

“Letter From M.O.M.”

The **Monthly** newsletter of **Moving On Ministry**

WWW.MovingOnMinistry.com

www.PrisonMinistry.net/movingon

Volume 32 – Jan. 2008

“I Can Only Imagine”

As you receive this volume of **Letter From M.O.M.**, we are doing some reprints of past articles, we are putting some more of the testimonies of “How God Changes Lives” as well as some of our own written articles. We can truly say that the “high” that many of our inmates have been trying to get through the wrong methods, is being surpassed by those putting God in control of their lives.

Watch our website

www.MovingOnMinistry.com

We have also become affiliated with International Prison Fellowship

www.PrisonMinistry.net/movingon

Fellowship

We have now communicated with about 1/3 of the prisons in California, as well as writing to Africa, Tennessee, Minnesota, Idaho, Washington, and Michigan. We have also had communication thru email as a result of our web sites. **We would like to know of the impact we are having and also cherish letters from inmates or relatives to the churches to let us know how we are doing**

Intentions & Wishes

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.

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 for this newsletter as we strive to serve God. We appreciate any articles or input.

Addresses to contact our Ministry Volunteers

**Moving On Ministry
Chaplain Bob
P.O. Box 6667
Visalia, CA. 93290**

**Moving On Ministry
Spanish Ministry - Linda
P.O. Box 6667
Visalia, CA. 93290**

**Moving On Ministry
Women's Ministry
P.O. Box 6667
Visalia, CA. 93290**

**Church Behind the Wall
Visalia First Assembly
3737 So. Akers
Visalia, CA. 93277**

Volunteer Work: I do it like I am paid great and dearly for it. For surely, the price Christ paid, was dearly and great!

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.

Letters that Express it All

We like to post real life situation, because God works in real lives and He is the one that gives "Eternal Life."

Missing M.O.M.

Just received your letter of Nov – Vol. 30 . . it's always a blessing to hear and know what you are doing for our Lord and for others. I know one thing . . I enjoy reading the letters From M.O.M." . . Thank you Lord, Bob & Linda and everyone that shares to the M.O.M. Letters. Hey, I hope all is well with the two of you. As for me over in Corcoran, all is good – Bless!! Say I hear your not on the schedule on ministry here in Corcoran – it put a sad face on me, because I always look forward to hearing & seeing you guys in chapel services at times sharing our good Lord's words. But I understand its hard to get in with so many ministries coming here (Corcoran). Hey, but it is all good because everyone wants to serve the mighty one and share His good words. So I will turn this sad face right side up to a smiling face because the Lord is good always. Hey, but I still pray for M.O.M. and be looking forward to seeing you two again **JM**

Volume 30 - Biking

Not much to brag about really. You know the song and dance. It's pretty much the same-o-same-o, what can I say? I mainly wanted to thank you for your wonderful newsletter. It's always a blessing whenever one is

received. It touches me to see God's work through your hands.

Seriously, this ain't my "first rodeo" but it is my first walk in Christ and it just blows me away sometimes to see folks like you working in the system, know what I mean? Thank you both for showing there is good out there.

Boy, your newsletter, volume 30, almost brought a tear to my eyes with the photos on page 9. That was a big part of my life out there. I was an amateur mountain biker and I've been on many a race with scenery such as shown in your letter. Tahoe has a couple that will take your breath away, like the "FLUM*RUN," an awesome ride.

On page 9 of your newsletter, volume 30, you wrote about churches that are supportive of incarcerated individuals. You wouldn't by any chance know of any in Tehama or Shasta counties, would ya? (We sent him a list of some names and addresses) **SK**

How We Look at Things

I was talking to an individual the other day and asked how they would feel if someone killed one of their children, grandchildren or great-grandchildren. She replied to me, "I would want to kill them." I said, "What about if they were not born yet?" She asked "What do you mean?" I said, "suppose that child was not born yet, but was aborted?" She just stood in silence. Now she had a different reality of what she had just said, and realized the one doing the killing would be one of her children or grandchildren.

