

“Free In Deed”

The **Bi-Monthly** newsletter of Central California Jail/Prison Ministry

Volume 8– March 2005 / Apr. 2005

“I Can Only Imagine”

In this **Volume 8** issue, we would like to examine how we talk of the suffering an individual goes thru whether in or out of prison. Does the term prisoner have a connotation tied with it? What about the terms convict or inmate? Do we really know how these individuals feel?



Note the articles in this newsletter and see if you can express the love for these individuals, as Christ showed on the cross for us. For those who have seen “**The Passion of the Christ,**” I can assure you that you walked away with silence, remorse, and possibly even some anger for those that rejected Christ.

I can honestly say that some of these individuals in our jail and prison system are reached. And God’s Word commands us to preach the Word in its entirety, with boldness and with no apologies for what it says. I can also express my disappointment of not being able to spend time with each one crying out. A recent letter I received from one of the inmates stated that I had missed him the last 2 weeks in visitation. I have 95 individuals and did indeed miss this one – I apologize and pray for HELP!!

Intentions & Wishes

We have gone to Bi-Monthly because there is too much to share.

The intentions of this newsletter are to allow an understanding of jail & prison ministries. It is our intentions to get input from those incarcerated as well as those “free” to visit. Life experiences of the faith and fellowship from those locked up in the facilities are always desired to let others know of the value of “visitation”. I am certain that each of us have many stories of the miracles God has done in our lives.

Our wishes are that we would have a list of supportive churches that individuals might look forward to attending once released (**51 listed in this issue**). Write for addresses if needed.

A list of services, such as housing, employment, and counseling services, as well as some individuals available for friendly fellowship are also much needed items.

God’s Word says if a man stumbles, how can he continue lest there be another to help him up. **Ecc. 4:10** “For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him [that is] alone when he falleth; for [he hath] not another to help him up.” **Proverbs 24:17** “Rejoice not when thy enemy falleth, and let not thy heart be glad when he stumbleth.” **John 11:10** “But if a man walketh in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him.”

Please help us with input with this newsletter as we strive to serve God. We appreciate any articles, testimonies, or input.

Letters that Express it All

These are actual quotes from some of the different incarcerated individuals. The names have been removed

"I was staying with my mother. She passed away XXX X, 2003. After she was gone, I lived in the streets, sometimes in orange orchards. I do have brothers and sisters, but I don't know their addresses. . . .I enjoy writing you because you send me those newsletters and because you write back. Everybody here writes their girlfriends or wives. At least I get mail from you. You seem to care enough about me and write me. That means so much to me. I thought I was alone, but someone cares. Thank you! I would appreciate if you can send the address to the mission in Visalia. I have about 1 year to look for shelter. I've lost all my possessions, but I'm not a materialistic person, I', just trying to survive, that's all. I'm so happy that you keep in contact with me. Thank you. Please send all Christian literature that may benefit me. I'm in a 6 X 9 cell 23 hours a day, but I got me a Bible and I read it daily, even at night. . . . I'm just grateful that I have someone to correspond with. Someone who gives me hope. The world needs more people like you Bob. It would be a much better place for all of us."

Please pray for individuals like this, that the Lord will lead them to a true commitment.

Fellowship

We would like to keep a listing of locations for fellowship that welcomes previous incarcerated individuals. Please feel free to let us know of those available. **We also cherish letters from inmates or relatives to the churches to let us know how we are doing**

CHAINBREAKERS

Every Tuesday
Visalia First Assembly
3737 S. Akers
Visalia, CA.
Room 8 – 7:00 p.m.
733-9070 ext. 131

Calvary Chapel Visalia

11720 Avenue 264
Visalia, CA. 93277
687-0220

Visalia First Baptist

1100 S. Sowell
Visalia, CA. 93277
732-4787

Church of the Nazarene

3333 W. Caldwell Avenue
Visalia, CA 93277
734-1117

Praise Center Church

503 N. Floral St.
Visalia, CA. 93291
733-2744

Please see next page for total list.

