk.”

Meanwhile, the pig splashed and grunted as he rolled around in the mud. The congregation of animals turned to him as a delegation of hens hastily scampered toward the pig and clucked, “And what do you have to offer, sir? How about the ham or bacon? That would go nicely with egg, milk and music.” The pig snorted, “I have a problem with your proposal. While you all so easily have offered your participation, what you’re asking of me is commitment. You’re asking me to give up my life. I’m not prepared to do that. Could this also be why they’ll be having eggs instead of fried chicken?”

This simple story illustrates what it means to be in relation to Christ. The Bible tells about some who were eager to participate (Luke 9:57-62) However, Jesus wants a lifetime commitment. Are we simply acting as participants, contributing what costs us nothing? Or, have we become a living sacrifice, committing all we are and have to Christ?

Study this as a group. Help identify each others’ strengths and weaknesses.

Read the statements, utilize your gifts to help strengthen one another’s faith.

I. BELIEF AND CONFESSION: Have I devoted my life to God by belief and confession? Read Romans 3:19-24, 10:8-13; I Timothy 1:15,16.

II. REPENTENCE AND BAPTISM: Have I repented and received the baptism of the Holy Spirit? Read John 3:5; Ezekiel 18:21; Acts 2:38; II Corinthians 7:9-10.

III. LIVING SACRIFICE: Have I become a living sacrifice? Read Romans 12:1; I Corinthians 6: 19, 20; Acts 20:24 and 21:13; Luke 9:23-25.

IV. SEEKING GOD: Am I seeking God? Read Jeremiah 29:13; Psalm 105:4; Hebrews 9:28; Matthew 22:36-40.

V. SERVICE: Am I committed to serving God? Read Romans 15:17; Revelation 2:19; Philippians 2:3-4; Colossians 3:23-24.

VI. DILIGENCE: Am I being diligent in my walk with Christ? Read II Peter 1:3-11; Acts 2:42-47; Luke 9:62.

VII. WITNESS: Is Jesus Christ being revealed to the world through me? Read Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 1:8; Romans 8:29; Galatians 2:20; John 13:34-35.

VIII. OBEDIENCE: Am I obedient to the Word of God? Read Psalm 119:9-11, 57-60; John 14:23-24; I John 2:3-6 and 3:24.

For wisdom, strength and perseverance, we should pray for the Lord's help in all of these things, because alone we are unable to fulfill them:

*O God, guard my life, for I am devoted to you.
You are my God – save your servant who trusts you.
Teach me your ways, O Lord, and I will walk in your truth.
Give me an undivided heart, that I might fear your name.
Search me, O God, and know my heart;
test me and know my anxious thoughts.
See if there is any offensive way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting.
All that I am and all that I have I offer to You.
In the glorious name of Jesus Christ, my Savior. AMEN*

I Met the Master

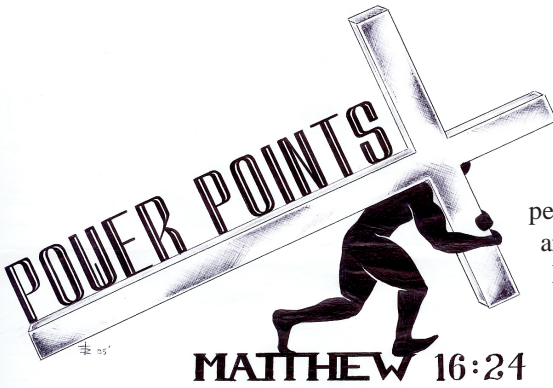
I had walked life's path with an easy tread,
I had followed where comfort and pleasure led;
And then by chance in a quiet place –
I met my Master face to face.

With station and rank and wealth for goal,
Much thought for body but none for soul,
I had entered to win this life's race –
When I met my master face to face.

I met Him and knew Him, and blushed to see
That His eyes full of sorrow were fixed on me.
And I faltered, and fell at His feet that day
While my castles vanished and melted away.