Meth. vs. God

My name is A G and my wifes name is R. We both used meth. I want this to become something of the past. Can you and your wife pray for us, so we move on with life without meth. and get addicted to God? I also have four boys that deserve this so much. **AG**

Hardcore Christian ? Not yet !

I want to start off by saying that God has truly blessed you. I'm not trying to sound like I'm a "hardcore Christian" (not yet, but God willing, soon to be). By the things you say and the fire you have for God, it is very visible, so God bless you. I don't know if you will remember who I am, but I'm here at Bob Wiley Unit ???. I asked about a picture of the Ark (Noah's Ark) from the internet and you said to write and you'd send me one. Well sir, if it's possible, I was wondering if I could get two of them, one also for my cellie. I would really appreciate it, and I want you to know that I appreciate all that you do here, the Bible studies or cell conversations. But most of all the love you have for God and for us inmates. You have a glow around you and I pray that your life remains blessed by God. Well sir, thank you for your time and I can't wait to see you for Bible study. God Bless

FG

Our life should reflect what fills it – Jesus Christ

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.

Prayer of Jabez – A truly fine first book from Bruce Wilkerson. This short book will change your mind about being disobedient to God by not taking care of people in need

Sharing Your Testimony

There are 4 parts to an individual's testimony;

1. What my life was like before I met Jesus
2. How I realized I needed Jesus
3. How I committed my life to Jesus
4. The difference Jesus has made in my life.

But in reality, those who believe in Jesus have the testimony of God in them; each of us needs to periodically share our testimony with others. The importance is not what you have done, but what God is doing.

1. Your testimony;
2. Your life lessons
3. Your godly passions
4. The Good News

I would like to add that we have shared many wonderful testimonies. Many individuals are afraid to share their testimony because they are not sure what to write or feel inadequate in their writing ability. I think all will agree, that the testimonies that move people are not the ones written from great minds, but are actually the ones written from a great heart.

God's Word says in **Jeremiah 17:9** that "**the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?**" When the heart is changed by Christ (salvation – separation – sanctification), it becomes the center of where God works from in our life. The testimony written from the heart is truly God inspired, as compared to the one that is a work of the mind. These are the ones that change others lives also, when shared.

Lighter But Serious Side

26 Beautiful One-liners

1. Give God what's right -- not what's left.
2. Man's way leads to a hopeless end -- God's way leads to an endless hope.
3. A lot of kneeling will keep you in good standing.
4. He who kneels before God can stand before anyone.
5. In the sentence of life, the devil may be a comma--but never let him be the period.
6. Don't put a question mark where God puts a period.
7. Are you wrinkled with burden? Come to the church for a faith-lift.
8. When praying, don't give God instructions - just report for duty.
9. Don't wait for six strong men to take you to church.
10. We don't change God's message -- His message changes us.
11. The church is prayer-conditioned.
12. When God ordains, He sustains.
13. **WARNING:** Exposure to the Son may prevent burning.
14. Plan ahead -- It wasn't raining when Noah built the ark.
15. Most people want to serve God, but only in an advisory position.
16. Suffering from truth decay? Brush up on your Bible.
17. Exercise daily -- walk with the Lord.
18. Never give the devil a ride -- he will always want to drive.
19. Nothing else ruins the truth like stretching it.
20. Compassion is difficult to give away because it keeps coming back.
21. He who angers you controls you.
22. Worry is the darkroom in which negatives can develop.
23. Give Satan an inch & he'll be a ruler.
24. Be ye fishers of men -- you catch them & He'll clean them.
25. God doesn't call the qualified, He qualifies the called.
26. Read the Bible -- It will scare the hell out of you.

Three Types of “Lost”

In reading **Luke 15**, Christ talks of three types of lost in the parables. Each of these situations shows a different situation and a different solution.

Luke 15:1 Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him.

Luke 15:2 And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.

Luke 15:3 And he spake this parable unto them, saying,

Example 1

Luke 15:4 What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?

Luke 15:5 And when he hath found [it], he layeth [it] on his shoulders, rejoicing.

Luke 15:6 And when he cometh home, he calleth together [his] friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost.

Luke 15:7 I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.

Example 2

Luke 15:8 Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the

house, and seek diligently till she find [it]?