In Tulare County,

evangelical churches who have volunteers in our jails: The following churches have volunteers involved in the jail and prison ministry, and are financially supportive of the jail and prison ministry

Corcoran -
World Wide Church of God

Dinuba -
First Baptist Church

Fresno -
Beautiful Zion Church

Hanford -
Grace Bible Church
St. James Lutheran Church
First Presbyterian Church
First Southern Baptist Church
St. James WELCA
Lakeside Community Church
The Oasis Church
First Lutheran Church
Kings Evangelical Free Church
First Christian Reformed Church
Calvary Christian Center

Ivanhoe -
Walnut Grove Assembly,
Ivanhoe Presbyterian Church

Kingsburg -
Kingsburg Evangelical Covenant Church

Lemoore -
Lemoore Church of the Nazarene
Grace Baptist Church
First United Methodist Church

Porterville -
Iglesia Evangelica de Woodville
(Spanish Speaking),

Landmark Christian Center,
Glad Tidings Church.

Tulare -
Christian Outreach Ministries,
Tulare Community Church,
First Baptist Church,
Bethel Assembly,
Spanish Assembly of God,
New Life Community Church

Visalia -
Sierra Baptist Church
First Baptist Church
Parkside Chapel,
Visalia Evangelical Free Church,
Visalia First Assembly,
United Methodist Church,
Praise Center Church,
Calvary Chapel Visalia,
Neighborhood Church,
Nazarene Church,
Grace Lutheran Church,
New Hope Christian Church,
The Sound of His Voice,
Grace Community Church

Woodlake -
Foothill Bible Church

The following churches support financially:

Kingsburg -
Calvary Chapel Kingsburg

Porterville -
First Christian Church

Tulare -
Calvary Chapel Tulare

Visalia -
Trinity Christian Reformed Church,
First Christian Reformed Church,
First Christian Church,
Abounding Grace Church

Addresses to contact our Ministry Volunteers

Bob
P.O. Box 6667
Visalia, CA. 93290

Rick
3737 S. Akers
Visalia, CA. 93277

Bible Study Lessons

SET FREE PRISON MINISTRY
Of Northern California
401 MacArthur Boulevard
San Leandro, CA. 94577-9801

Replenishing

God's Word promises to restore the years of the locust, or more simply the years previously lost.

Joel 2:25 And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the cankerworm, and the caterpillar, and the palmerworm, my great army which I sent among you.

Recommended Reading

For the new Christian, or the individual desiring to know God, we would like to recommend the following reading.

The Gospel of John – This is a great introduction of Christ's walk on Earth.

The Book of Romans – This gives an introduction of many of the Bible stories shared and helps build familiarity of Christ's plan for our lives.

The Purpose Driven Life by Rick Warren – 40 chapters will change your life in 40 days

Book of Proverbs – Read one chapter a day with the chapter read being the day of the month. This will allow the book to be read almost 12 times thru the year.

Ephesians 4 – 6 – This gives the pattern for life that we should live. All 7 S's are displayed in these 3 chapters. We are given the purpose of the gifts, changing our character, husband/wife/family relationships, and the type of life we are to live and display.

Men's Relational Toolbox – Another fine work by Gary Smalley with both of his sons adding to this book. This book avoids "male bashing" but rather teaches men to use and modify the inner tools they have to improve their relationships.

When Satan reminds you of your past, remind him of his future.

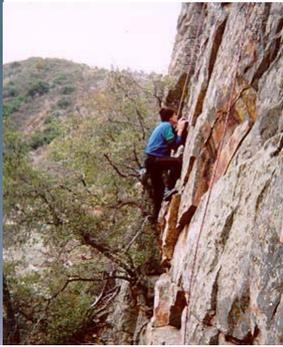
God accepts you where you are, but loves you too much to leave you there.