Melted and vanished, and in their place
I saw naught else but my Master's face.
And I cried aloud: "Oh, make me meet
To follow the marks of Thy wounded feet."

My thought is now for the souls of men,
I have lost my life to find it again,
Ever since alone in that holy place
My Master and I stood face to face.



POWER POINTS

by Flex Stevens

What Peter Feared, We Now Dirty Up

We know the story where Jesus said to Peter, “Verily I say unto thee, that this night before the cock crows thou shalt deny me three times.” (Matthew 26:34) Peter did just that, he claimed with an oath, “I don’t know the man.” (v. 69-75)

My outlook on this situation is that Peter was afraid. After the third denial and the look Jesus gave him (Luke 22:61), Peter cried and felt so bad that his regret became his strength to repent and stand for the Lord.

In our day we have become accustomed to unleashing the name of Jesus Christ just to gain some sort of favor. In the prison system I have discovered that inmates who don’t know Christ will claim that they do. Here is where you’re going to say, “Brother Flex, don’t be so judgmental,” but let’s take a look at this issue.

Acts 9:4 says that Jesus called to Saul, saying, “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?”

Saul, who later became Paul, had been killing and persecuting Christians. The word “persecute” is also defined as to “annoy persistently.” I personally find it annoying and disrespectful when I hear “Praise the Lord,” “I believe in Jesus,” “I’m a child of the Lord,” etc... and then seconds later that same person’s behavior is the total opposite of Christ-like character.

Please spare me the while “nobody’s perfect” and “we all make mistakes” speech. This has nothing to do with our imperfections and the mistakes that we are going to make. This is about using the name of Christ as an illusion for one’s own personal advantages.

My mind was at an “anger stand-still” one morning when my brother received a letter with one request that read, “Praise Jesus, send me some money and a Christian girl to pen-pal with. God Bless. P.S. Make sure my inmate number is correct on the money order.” How different are these motives from the motives of Saul? If you ask me, I would tell you that they are both equal.

Gang members should not use Christian worship services just to hang out and hold their gang meetings in the back row. Inmates who do not repent from their gay and perverted ways need to stop using Jesus Christ as their smoke screen to get close to good-hearted Christians only to bring their habitual “favorite sins” into the church circle.

Listen - Jesus said it clearly, "He who is not with me is against me." (Luke 11:23) He also said, "Whosoever has my commandments and obeys them, is the one who loves me." (John 14:21) He knows you by your fruits - we as prisoners who have given our lives to Christ Jesus are also anointed with the Holy Spirit. We too will not be fooled.

Lukewarm character is something that Jesus has no taste for in those who profess to follow him. (Revelation 3:16)

Where do you stand? Get your hearts together, people. I love you all very much.

Note: Flex Stevens is currently serving the Lord where he resides at Standish Maximum Correctional Facility. If you would like to correspond or comment, please contact him at: Flex Stevens 228-599, Standish Maximum, 4713 W. M-61, Standish, MI 48658 or e-mail rienstraog@hotmail.com. The correspondence will be printed and sent to Flex.

Alleged Robbery 'Mastermind' Sentenced to Life in Prison

Muskegon "Chronicle" January 26, 1996

**By Teresa Taylor Williams,
Chronicle Staff Writer**

A Muskegon man was sentenced to life in prison for "masterminding" the armed robbery of a jewelry store and the shooting of the store's owner last February.

Troy Rienstra, 26, of 186 E. Isabella is one of the few people who shouldn't ever walk the streets of civilized society, said 14th Circuit Court Judge Ronald H. Pannucci.

Rienstra was charged with conspiracy to commit armed robbery and assault with intent to rob while armed.

The robbery occurred February 28 at the Diamond Connection, 544 E. Apple. Owner Clarence Cooper of Grand Haven was shot three times in the back and is still recovering from the wounds.

Before sentencing, Cooper thanked the courts and the police for their 'tireless' work on the case. He also requested that Rienstra receive the maximum penalty under the law.

"This has been a year of physical and financial pain for me, and it will continue to be," Cooper said. "Troy Rienstra was the leader and organizer to take my life and my stock."