Luke 15:9 And when she hath found [it], she calleth [her] friends and [her] neighbours together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost.

Luke 15:10 Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.

Example 3

Luke 15:11 And he said, A certain man had two sons:

Luke 15:12 And the younger of them said to [his] father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth [to me]. And he divided unto them [his] living.

Luke 15:13 And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.

Luke 15:14 And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want.

Luke 15:15 And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.

Luke 15:16 And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him.

Luke 15:17 And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!

Luke 15:18 I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee,

Luke 15:19 And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.

Luke 15:20 And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.

Luke 15:21 And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.

Luke 15:22 But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put [it] on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on [his] feet:

Luke 15:23 And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill [it]; and let us eat, and be merry:

Luke 15:24 For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.

Luke 15:25 Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard musick and dancing.

Luke 15:26 And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant.

Luke 15:27 And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound.

Luke 15:28 And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and intreated him.

Luke 15:29 And he answering said to [his] father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends:

Luke 15:30 But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf.

Luke 15:31 And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine.

Luke 15:32 It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.

Example 1

The sheep realize they are lost, but do not know how to find their way back. The getting lost was a process of going on a path that was the wrong way or getting so far out, they did not know the way back. Remember, the Word says that the sheep was part of the flock and then went astray.

The sheep will be heard crying out to be found and will want to return to the safety of the flock and the shepherd's care. In this case, it takes a shepherd to go out and find the sheep and bring it back home.

An example of this sheep would be the individual that cries out for a "shepherd" to come to him and help him return to the flock. This is an individual that was in the flock and wandered away.

Example 2

The coin does not know it is lost and does not try to find its way back. The coin does not cry out. This example

is where something was either dropped or was misplaced. If the coin was not in a secure place, it is easy for it to become lost.

In this example, the only remedy was to go out and check every nook, cranny and corner, cleaning the environment until the coin is found. Once it is found, there is no discussion with the coin, because it knows nothing, but rather the master picks up the coin and carries it back to where it should be for safety.

The coin did not get lost of its own desire or actions, but rather got lost because of lack of proper care by its keeper. This is a common example of parents that do not follow God's word in **Ephesians 6:4, "And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord"**

In this example, it was actually the master keeper of the coins that had done wrong, thus resulting in the coin being lost. The keeper realizes that one coin is missing and checks everywhere with a full cleaning of his environment around him, to find the lost coin. Then when found, the coin is brought home and the neighbors are notified to join in with the rejoicing.

When talking about "one sinner that repenteth," is the scripture referring to the coin? The coin has no knowledge of its location or condition. The scripture actually is referring to the one that lost the coin, and diligently searched to find the lost coin.

Sometimes, these lost coins are our own loved ones and children. Do we perform the cleaning of the environment as we search to recover the "coin?" How often do we invite the "neighbors" to rejoice with us when one of our "coins" is found and returns home? Or

do we just ignore and hide the "lost and found" situations in our life, being in denial of the true situation?

Example 3

In the example of the prodigal son, he got to where he was lost by his own doing. He recognizes that he does not have a blessed or abundant life. The son knows he is lost and decides to go back on his own. This "lost" is usually the most common type of lost. This is where an individual intentionally goes a wrong path (different than the sheep example) and has to hit rock bottom, to realize that he is lost. In this example, you will notice that the father did not go out and try to persuade the son to come back. The father did not become the answer or provider for the son while he was lost. The father did not enable the situation. Rather the father continued to pray for the son, and when the son was so down, that the only way he had to turn (not as a son, but as a servant) was to the father, then the son, of his own accord, decided to go to the father, to fill the position of a servant. Notice that when the Father saw the son coming, he greeted him with open, loving arms.

Too often, when dealing with a "lost son" the parent tries to replace God. The parent, to solve the situations, instead of requiring the son to seek God for answers, unknowingly does intervening. Had the father in the example, gone out to the son when the son was lost, the son would not have returned with the humble spirit of a servant. Without the humbling spirit, there would be no repentance, and without repentance, there is no forgiveness. This demonstrates the "coming to Christ" of our own free will and deciding to totally give ourselves to Him with a servant attitude.