Tools of Ministry (Part 5)

Vol. 4 newsletter we did part 1 of the tools of the ministry. In it we discussed such tools as
A pair of **Python Boots** and a **handcrafted one-of-a-kind car**.



Vol. 5 newsletter we did part 2 of the tools of ministry. With **Skydiving** and **Rock Climbing**.



Vol. 6 newsletter we did part 3 of the tools of ministry. **Wedding Ring**



In Volume 7 newsletter we did part 4 **Goldfish**



In **Volume 8**, for part 5, we are going to discuss; **Melody**

It seems that we each have some form of melody in our heart. The melody of our heart is often an accompaniment of the melody around us.



God's Word says make a joyful noise unto the Lord.

Psalms 33:2 Praise the LORD with harp: **sing** unto him with the psaltery [and] an **instrument** of ten strings.

Psalms 92:3 Upon an **instrument** of ten strings, and upon the psaltery; upon the harp with a solemn sound.



Psalms 144:9 I will **sing** a new song unto thee, O God: upon a psaltery [and] an **instrument** of ten strings will I sing praises unto thee.

Psalms 33:3 **Sing** unto him a new song; play skilfully with a loud noise.

Psalms 96:1 O **sing** unto the LORD a new song: **sing** unto the LORD, all the earth.



Psalms 98:1 {A Psalm.} O **sing** unto the LORD a new song; for he hath done marvellous things: his right hand, and his holy arm, hath gotten him the victory.

Psalms 144:9 I will **sing** a new song unto thee, O God: upon a psaltery [and] an **instrument** of ten strings will I sing praises unto thee.

Psalms 149:1 Praise ye the LORD. **Sing** unto the LORD a new song, [and] his praise in the congregation of saints.

Isaiah 42:10 **Sing** unto the LORD a new song, [and] his praise from the end of the earth, ye that go down to the sea, and all that is therein; the isles, and the inhabitants thereof.

Is the command to Make a joyful noise and sing unto the Lord something of past? No, it is still a method of praise to the Lord. Even in Revelation, the last book of the Bible, it is said that they sing the song of Moses.

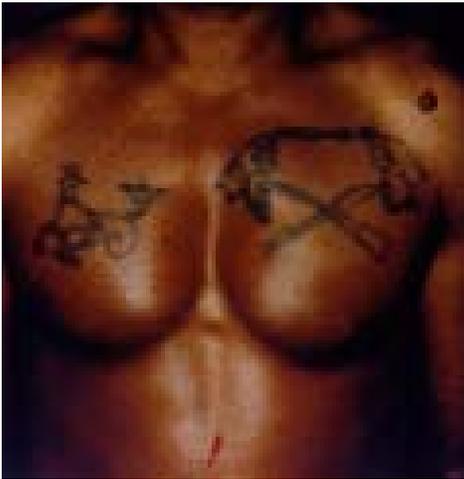


Revelation 15:3 And they **sing** the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvelous [are] thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true [are] thy ways, thou King of saints.

Who do I Belong to?



We tend to show our allegiance and faith towards something or someone.

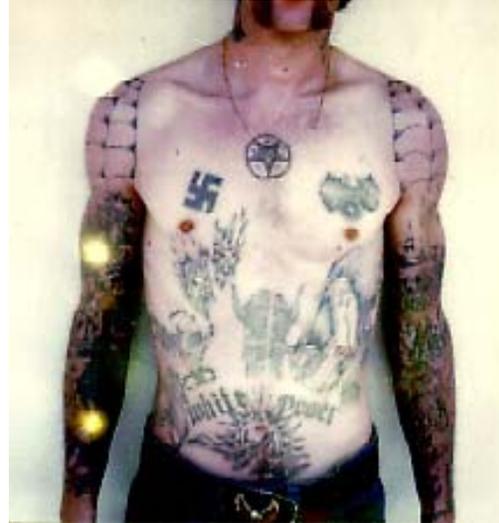


We have a “pride” in our affiliation.