Michael Marble, 21, Sonya Grissom, 20, and Andrea Colvin, 24, were also involved. Marble admitted robbing the store and shooting Cooper. But the store owner managed to reach a shotgun, and fired shots to chase Marble away.

In previous court testimony, Grissom said Rienstra gave the orders and Marble carried them out.

Joseph Bader, senior assistant prosecutor, talked of Rienstra's extensive juvenile record, which included larceny and assault, and the many attempts at treatment he was given.

He also likened Rienstra's cohorts in crime, Marble and Grissom, to the characters in the comedy movie "Dumb and Dumber."

"Marble testified he was of limited intelligence; however, this defendant (Rienstra) is not. He was given many opportunities in life - good education and a supportive family - and he threw them away to engage in a life of crime," said Bader.

Before he was sentenced, Rienstra told the judge he knew that the incident had a terrifying impact on the community but that he was sorry. He also said he didn't believe there was sufficient evidence to prove him guilty.

During a December trial, the prosecution told jurors that Rienstra conspired with three others to rob the jewelry store and ordered Marble to shoot any witnesses.

"I am not guilty, and I'm not any kind of mastermind," said Rienstra. "I can't justify what happened but I regret it."

Pannucci said the incident is one of the most serious crimes he has dealt with in over 20 years.

"Marble was manipulated by you. There is no question that you were the brains and in control. The blame is your blame," Pannucci told Rienstra.

Pannucci said the sentencing guidelines don't apply in Rienstra's case because he is a habitual offender.

Last month Pannucci sentenced Marble to serve between 50 and 83 years in

prison. Colvin was ordered to serve between 15 and 50 years. Grissom entered a plea agreement that in exchange for her testimony, she would plead guilty to unarmed robbery and serve no more than 15 years. Her sentence is pending.

This was a bad time for many people, although, much has changed since then. In 2003 I abandoned all appeals from my conviction. As a Christian, I could no longer live the lie. I was guilty and the blame was mine. It was time for that life to come to an end. I wrote Mr. Cooper, his family and others to convey most sincere apologies for my wrongful intrusion upon their lives.

I hope that others would examine their circumstance and conclude that as Christians we are called to uphold the truth, impart justice, and seek restoration from past offenses. It's a clear contradiction for the Christian to be a follower of Jesus while holding fast to a lie.

The Bible says, "These are the things you are to do: Speak the truth to each other, and render true and sound judgments in your courts; do not plot evil against your neighbor, and do not love to swear falsely. I hate all this," declares the Lord. (Zechariah 8:16-17) If you expect God to do his part, be sure to do yours.

Fortunately, we have been given a path to redemption through the blood of Jesus. Repent and be baptized. Do the right thing, think about others before yourself, confess your guilt and the truth will set you free to enjoy a genuine relationship with God.

Troy Rienstra

The Teach

by Tom Shulick

The Greater Good

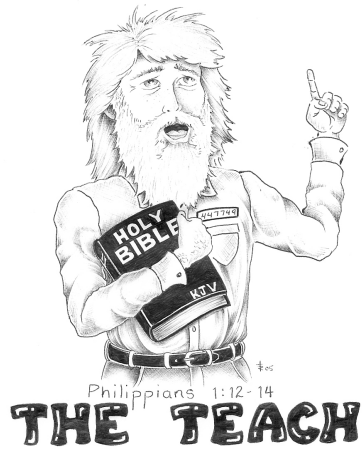
There are a lot of “isms” infecting the body of Christ. Legalism, liberalism, modernism and other manmade spiritual viruses are running rampant in the church. However, these are easily recognizable and combated, whereas there is another ‘ism’ that is much more subtle and therefore dangerously deceptive. I speak of pragmatism, or the belief that the ends justify the means.