Lighter Side

Read out loud the text inside the triangle below.



More than likely you said, 'A bird in the bush,!' and. .

if this IS what YOU said, then you failed to see that the word THE is repeated twice! Sorry, look again.

Next, let's play with some words. What do you see?



In black you can read the word GOOD, in white the word EVIL (inside each black letter is a white letter). It's all very physiological too, because it visualizes the concept that good can't exist without evil (or the absence of good is evil). Now, what do you see?



You may not see it at first, but the white spaces read the word optical, the blue landscape reads the word illusion. Look again! Can you see why this painting is called an optical illusion?

What do you see here?

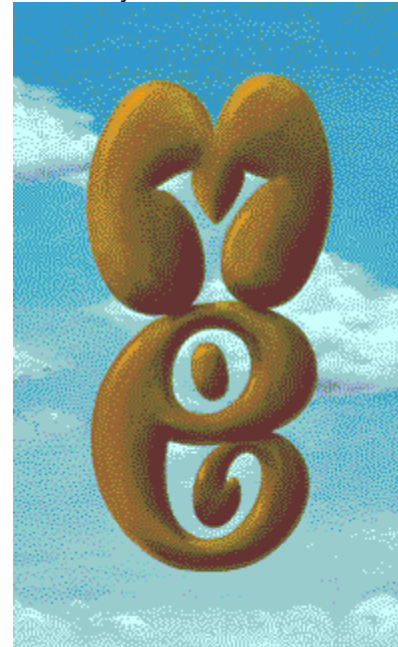


This one is quite tricky!

The word TEACH reflects as LEARN.

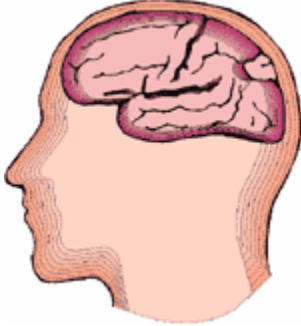
Last one.

What do you see?



You probably read the word **ME** in brown, but.....
when you look through **ME** you will see **YOU!**

Do you need to look again? *Test Your Brain*
This is really cool. The second one is amazing so please read all the way though.



ALZHEIMERS' EYE TEST

Count every 'F' in the following text:

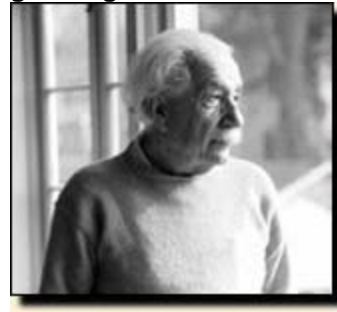
FINISHED FILES ARE THE RESULT OF YEARS OF SCIENTIFIC STUDY COMBINED WITH THE EXPERIENCE OF YEARS...
(SEE BELOW)

HOW MANY ?
WRONG, THERE ARE **6** -- no joke.
READ IT AGAIN !
Really, go Back and Try to find the 6 F's before you scroll down.

The reasoning behind is further down.

The brain cannot process 'OF'.

Incredible or what? Go back and look again!!
Anyone who counts all 6 'F's' on the first go is a genius



Three is normal, four is quite rare.

More Brain Stuff . . From Cambridge University

Olly srmatt poelpe can raed tihs. I cdnuolt blveiee taht I cluod aulaclyt uesdnatnrd waht I was rdanieg. The phaonmneal pweor of the hmuan mnid, aoccdrnig to a rscheearch at Cmabrigde Uinervtisy, it deosn't mtttaer in waht oredr the ltteers in a wrod are, the only iprmoatnt tihng is taht the frist and lsat ltteer be in the rghit pclae. The rset can be a taotl mses and you can sitll raed it wouthit a porbelm. Tihs is bcuseae the huamn mnid deos not raed ervey lteter by istlef, but the wrod as a wlohe. Amzanig huh? yaeh and I awlyas tghuhot slpeling was ipmorantt! if you can raed tihs psas it on !!