We show honor and trust to those teamed with us.

And we are offended by those outside our group.

We set ourselves apart from others.



The method of a slave showing allegiance to his master in Christ’s time was by having the slave’s ear pierced to the door casing with an awl.

The Bible says “You were bought with a price” and that price was Jesus dying on a cross and rising from the dead.



Who do you Serve and Belong to?

Seeking freedom from gangs' grip

By Christina Jewett -- Bee Staff
Writer

Published 2:15 am PDT Wednesday,
September 29, 2004



Richard Mejico was a name young gang members scrawled on California Youth Authority walls. He was revered and ruthless.

In prison, young gang members unwittingly asked him if he knew Richard Mejico. They told him of his own legend in the prison gang the Mexican Mafia.

Knowing his glory was destructive, he tore off his shirt, revealed his tattoos and shouted, "I am Richard!"

He told them to get out of gangs and leave prison behind.

He spreads the same message now with less fury. He is Richard M., founder of Criminals and Gang Members Anonymous or CGA, a program akin to Alcoholics Anonymous with 12 steps to ending addictions to power, violence and gang-derived identity.

Officials at Mule Creek State Prison in Ione, where Mejico is serving a life sentence for murder, say the program fosters peace and cuts lockdown costs.

It could cut crime outside the prison, said Roseanne Campbell, acting warden of the prison.

"(CGA) has made an impact," she said. "It can make an impact in all of our prisons and the community."

Hoping to see the program spread, officials hosted 65 corrections and political leaders in a forum dedicated to CGA on Sept. 21. Mejico and about 30 killers, robbers and rapists spoke of how the program touched their lives.

"I'm tired of gang members being thought of as macho," Mejico said. "They're not. They just have a lot of fear. All they need is a little love. Don't ask them what they've done. It's what happened in their developing years. 'Who hurt you? Tell me, I will help you change, I will help you heal, so you can learn to love.' "

Mejico, 51, spoke with a tremor in his voice, tattoos like a scarf around his neck and a gold crucifix glittering against his prison-issued undershirt.

He said he started the CGA program in 1997 at Mule Creek, and it has begun to spread with inmates who have been transferred to other prisons. His goal is inspire others to duplicate the program in prisons, communities and schools.

"I'm not doing this for recognition," said Mejico, whose stepson Steve also is a CGA member at Mule Creek, imprisoned for a gang-related murder. "I'm doing it because it saved my life."

First, Mejico took lives. In 1973, he killed a man who raped his girlfriend, he said. He served two years in the California Youth Authority.

Sixty days after completing his first sentence, he killed again for his gang in Los Angeles. It was a double homicide and in 1976 Mejico was sent to death row, said Tom Hanson, Mule Creek spokesman.

In prison he rose in the Mexican Mafia, high on his reputation, sheltered by other gang members' loyalty.

At San Quentin State Prison, a nun regularly visited him, urging him to leave the gang and heed a higher calling. He listened but did not change; not until after the Supreme Court made a ruling that changed his death sentence to life in prison in 1978.

Then, change was gradual, Mejico said. He earned a degree in psychology from San Jose State University. He studied the Alcoholics Anonymous program, but it did not address his issues.

He thought of his hatred after his girlfriend's rape. He realized he was propelled by emotion, not reason.

"That was prison - the darkness in my head," he said. "I am not a prisoner now. I am free here. I can think through anything."

The first step for those in the program is to realize that one's life is not decent or manageable. Then members analyze what spurred their deviance, seek spiritual growth and make amends with victims.

In a guarded Mule Creek meeting room, other members of the support group stood and recounted how their youthful pain spurred heinous crimes.

"Hi, my name is Willie."

"Hi Willie," the group said in unison.

Willie spoke of his hate for his often-absent and occasionally abusive father. His mother pushed him not to cry, never get beat up. So he was mean. He murdered to get to prison and fatally stabbed a man inside.