Moses was the son of a Hebrew midwife who was favored by God enough to have her son spared from mass infanticide and thereafter further blessed to be able to raise the boy herself. He was named Moses meaning “drawn out” for he was drawn out of the water in the now-famous woven basket. This name would prove prophetic when he was ‘drawn out’ of the house of wicket Pharoah and used by God to draw out the Hebrew people from Egyptian slavery. The event that changed Moses from a lucky guy living the privileged life of Pharoah’s adopted grandson into the greatest civil rights leader in history was a crime and sin that later came to be known as murder in the first degree. (Exodus 2:11-14)

And it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown that he went out to his brethren, and looked on their burdens; and he spied an Egyptian smiting an Hebrew, one of his brethren. And he looked this way and that way, and when he saw that there was no man, he slew the Egyptian and hid him in the sand.

And when he went out the second day, behold, two men of the Hebrews strove together; and he said to him that did the wrong, “Wherefore smitest thou thy fellow?”

And he said, “who madest thee a judge over us? Intendest thou to kill me, as thou killest the Egyptian?” And Moses feared and said, “Surely this thing is known.”



If this were to occur today, Moses could have used some of his privilege to get the best lawyers in town who would no doubt try to argue for manslaughter, even though the evidence speaks for itself. Moses deliberated, noted the coast was clear, and hid the body. He had motive, forethought, afterthought, and even further interfered with judicial powers by fleeing and eluding (v. 15). And to top it all off, there were witnesses. Moses was, as they say, ‘hit.’ He knew what he did was inexcusable, and facing the death penalty, he chose to live on the lam.

So, why then do so many of us try to build a case for justifiable homicide? It's easy to think that what Moses did is excusable because he saved a life, prevented further injustice, and in the long run was catapulted into a life of dedication to God, which led to the preservation of the Hebrew people after their immediate rescue from slavery.

This ex-felon went on to be a productive member of society and it's possible that this one bad act was the catalyst that started it all. Wasn't this lapse in judgment serving the greater good? Don't the ends more than justify the means? GOD FORBID!

But if our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say?

Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance? (I speak as a man.) God forbid: for then how shall God judge the world? For if the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto His glory; why yet am I also judged as a sinner? And not rather, (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say) let us do evil, that good may come whose damnation is just. (Romans 3:5-8)

This is God's anti-pragmatic clause. Paul says here that there were people who thought God would receive more glory through their "little white lies" than if they were to act according to His commandments. They thought they knew the end from the beginning better than their Creator and they could help Him out with a few well-meaning sins. They put their supposed 'greater good' over God's 'moral good' and even accused the apostles of doing the same.

Imagine telling your friend that next Sunday the pastor will be serving coffee and donuts so your friend should come to church. He comes, hears the message and gets saved. There were never any donuts, but he forgives you for lying because he has just received eternal life. Perhaps he then goes out to be a missionary and leads thousands of souls to Christ. And you don't see the harm in it because it gave GOD more glory and besides, everybody does it. Romans 3:8 says your damnation is just.

Moses' lawyer stands up: "I object, Your Honor! Roman's Compiled Law, Statute 8, Mandate 28 clearly states that 'all things work together for the good...' All things must be understood to include our sins as well as our good works, especially when the sin in question is committed with a good motive."

Yes and no. Yes, God is so merciful and loving as to use our failures, faults, doubts and sins to help us learn, grow and overcome the world. In fact, it is a great encouragement to look back on all the instances in scripture that show God's ability and willingness to utilize men who stumbled, faltered, wavered and disobeyed. But as Romans 15:4 says, "For whatever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope."

They are meant to be an encouragement that God uses us despite our shortcomings, not an excuse to sin because God needs our particular brand of twisted morality to make

His plan work. How foolish it would be to use David's stumble into adultery (which resulted in the birth of Solomon) to justify one's own lustful impulses in the light of Jesus' warnings against adultery. But this is the logical end to the pragmatic means of thinking.

The truth is that Romans 8:28 has to be read in the context of parallel passages in scripture. Two examples are Genesis 50:20 and Deuteronomy 23:5 which make it clear that God can and will take something meant for evil purposes and turn it to work in His children's favor. But in no way do these passages indicate that God's plan is contingent upon our prideful assumption that well-intended sin is somehow better serving His purposes than trusting and obeying His commandments.