Chaplain Bob's Life

Many of those receiving this newsletter have asked for another printout of the testimony of Bob from past life to volunteer chaplain with jail and prison ministry and evangelism for church commitment.

I would like to share a story of the seeds planted in my life and the insight as I look back.

The greatest influence in my life I would have to say was my earthly father. This man would do what ever he could to provide for his family. The greatest reference of his nature was my mothers dearly love always for him.

When I was probably 8 to 12 years old, I had a Sunday school teacher named Malcolm that worked on planting Godly seed in my life. As I look back, I am sure there was the appearance of the seed going dormant, or even dying. As I entered middle school years, I bounced through a variety of churches because of going with friends and relatives. Still, any seed that may have been planted was basically "dead."

As I was finishing my high school years, I started a job in a restaurant where I met a black man, Otis, that was the dishwasher. He let me know that he was an ordained pastor. I thought I want nothing to do with this man. Otis would take the garbage out to the room to empty and would stay a little longer as he pulled his New Testament out of his pocket and read for his break. Then (the nerve of him) he would come back in and share with me about God's love for me and God's purpose for my life. I would tell Otis that I did not want to hear about it. I explained that my relatives would use the Bible and religion to tear apart and slay one another. I further explained that my

feelings were that he read the Bible in the garbage room and that was where it belonged. God should have taken my life for a statement like that. I now am thankful that God did not remove my life on earth, because I would not have been going to be in His Heavenly presence. But God had another plan and had not given up on me. I was accepted to California State University Humboldt and moved to Eureka, CA. I have to admit that this was really God's country, but I still did not have a personal relationship with Him. As I looked for work, I found an opening in the service department of Sears. I was hired to do television and stereo repairs. The manager of the shop came to me and let me know that he was a pastor of a local church. Again I thought "*I'll stay away from him*" but that was not God's plan. I began to think "*either this man has something real or he is totally nuts.*" I decided that I would ask some questions, and so we would spend lunch together in his Volkswagen and discuss Bible reality.

In January 1971, at the age of 23, I finally told Him, **God I accept you as Lord and Savior and want you in control of my life but (1) do not expect me to go to some God forsaken country like Africa as a missionary, (2) don't expect me to work with youth, and (3) never expect me to be involved with inmates, jail or prison ministry.**

As I went on in life, thinking I had cut the best deal I could with God, he started to reveal to me that he wanted me to release some of those things "I" was holding on to and fully submit my life to Him. This happened over an extended period of time and it seems God knew just the right timing and speed for me to grow (you might realize

because He is the creator/builder). As I released those fears I had and let God have control of those objects, there continually were burdens being lifted. I now tell people that while people were getting high on weed in Humboldt County, I was getting high on the Spirit.

I became involved in teaching youth and running a youth group. While dealing with the youth, I noticed one principle that can be applied with our relationship with God. I took a group of youth out gold panning. All day long I watched the young men panning the gold. At the end of the day, I noticed the young ladies had the bottles of gold going home with them. When I asked how that happens, the ladies said that the men did it because of love and labored for the ladies. We actually get to take home the “Gold” at the end of “our day” while God was the one laboring for us all those days.

I had a friend that invited me to do jail ministry with him. I told him that I had told God “no” and he said that was probably a good reason to do it. I have been involved in jail/prison ministry for about 3 ½ years now and can truly say it is my greatest blessing that was almost missed because of “trying” to say NO to God. Later in life, God revealed His progression pattern for me to follow;

1. **Sin**
2. **Salvation**
3. **Separation**
4. **Sanctification**
5. **Soul Winning**
6. **Stewardship**
7. **Service**

Many people try to separate from the temptations of the world before receiving salvation. Others try to receive all God’s blessings (sanctification) before they have separated from the sin of the world.

Read Ephesians 4 thru 6 and see if you can see this pattern revealed. Notice that 1 John displays the same progression, as does Colossians.

