



Compassion

2024 - First Quarter

Faith-filled Friends

Four of those who came were carrying a man who could not walk. But they could not get him close to Jesus because of the crowd. So they made a hole by digging through the roof above Jesus. Then they lowered the man through it on a mat. Jesus saw their faith. So he said to the man, "Son, your sins are forgiven." Mark 2:3-5

God included a wonderful surprise in the Bible study I shared in jail recently. While I prepared for it, one verse stood out; "Jesus saw *their* faith." Plural! At least two people involved had the gift of faith in Jesus. None of the accounts give us an exact total. My guess is that most (if not all) of the people carrying the paralyzed man had faith. What else would make them persist in their back-breaking efforts? They didn't give up when the house where Jesus was preaching was packed with people. They carried their friend up steps, clawed through a roof, and carefully lowered him through the new opening to be closer to Jesus. This difficult work required strength, stamina, and careful coordination.

In our Bible study, we rejoiced in Jesus' healing power and the friends who helped the man with paralysis. Many shared that they felt "paralyzed" with their addiction to alcohol and other drugs. They appreciated being incarcerated because it kept them away from substances that destroyed their health, families, and finances. Once they were released, they knew it was crucial to have loving supporters in their daily struggle with addiction. I emphasized, "We all need faith-filled friends who gently plop us in front of Jesus! These friends help us in our faith!"

Another woman, *Heather*, joined us near the end of our Bible study. She needed to talk. "I am an angry person," she confessed. "I've been mean to most of the people here." She gestured to the other women and said, "But they brought me back to Jesus. My faith was gone, but they kept talking about Jesus and being kind. They showed me Jesus!"

Amazed, I looked at the women and

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Ambassadors for Christ



Special Gifts & Memorials



Plank Road Legacy

There is a profound sense of joy and relief knowing our gift will keep giving in perpetuity. There are so many worthy ministries to support gospel-spreading kingdom work — we believe God has richly blessed IM for a reason. A strong endowment equals a strong ministry.
- Todd & Cynthia Witte

Consider including IM in your estate plans. Please contact Tammy at 414-259-4376 or tammy.schmidtke@im.life

GraceLinks

"You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives" (Genesis 50:20).

These words of Joseph to his brothers are such a beautiful and strong confession of faith. Over a thousand years later, Paul expresses this same trust in our loving God when he writes to the Romans: *"We know that all things work together for the good of those who love God, for those who are called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28).*

These two passages from God's Word are often what the Holy Spirit brings to mind when we reflect on one of the facets of our work here at Institutional Ministries—the email devotions we call GraceLinks.

When the world shut down for Covid, our ministry to incarcerated souls almost came to a complete stop. Our chaplains were not allowed to enter jails or prisons for their scheduled Bible studies and worship services. The walled-in souls we had been serving seemed to be without any means of hearing or reading God's Word.

But what Satan was only too delighted to use for the harm of our inmate congregations, the Lord was able to use for good. God took that desperate situation and used it for the saving of many lives for eternity.

At the time when visits to prisons and jails stopped, we had been sending devotions via email to just a few inmates. Very few. In fact, just two. But, after much prayer and by the guidance of the Holy Spirit, our ministry leaders saw an opportunity. Could we expand our outreach through these devotions? Could we use these devotions to share God's love in a new and unique way? God's answer was a whole-hearted "Yes!" *"This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us" (1 John 5:14).*

From the very small congregation of two recipients of GraceLinks devotions, the Holy Spirit has built an ever-growing online congregation of over 900 souls. Who could have imagined that? But why should we be surprised? We know that *"God...is able, according to the power that is at work within us, to do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine" (Ephesians 3:20).*

Thank you for being part of this important ministry. Thank you for your prayers and offerings to help us do this important work. Thank you for bringing the light of God's Word to these walled-in souls of our communities. We thank you, and the inmates thank you:

- "These devotions mean so much to me. I need to hear from God daily."
- "I really appreciate the daily emails. I love reading them and looking up the verses."
- "Thank you very much for this latest email. It was right on point. I needed it more than you know!"

To God be the glory!



by Louise Wendland
Copy Editor



Ambassadors for Christ

I didn't consider how fervently some of the people we minister to would pray for my family. I shouldn't have been surprised. When God's Spirit works in a heart, there is a new creation. The old has gone. The new has come.

So why didn't I expect it? At the time of the tragedy, we weren't thinking about how others would react. We most certainly weren't expecting that word of our family's tragedy would travel into the prisons or that incarcerated brothers and sisters in Christ would join those who grieved with our family.

The Word of God that was shared with us, the prayers, the hugs, the cards, the tender care expressed over and over again were amazing. Discovering that some of the people we serve were in turn serving us with their prayers was extraordinary.

While losing a grandchild this past November caused our holiday celebrations to be greatly subdued, it has also given richer, deeper meaning to the Gospel. An old African-American hymn says it well:

There's a light in the valley of death now for me,
Since Jesus came into my heart!
And the gates of the City beyond I can see,
Since Jesus came into my heart!

Sometimes, the people our ministry serves feel like they are living in the valley of the shadow of death. Yet, while their lives are often difficult, they know this truth: "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Co. 5:21).

Now God has given them, as well as all of us, a special role. Each one of us has a vocation. We are ambassadors for Christ and God wants us to share the message of Christ's love with the people around us. Here is how God ties these thoughts together:

If anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins



against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God (2 Cor. 5:17-21).

We are all Christ's ambassadors. May God use us powerfully to break Satan's chains, to shine light into darkness, and to reveal Christ everywhere we go.



by Pastor Philip Henselin
Executive Director

exclaimed, "You are the faith-filled friends! You 'carried' Heather to Jesus! I was talking about people outside of jail supporting your faith and sobriety, but you are doing that now for Heather!"

You, our partners in ministry, are also those faith-filled friends. Your support through prayer, volunteering, encouragement, and donations helps us bring people to Jesus. Through our ministry, the Gospel reaches those who are "paralyzed" behind the walls of incarceration, addiction, and psychological and physical struggles. You bring them closer to Jesus' healing and love. Thank you and thank God!



by Tammy Schmidtke
Director of Development





Shining the light of Jesus' love
on the walled-in souls of our communities!

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OUR MISSION

*To provide
direction, comfort,
and hope by shining
the light of Jesus'
love on the walled-in
souls of our
communities.*



Have you ever considered Institutional Ministries in your will or as a beneficiary on a life insurance policy, IRA, 401(k), 402(b), pension or other retirement fund? You can help spread the love of Jesus even while rejoicing in heaven!

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