There are a lot of brothers who will be paroling and maxing out this

year. This accounting of the stories of sinful, imperfect men God used is meant to be an encouragement to them. But learn from their mistakes too. Don't be tempted to take the quick fix or easy money that comes from acting outside God's will. Trust His promises, Obey His commandments and He will provide in just the right way and time. Know that there is no difference between the moral good and the greater good, for all good is from God. He only knows the end of our actions.

Stealing bread to feed your family is still stealing. Lying to your wife about how she looks in those new jeans is still lying. No matter how difficult it seems, you have a Father who will see you through it if you stick to the two words of the famous hymn "Trust and Obey." (Ecclesiastes 12:13)

The defense never rests.
(Philippians 1:17)

In Christ's Love, Tom Shulick

Think OUTSIDE the limits of dry land -- This is an eye opener --
some probably never thought or looked at Psalm 23 this way,
even though they say it over and over again.

The Lord is my Shepherd... That's Relationship!
I shall not want... That's Supply!
He maketh me to lie down in green pastures... That's Rest!
He leadeth me beside the still waters... That's Refreshment!
He restoreth my soul... That's Healing!
He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness... That's Guidance!
For His Name's sake... That's Purpose!
Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death... That's Testing!
I will fear no evil... That's Protection!
For Thou art with me... That's Faithfulness!
Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me... That's Discipline!
Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies... That's Hope!
Thou anointest my head with oil... That's Consecration!
My cup runneth over... That's Abundance!
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life... That's Blessing!
And I will dwell in the house of the Lord... That's Security!
Forever... That's Eternity!

Face it, the Lord is crazy about you. What is most valuable, is not what we have in our lives, but WHO we have in our lives.

I was just thinkin’

by Troy Rienstra

Can you imagine what life would be like if two demon-possessed men were exiled from their community and chained to your front porch? The people who lived in the region of Gadarenes faced this problem during the time of Jesus’ earthly ministry. Two men who referred to themselves as “legion” were exiled to live among the tombs. They were tormented in their souls, untamable and abusive, chains could not bind them. Day and night they would cut themselves with stones and cry out profanities. These men had some serious issues. Fortunately, Jesus healed them. (Matt. 8:28-34; Mark 5:1-20) Afterwards, the men were described as having been “clothed in their right mind,” and they set out to tell everyone what Jesus had done for them.

These men underwent a miraculous transformation just as the Bible says, “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. (II Corinthians 5:17) This also is true for the prisoners who are “in Christ.” They have changed drastically and become “clothed in their right mind.” This is a hard notion to conceive for many. Nevertheless, it does not do away with the fact that the once demon-possessed prisoner now awakens to a society that cannot comprehend him, nor can he comprehend it.

Prisons, like the ancient cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, are inhabited and overseen by a majority of men and women who subscribe to a vast diversity of religions and philosophies. Daily life for Christian prisoners parallels Lot’s experience while living in Sodom. The Bible says, “Lot, a righteous man... was distressed by the filthy lives of lawless men. (For that righteous man living among them day after day was tormented in his righteous soul by the lawless deeds he saw and heard.)” (II Peter 2:7, 8)

The apostle Paul wrote to the church at Ephesus of the depraved condition that keeps man from believing in God and the miracle of a changed life. Paul makes a fatal diagnosis when observing the following symptoms: “futility of their thinking,” “darkened in their understanding,” “separated from the life of God,” “hardening of their hearts,” “having lost all sensitivity, given over to sensuality, indulging in every kind of impurity, and having a continual lust for more.” (Ephesians 4:17-19)

The Bible says, man is destined to die once and after that (death) we will face judgment, so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for Him.” (Hebrews 9:27-28)

Can you imagine being entrusted with the gospel of Jesus Christ for the purpose of sharing it with some of the world’s most hardened criminals and untrusting overseers? How do you tell a murderer, who would like to do

nothing better than kill you, that God loves him, how Christ died for him and that heaven and hell are more than a myth? This is the challenge and commission of the Christian prisoner.