Now to get back to the “*but*” three exceptions I *had* to turning my life over to God. “*But #3*” was not doing Jail/prison ministry. Well, I have been blessed with 3 1/2 years of involvement as a volunteer with what God has called me to do. “*But #2*” was to not be involved with youth ministry. I have volunteered as Sunday School teacher, Youth director, AWANA Club boys director at 2 different churches, and organizer for youth outings. The final one, “*But #1*” was to not go to some God forsaken country like Africa as a missionary. I had made this known to those around me and one Wednesday afternoon, I had a pastor tell me that he thought I would have my passport by then. I said “Oh, you read my testimony in the newsletter.” That evening at our church we had a guest speaker from Cameroon Africa. He then told of being involved with jail ministry too. As I went to talk with him after the service, he said he did not know why, but God told him to give me something – a snakeskin checkbook cover. Those that know me, know my snakeskin boots are a trademark. Four incidents in one day? “*OK, God, I will go.*” I said.

We then met **Bruce Wilkinson** in Tulare, CA, who had quit his ministry of **Walk Thru the Bible** and moved to Africa to start a ministry called **Dream For Africa**. We decided it was time to sign up

As you can see in the **Swaziland Special Edition**, we gave that “*but*” to God also, and were truly blessed by the experience. **Ask for the Swaziland Special Edition newsletter.**

Linda's Life



What a great God we serve!!

When my husband asked me to share my testimony I had a picture of my mother and father and the small towns of Fowler and Selma California in my mind. We lived in a three room house with only a light bulb hanging from the middle of the ceiling. There was no plumbing, no bathroom but we did have a woodstove. The outhouse was a distance from the house. We drew water from a well until we graduated to a pump. Years later my "daddy" and "mama" added pipes for a sink and we thought we were rich. We grew all of our own vegetables, had to go out to the henhouse to collect the eggs daily and took care of the Coolidge Ranch consisting of irrigating, pruning, picking grapes, driving tractor etc.... It was the neatest experience. It was survival.

We did not get into town very often so when we did it was a treat. We would visit my dad's family in Tulare and my mom's in Visalia California. If we went to church it was for a wedding, funeral, Easter or Christmas that I could remember.

The earliest experience of any prayer that I could remember was an elderly lady by the name of Nellie Metzler and her husband Henry. When the Wizard of Oz would come out on TV every year they would pick up all of us

kids and take us to their house. Nellie would pray for our delicious chocolate cake and glass of milk while we sat to watch the movie on this big blanket that was laid out for us in front of the "color" tv. Color TV! Wow! To see color for the first time and listen to Judy Garland sing "Somewhere Over the Rainbow." There is just something about that song that stayed with me. I could picture myself singing, seeking for answers that would lead to a beautiful new world where there was no tears and everyone was filled with a joy and love for each other.

I did not realize that "Nellie" was put in my path to pray for me until 1992. Thank God that she was a prayer warrior. She was also the person that gave me this book called "All About Trees" and told me to read and I could travel all over the world anytime. Yes, I do love to read and write and encourage others to do so.

My father was a very hardworking man. He was also an alcoholic which led to the abuse of my beautiful mother. In my teens, during their divorce I started hanging around with people who were eight to ten years older than me. WRONG!!

Selma When I was 12 or 13 years old I was brutally and violently raped by a relative whom I trusted. Being dragged down a dirt field by the hair is like those cartoons shown of cavemen dragging the female. With a can opener to my throat and after fighting for my life I finally stopped when I felt this calm over me as if I was not to move anymore. (I am still alive. Thank you Lord!)

My heart was shattered, my mind was confused and the silent rage filled my being. Every person was a target of my fury. The twig of anger turned into a bush of bitterness. Finding myself "alone" in all of this ugliness I chose to "survive". I vowed that on one was ever going to hurt me again. I delved in new age not knowing that it

was leading to a nightmare of hell. I did not know any other way until the day I accepted Jesus Christ into my life in 1992. Praise the Lord!!

I did not care about anyone but myself. I wanted to belong somewhere so like a magnet all my friends were about in the same boat. I was living a wild and very dangerous and promiscuous lifestyle. Misery loves company. That is so sad that some people live life through a tunnel vision. They cannot see the whole picture.

