

“Letter From M.O.M.”

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

WWW.MovingOnMinistry.COM

<http://PrisonMinistry.net/MovingOn>

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“I Can Only Imagine”

It is hard to imagine that this ministry has been developing for nearly five years. New facilities have opened up to us, we are going to **monthly newsletter**, as well as getting correspondence from many states and foreign countries.

Watch our websites

www.MovingOnMinistry.com

<http://PrisonMinistry.net/MovingOn>

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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.

My Testimony

By Natty Ebuka Nwajiaku

"In love He predestined us to be adopted as His sons and daughters through Jesus Christ, in accordance with His pleasure and will to the praise of His glorious grace, which He has freely given us in the one He loves". (Ephesians 1:5, 6)

I find it a joy to share with you this great love our Father has lavished on us through His Son Jesus Christ that today we are called sons of God. So let us celebrate as the Scripture says. "For this son of mine was dead and is alive again, he was lost and is found:" (Luke 15:24)'

The story of my life is long but I will write as the spirit directs me, hoping you will be blessed and the name of the Lord be glorified

There is one truth I will first let you know as some may think that I came to prison because of my faith in Christ; No! That is not true. I came to prison because I chose my own way and wandered away. Along the way I found the Lord Jesus, where I am today. How it happened I will explain later. In my early years in prison I found it difficult to comprehend what the Lord was about to do in my life. I asked innumerable questions. I did not get answers, but as the years went by and I gave myself completely to the Lord in prayer and in studying the

Scriptures, God's plans for my life were gradually revealed to me, then I started to have peace in my heart.

It was so difficult to understand how God does His own things – until He started doing them. God's ways and thoughts are different from ours says the Scripture. The Bible says that God disciplines those He loves as a way of bringing them close to Himself. (Heb. 12:6) In my case I found that my imprisonment was God's discipline on me to bring me back to Himself, just as He can use sickness, hardship etc to discipline those He loves.

One truth I kept to myself for years was my innocence of the drugs charges against me. Instead I started focusing on what the Lord was doing in my life.-the transformation – not the false charges that brought me to 15 years in jail. I kept this truth of a wrong charge to myself because those to whom I told it in the past doubted it. I am telling it now because the Spirit moved me, but the only thing I want you to do is focus on what the Lord is doing in the life of your brother Natty through this imprisonment. I ask for continued prayers that I will become what the Lord wants me to be for Him. Let us forget the wrong charges against me. It is no longer important. Like the Scripture says, God has His ways of doing His own things. He allows whatever happens. Satan may mean harm and destruction but God can turn everything for good and to His own glory.



Briefly –my background

I was born into a poor, pagan family of 4 boys and one girl in South-eastern Nigeria (Ibo tribe). My parents were farmers. My father died while we were young, shortly before the civil war that destroyed my people. My mother died during the war on her way to a nearby town where she went to look for food. It was very painful experience as a child, remembering the war and what we went through as orphans and how my family was scattered. My only sister – young then, was given in marriage to an old man whose children were grown up, older than my sister. This was against her wishes. She was his second wife. My brothers were shared to other families. As the last born I was asked to live with my sister. Living with my sister in that marriage was another sad experience. Many times my sister and I received beatings from the man's older children who had the support of their mother. Many times I ran away to my home, through the bused, as no one went on the road because of the war. My sister would start looking for me, crying until she found me in our home. She would plead with me and convince me before I would go back with her again. Also I

became encouraged for her endurance in all that she went through. Today the Lord has blessed her for her perseverance. After the passing away of her husband and the first wife she became the best mother the family ever had. She is now a born again Christian bringing Christianity into that pagan family. Her children are doing well and she is a grandmother.

I thank God that the war ended without me losing any of my brothers as the two oldest ones were taken into the army. The Lord brought us together again as a family, we found our old house still standing. My brothers joined a trade and I was put in school. They worked to provide for our food and to pay my school fees. I did home errands, keeping our home and cooking the food as there was no woman. My sister used to come and stay a day or two with us. I found this time a relief as she did everything! But she had to return to her home.