Most listeners deny the deity of Jesus Christ and refer to Him as merely a good moral teacher, and they reject the Bible and describe it as being a book full of fables and myths, but having some good for life application. Unfortunately, someone has failed to do their homework before taking the test. They've fallen under the influence of a deceiver who seeks to deter all of mankind from knowing God.

The Bible is comprised of 66 texts written by 40 people, over a 1500 year period. Apart from the Bible, no other text has maintained its integrity through copy and translations from its original form. There are no mistakes, no contradictions and esoteric conspiracies in the Bible.

Archeology, science, the fulfillment of prophecy and its transforming power, all confirm its truthfulness. When you find someone who is looking to be convinced by a miracle, give him the Bible. It does, has, and always will reveal itself to the reader as an living and active life-changing miracle.

One of Adolf Hitler's greatest propagandists said, "If you tell a lie big enough and keep on repeating it

people will believe it." This is Satan's core strategy for attaching the Bible and the infallibility of its claims. You will hear time and time again all the reasons people produce in opposition to believing the Bible. They fallen victim to the "Big Lie."

Our culture has an expectancy of immediate gratification and an insatiable desire to sensual experiences. We don't want to wait. The subjects of sin, death, sacrifice, salvation and judgment only seem to exist in theory and hypotheticals. We believe only in what we can see,

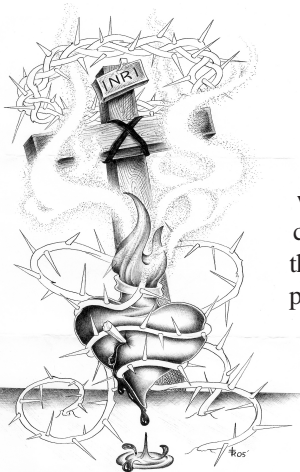
taste, hear, smell or touch.

As for the invisible it is of no use to us, even though we believe in God. "They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served created things rather than the Creator - who is forever praised. Amen." (Romans 1:25)

We like to acknowledge His being, but explain away His presence. This is what

our appetites do to us. They deceive us, blind us, drag us away from God and in the end, they lead to our eternal death. C.S. Lewis wrote, "I willingly believe that the damned are, in one sense, rebels to the end; that the doors of hell are locked on the inside." Yet this is why Jesus came, to set the captive free and to give sight to the blind, to lead us into the kingdom of God, paving the way with His own blood.

In the classic film "Papillion" the prisoner had a nightmare. He was



A Sweet Lesson

unknown

A ten-year-old boy approached the counter in an ice cream shop and climbed onto a chair. "What does an ice cream sundae cost?" he asked the waitress. "Two bucks," she answered.

The youngster reached deep in his pockets and pulled out an assortment of change, counting it carefully as the waitress grew impatient. She had 'bigger' customers to wait on.

"Well, how much would just plain ice cream cost?" the boy asked. The waitress responded with noticeable irritation in her voice, "A buck fifty."

Again, the boy slowly counted his money. "May I have some plain ice cream in a dish then, please?" He gave the waitress the correct change and she brought him the ice cream.

Later, the waitress returned to clear the boy's dish. When she picked it up, she felt a lump in her throat. There on the counter the boy had left two dimes, four nickels, and some pennies.

She realized that he had enough money for the ice cream sundae all along, but in order to have enough to leave her a tip, he ordered less than what he really wanted.

A Survey: What would you do with Jesus?

Please answer these questions and send to Troy Rienstra 202107 at Standish Facility 4713 W. M-61, Standish, MI 48658, or e-mail the answers to rienstraog@hotmail.com. This information will be used for a book project. No names will be used, but do include your age and gender.

Imagine that Jesus Christ came to spend two weeks with you.