I had my first child at 16, married at 18, had my second child, divorced by 22 and lived (not married) with my third child's father for another 7 years. During my first marriage I usually ended up by myself with my children. My husband at that time was a heroin addict of which I would go visit him in prisons all over dragging my children along with me.

I was at death's door at least 6 times either by being almost strangled, beatings, knifed, or shot, well, you name it. We lived in a little cabin in back of my in-laws. Actually it was my then husband's grandparents who raised him. Whenever Grandma would hear any screams he would try to cover my mouth so he did not have to confront any of them and yell back to her...."Nothing is going on. We are okay." [Liar, Liar pants on fire :>)]. I would get slapped across my face, onto the bed, his knees would be on my shoulders and I would get called every name in the book as he slapped me back and forth until I would get away which would land me next to the little frig, get slapped toward the stove then slapped to the floor. It was a never ending story. Usually happening on Friday or Saturday nights after he would come home and I would find matchbooks with from the Rainbow Ballroom or he would smell of perfume. It was always something. (That is if anyone remembers those "OLDIES DANCES".) There were always other

women in his life. I was no naive in what was going on all around me. One day I had just about enough and in self defense I grabbed the scissors where I had them up to neck and until I heard "Grandma's" voice then I pulled back and I was safe.....for one day.

Being in and out of prison is no life for children and thinking there was no way out I felt lost and hopeless. I did not go to church besides visit and never got connected. I finally chose to get divorced leading to dead end relationships that were like a revolving door, over and over again.

The relationship I had for seven years was a roller coaster of emotions. I carried all the excess baggage with me everywhere. This relationship was full of arguments, no trust and insecurity. I had one child from that relationship. My son was loved by everyone and was tragically killed with his best friends in a fiery auto accident. He was a marine and home for several weeks when this happened. It involved alcohol. The enemy never sleeps.
Kings James 1 Peter 5:8,
NIV version 1 Peter 5:8

If I had not known the Lord then, even the little that I knew at that time during my life, I shudder to think where I would have been now. I had two more children without their fathers in their lives.

During 1990 I moved to Visalia. The doors were opening in all areas of my life. I started working with the developmentally challenged, office, auto dismantlers and as a merchandiser working all over the valley. God sent several people in my path to encourage me. I was married in 1994, very involved in my church so when I was served with divorce papers it was as if I was going through the grieving stages of another death. I was devastated. In James 1:2-8 the scriptures speak of "when you face trials" not "if", for they will surely come. The only thing you have to rely on is to have faith and trust

in God. Like Jeremiah 29:11 and also Colossians 4:17 where Paul writes; Tell Archippus: "See to it that you complete the work you have received in the Lord."

Well we have been given gifts, yes...You! You and I and we have to use them. It is like a nugget of gold. You use it to share the gospel and it increases in value everyday as you go out in obedience for His glory. It could be singing, using an instrument, reading to others, writing, sewing, painting, art, math, woodworking, ironwork, gardening...etc, etc, etc. Those skills are perfected and the giver of gifts will be well pleased..."he that is faithful in little will be faithful in much" What I am getting at is for you to look back at your childhood. What are your skills and gifts and how have you used them? What did you want to be when you grew up? Did you lose your dream? It has been said that the richest place in the world is the graveyard where people's hopes and dreams are buried along with them. The time is now! Do not wait a second longer. Pray for guidance in whatever you do. Maybe you will end up in Africa as my husband and I did. You do not know but I suggest you start getting prepared for this great adventure. If that train pulls up at your station I suggest you get on. Don't let that enemy put doubts in your head or allow him to set these words in your mind and heart like "I'll wait for the right time", "Maybe later", "I don't believe I am ready yet", or the classic:

"Look at you! Who is going to believe you, after what you have done!?" That dirty devil is the author of lies, deceit, confusion and the lord of the flies.