"I was addicted to wrong," he said. "Right was accomplishing my ends, no matter what."

The resentment driving the violence is no excuse, Mejico said. But being humble and honest with one's self and breaking down the false comfort of crime or gangs is a key to walking away for good.

Joey Ray Lucero, 26, said he has. He joined CGA at Mule Creek and since has been released and landed a social services job helping gang members. He's also started taking

classes at East Los Angeles College, where he joined the football team.

He grew up in San Diego, he said, a third-generation gang member. His role models at home were strung out on heroin, he said. He was raised to show no pain and be true to the gang.

He said he realized in prison (he pleaded guilty to attempted murder) that gang life was wrong.

"You spend all those years fighting for a street corner or number or color that isn't yours," he said. "A lot of bloodshed - five, six generations - for what?"

Lucero regrets he can't visit his old neighborhood - he could be killed for turning on the gang. He cried when he quit. "I didn't know who I was anymore."

And his life now is this: work, class, football, sleep. Repeat.

"I have just enough money to be broke," he said, jokingly. "I'm so busy, but I love it."

Mejico knows there is more peace for criminals - and potential victims - with the program. He hopes he can spread it by writing letters and via the CGA Web site, www.angelfire.com/id/CGAnonymous/.

"(Criminals and gang members) need to be talking about their problems so they won't hurt anyone," he told the audience. "I need your help. I am still in the prison environment."



Steve Mejico, stepson of CGA founder Richard Mejico and also an inmate at Mule Creek, tells of his struggles to escape gang life.

Slingshot Guilt

A young boy and his younger sister, Billy and Susie, went to spend the summer at their grandmother's farm. The boy noticed a slingshot in one of the rooms and asked his grandmother about the item. His grandmother explained that the slingshot belonged to his grandfather. She further explained that his grandfather's father had given it to him as a boy. The grandmother went on to say that her grandson could have the slingshot but he must realize the responsibility of owning one. She explained that the objects shot from the slingshot traveled with such velocity that items could be broken or even killed. She told him not to be shooting at anything that could be broken and by all means never to shoot at anything living. The grandson explained that he understood and would be careful.

The boy was so excited as he went around the farm collecting the perfect stones to shoot from his new toy. He would shoot a stone out into the pond and watch the splash. He would set up cans and knock them over with each shot. He got so good that he figured he was the best shot ever to live with a slingshot.

Soon the boy was getting bored with hitting the objects and wanted something more exciting

As the boy came around the barn, he noticed his grandmother's favorite rooster. Slowly he put a rock in the slingshot. Slowly pulling it back, he let the rock fly. The rock hit the rooster in the head and it fell over. The boy immediately ran to the rooster hoping it to be all right. The rooster was dead. The boy started crying for what he had done and knew his grandmother would be very disappointed with him. He quickly grabbed the rooster and a shovel

and dug a hole. Putting the rooster in the hole he covered it and smoothed the ground so as to get rid of all evidence.

As he started to walk towards the house, he heard a voice that said "I saw what you did." As he turned around, it was his sister. She had seen the whole incident. The boy crying, begged her not to tell of his evil deed. The sister agreed with the condition that her brother would do the favors she asked. Knowing he did not want to tell, he agreed.

That evening, grandmother made a beautiful meal. As they finished the meal, Grandmother gave them each a slice of home baked pie. Grandmother said that there was one piece of pie left if someone would like it. The sister said, "Billy does not want it and said I can have it." Billy remained silent.

As the sister finished her second piece of pie, grandmother came in and started clearing the dishes from the table. She said to Susie, "Why don't you help me with the dishes?" Susie said, "Billy already asked if he could help with the dishes." Billy quietly got up and said "that's right."

The next morning was more of the same situations, with Billy getting to do things that Susie pressured him into. Billy's grandfather asked him to go fishing, but Susie interrupted that Billy had volunteered to help grandmother clean house. Susie went with grandfather instead. Billy went to his grandmother and stated he could not bear it any more. He confessed and told his grandmother what he had done. She replied, "I already knew. I was watching the whole time out the kitchen window. I wondered how long you were going to bear the guilt?" She forgave him.