1. List 5 things that you would do with Him.

2. What would Jesus' presence cause you to change about your daily life? (5 things)

3. What are 5 things that Jesus would find lacking in our local church ministry?

What is your age? ___ What is your gender? ___M ___F

standing before a judge charged with having wasted his life. He cried loudly thought tears, “Guilty, your honor! I am guilty of wasting my life!” Papillion had fallen victim to two of the Devil’s greatest designs for man’s ruin. First, the Devil does not want us to trust in God; second, he wants us to believe that we will always have tomorrow to do the things that we should do today.

Legend has it that Satan held a gathering of his demons to develop his own kingdom message. One demon suggested, “I will tell them there is no God.” Satan replied, “Fool, you will deceive no one, for everything testifies of Him.”

A second demon said, “I will tell that there is no hell.” Again Satan replied, “If they have not seen or heard-tell of you they have known evil, and if they have known evil they know that you have a domain. Therefore, you will deceive no one, for they will know there is a hell.”

A third demon spoke with a quiet confidence from the far end of the meeting table, “I will tell them that they have plenty of time.” The room fell quiet, then Satan spoke, “You, my brilliant, you will deceive many because man lives for the pleasures of today and only a distant hope and care of tomorrow. Time is ever elusive, denying men from reaching the pinnacle of his desires, so they deceive themselves by chasing aimlessly after more. Yes, persuade them that time is of greater value than eternity and our chambers will be full.”

I often think of ways to describe the Christian’s mission during his stay in prison. In this case I refer to the

writing and exhortation of Jude v. 22, 23. “Be merciful to those who doubt; snatch others from the fire and save them; to others show mercy mixed with fear - hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh.”

Sometimes it is the fear of death which leads to the death of many. The one in need of rescue becomes disoriented, he panics, runs in the wrong direction, and quite often threatens the one who seeks to rescue him.

Each time I speak with a prisoner or guard about Jesus, it becomes more clear to me just how much “the god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.” (II Cor. 4:4)

Socrates was quoted saying, “The unexamined life is not worth living.” However, the Lord Jesus said, “I tell you the truth, whoever hears My word and believe Him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.” (John 5:24)

Through Jesus Christ we know something that Socrates didn’t - that is, without Christ in our lives we are already dead. But if we examine His life, and believe in Him only then will we know God, realize our worth and be gifted to live with Him forever. I encourage you today to be mission-minded. It’s worth the risk.

Anyway, I’m a Christian and I was just thinkin’.

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.

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.

In Whose Hands?

A basketball in my hand is worth about 19 dollars.
A basketball in Michael Jordan's hand is worth about \$33 million.
It depends whose hand it's in.

A baseball in my hand is worth about 6 dollars.
A baseball in Mark McGuire's hand is worth \$19 million.
It depends whose hand it's in.

A tennis racket is useless in my hand.
A tennis racket in Venus Williams' hand is worth a championship.
It depends whose hand it's in.

A rod in my hand will keep away a wild animal.
A rod in Moses' hand will part the mighty sea.
It depends whose hand it's in.

A sling shot in my hand is a kid's toy.
A sling shot in David's hand is a mighty weapon.
It depends whose hand it's in.

Two fish and 5 loaves of bread in my hands make a couple fish sandwiches.
Two fish and 5 loaves of bread in Jesus' hands will feed thousands.
It depends whose hand they're in.

Nails in my hands might produce a birdhouse.
Nails in Jesus Christ's hands will produce salvation for the entire world.
It depends whose hand they're in.

So put your concerns, your worries, your fears, your hopes, your dreams, your families, and your relationships in God's hands because... you see now...
It depends whose hands they're in.

This message is now in your hands.

Evangelism on the Edge



Christians for Prisoners & Prisoners for Christ is a grassroots movement by prisoners and their families 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 churches (prison, local, and national) to unify for the advancement of the gospel! Through the local churches animated and active participation with prisoner/prisoners discipleship, Jesus Christ will greatly reduce 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 to lift up the unification of the Body of Christ
- Churches, individuals, and organizations to commit to the adoption (or co-adoption) of in-prison churches
- Interested volunteers and skilled teachers to mentor prisoners
- Seasoned ministers and gifted leaders to implement and manage the CFP/PFC agenda