I am here today to write this because I know that we serve a great God and God loves me. As a young child I was robbed of my youth, joy and hope. When I realized that Jesus took it all for me I asked Him into my heart. He had to be the Lord of my life for the rest of my life. I asked for forgiveness and

gave up trying to carry that heavy load of guilt, anger, sadness and the pity parties that I was the host of and was the guest of honor. Like I said misery loves company. If you want to be a winner you have to hang around with winners. Think back at your life and ask God to guide you from this day forward. Allow your life to be filled with a joy that is so overwhelming that you cannot contain it and share it with everyone. You can have it now. Just ask Jesus in complete submission. (search your heart)

Lord, I am here today because I am a sinner. I repent of my sins and ask for forgiveness of _____ (tell Him now) I accept Jesus Christ as my savior and into my heart. I trust in you from this moment on. Give me a hunger for your word. Guide me in the gifts that you have given me so I may serve and share of You daily and whatever I do and say will be glorifying to You. Less of me, and more of You. I am a new creature in God's kingdom. I am royalty and will act upon it accordingly. May the words of my mouth encourage others, give me the wisdom to turn away from wrong and the strength to run the race and follow you all the days of my life.

AMEN. (There, was that so hard?)

December 15, 1992

Woodland Drive Baptist Church Office
Pastor Ernie and Margie Martinez

When I accepted Jesus Christ in my heart was the day that I said, "Lord, please take away this ugliness in my heart. I want to have joy and peace in my heart. I am sick and tired of being sick and tired. Then all of a sudden I said; (I was truly tired and desperate so I wanted to God to know that I meant business) " Lord if I ever see the person who hurt me I will tell him I forgive him and tell him of Your love." Then I said and if I ever see Nicky Cruz I will tell thank him for his book "Devil on the

Run". Margie gave that to me. The Bible is the living Word. It made this hard headed woman see the light. I got to see Nicky in Fresno and he prayed for me.

Years went by as I noticed so many changes in my life and saw how I viewed "things". My pastor Isidro and Cleo Carrasco said to get rid of things in my house that were not godly and if in doubt get rid of it. I did as instructed. My eyes were open to all of the stuff that I was allowing into my children's lives. I had to ask for forgiveness from my children. I then got rid of all kinds of items and broke them up (gods, idols) thousands of dollars of books and tore them up so no one would pick them up. If we give them to others or set them where another would pick them up and use then or read them, it is opening up the window to the darkness for them and we will be accountable.

Well, one day it happened. I was singing at a funeral and low and behold there he was right across from me. There was the man that had shredded my life into pieces. The first thought that came to me was "Okay Linda, finish singing and get out of here." I did get to see tears stream down his face under his sunglasses as I sang "Go Rest High Upon That Mountain" I started to leave when I heard a very clear voice tell me "What happened? I thought you were going to tell him about my love?"

???? Wow! I immediately asked for forgiveness and followed this person home and went up to him in front of all of his friends to ask him if I could speak to him

When he saw me it was as if he seen a giant with a facial expression that I will never forget. He walked around away from everyone and kept saying "please, don't look at me. I'm not worth the ground you spit on." I told him

that I thought about many ways to get revenge but that on December 15, 1992 when I asked Jesus into my life there was a heart change. I told him that I was there to tell him that I forgave him and wanted to be sure that I did not go to my grave or he did not go to his grave before I told him that I had repented of all anger and bitterness against him and wanted to be sure he knew Jesus too. He cried and said please don't tell me that. It burns like hot coals. He was like a crumpled, broken doll on his knees. I gently helped him up, hugged him and told him "I love you and now the ball is on your court. I serve an amazing God and I want you to know Him and let him be the Lord of your life too. Proverbs 25:22, Romans 12:20, NIV.

Romans 12:9-21

Asking for forgiveness does wonders and heals our heart wounds. It had to be real. It was life changing and the newness and the joy I knew at that moment I could not even describe. Psalm 18, Ephesians 6:10, 1 Thessalonians 5:16-19

My present husband, Bob and I are growing closer.....The truth isAt first it was a bit of a struggle for me. I would think "forget this" at times. When you are a Christian it doesn't mean that everything is "live happily ever after". It just means that we rely on God to guide us in our decisions especially when we "humans" get to a low point. When the storms come we are not alone, especially in blended families. There is so much more. I could go on and on about God's miracles in my life and the lives of others that I would love to share. You may write me. God Bless you all.

God is good all the time....All the time God is good.

In Christ Jesus, Linda.