Is it time to confess to God?

Prison Life (as it should be?)

MOST INMATES ARE FAMILIAR WITH THIS INDIVIDUAL THRU THE GRAPEVINE. TO THOSE OF YOU NOT FAMILIAR WITH JOE ARPAIO, HE IS THE MARICOPA ARIZONA COUNTY SHERIFF AND HE KEEPS GETTING ELECTED OVER AND OVER.

THIS IS ONE OF THE REASONS WHY:

Sheriff Joe Arpaio (in Arizona) who created the "tent city jail":

He has jail meals down to 40 cents a serving and charges the inmates for them.

He stopped smoking and porno magazines in the jails. Took away their weights. Cut off all but "G" movies.

He started chain gangs so the inmates could do free work on county and city projects.

Then he started chain gangs for women so he wouldn't get sued for discrimination.

He took away cable TV until he found out there was a federal court order that required cable TV for jails. So he hooked up the cable TV again only let in the Disney channel and the

weather channel.

When asked why the weather channel he replied, so they will know how hot it's gonna be while they are working on my chain gangs.

He cut off coffee since it has zero nutritional value.

When the inmates complained, he told them, "This isn't the Ritz/Carlton. If you don't like it, don't come back."

He bought Newt Gingrich' lecture series on videotape that he pipes into the jails.

When asked by a reporter if he had any lecture series by a Democrat, he replied that a democratic lecture series might explain why a lot of the inmates were in his jails in the first place.

More on the Arizona Sheriff:

With temperatures being even hotter than usual in Phoenix (116 degrees just set a new record), the Associated Press reports: About 2,000 inmates living in a barbed-wire-surrounded tent encampment at the Maricopa County Jail have been given permission to strip down to their government-issued pink boxer shorts.

On Wednesday, hundreds of men wearing boxers were either curled up on their bunk beds or chatted in the tents, which reached 138 degrees inside the week before.

Many were also swathed in wet, pink towels as sweat collected on their chests and dripped down to their pink socks.

"It feels like we are in a furnace," said James Zanzot, an inmate who has lived in the tents for 1 + years. "It's inhumane."

Joe Arpaio, the tough-guy sheriff who created the tent city and long ago started making his prisoners wear pink, and eat bologna sandwiches, is not one bit sympathetic, He said Wednesday that he told all of the inmates: "It's 120 degrees in Iraq and our soldiers are living in tents too, and they have to wear full battle gear, but they didn't commit any crimes, so shut your damned mouths!"

Way to go, Sheriff! Maybe if all prisons were like this one there would be a lot less crime and/or repeat offenders. Criminals should be punished for their crimes - not live in luxury until it's time for their parole, only to go out and commit another crime so they can get back in to live on taxpayers

money and enjoy things taxpayers can't afford to have for themselves.

Sheriff Joe was just reelected Sheriff in Maricopa County, Arizona.

NOTE from Bob;

I recently received a flier from an inmate that was titled;

“Accept Me As A Person . . . Not as A Convict

In his testimony, Glenn Ralph Mellott, states *“the people who are confined in prison play for keeps. They are the type of people who think if they have a problem with someone else, they are justified in eliminating the problem permanently.”* Mellott goes on to say, *“A convicts reputation is very important to him while he’s behind bars. After all, his reputation is all he has.”* After a convict has built a reputation, it is hard to be accepted as an inmate or just a person. Mellott explains *“An inmate is considered low life, scum-of-the-earth type individual in the convict’s eyes. I used to be a convict, now I’m considered an inmate because I accepted Jesus as my Savior.”* As we look at Mellott’s definitions and stand, it appears that being an inmate is something to be proud of, because we are no longer the convict that was convicted, but **Free-in-Deed**