So life was becoming normal for us as my brothers started doing well in their trade, then my older brother married a young lady who became my best friend and a foster mother. She became a very good help to me in running the home. We went to school together and back to do the work at home. Unfortunately for her she dropped out of school as she became pregnant. Today she is still my best friend and a mother. She is the one who feels most of my problem. Anyhow, I thank God for what He is doing in their lives. They are living peacefully but they miss me so much as they used to tell me in their letters. I do miss them too.

The second part of my life began when I joined a business after my secondary school. I could not go further in my education as my brothers had a setback in their business and also they started making families of their own which was extra responsibilities for

them. Things were moving fine for me and I was progressing in my business just like my mates until 1986 when I had a problem with my business. I lost almost all of my money. This was the beginning of my troubles and my need for Jesus who I had neglected in my life and in everything I did. Top of my table of values was “Money”. God was nowhere on my list. Although I believed in God, I didn’t know Him. I remember that my elder brother who became a born again Christian in 1978 and joined the Assemblies Of God Church, used to tell me about Jesus Christ and my need to give my life to Him. I knew that all he was telling me about God was true but I found it difficult to give in. to me, I believed that being a born again Christian meant being poor for ever. This was the opinion people like me had about Christianity. It was then that I realized the whole truth. Even if one tries to be a good person on his own it is not enough without Jesus Christ in his life. I learned one thing also during those days of my problems in business, my good friends disappointed me. They made promises which ended up in excuses. This went on for a long time without my family knowing what was going on in my life. I kept hiding, not knowing what to do next. The news of my problems reached my brother –the Christian one. He sent for me to meet him immediately so I had to leave Lagos on this long journey to Northern Nigeria where he lived. The only means for me to travel was by the road as this was the cheapest way.

I boarded a bus and my journey of Salvation started that very day. I was on my seat when a young man selling magazines came in. He came to me and spoke in broken English, telling me to buy the literature he had and said I should buy it before it someone else does because it was the only one remaining. What actually attracted me to buy the book was the title which read “For Those In Need.” I didn’t know this

was Christian literature until I started reading it. This book became my companion throughout the journey. I heard the Lord speaking to me through this small book, all the answers to my problems were there, and the need for Jesus in my life. I enjoyed this book until we reached halfway when our bus stopped for refueling and refreshment. I did not go into the inn, I stood near a car parked near our bus and continued to enjoy this book. The only thing I did while standing there was shopping for my brother’s children from some hawkers. To my surprise I forgot this beautiful book and left it on top of the car. But another surprise happened that was unbelievable. Just a few kilometers away a car approached us and my book was handed over to our driver telling him that someone in the bus forgot in on their car! This is how my book came back to me again and I continued with my happiness again and with my journey. I never knew that someone was watching me, only God knew who that person was. I was happy and I thank God the journey was successful. My brother and his family were happy to receive me.

The days I spent with my brother and his family were happy ones. He took me to his Christian friends, we attended prayer meetings and one of the meetings was a crusade in the City Stadium which a preacher and gospel music band from Germany attended. It was there I made my first decision for Christ. There my brother bought me a book called “Tough Times Never Last, Tough People Do.” This was another encouraging book pointing me to Jesus Christ – the way to a real life, the answer to all the problems and the provider. In fact the period I spent there in Minna was very nice. I found encouragement, peace I’d never had and the presence of God.

When I was going back to Lagos my brother gave me a little sum of money to support me. He prayed for me and blessed me.

Now back to Lagos, still fresh from my journey and the new life and the decision I had made, I tried to live this new life but Lagos seemed entirely different, a different environment. To isolate my friends was very difficult because I needed them. I was afraid and ashamed to tell them of my new life and my decision because they would make fun of me. Gradually I was pulled back to my former way of life because, as a young man, I could not stand the forces around me. This time, again, I lost the peace I had with God. Inside me were wars and troubles. Really inside me was love for God but I could not resist my environment, I could not help it. At last in my struggle I gave up and said "God, You understand." I promised to come back to God and I might have made it. This time around God is completely forgotten in my life and I went on planning how to make it big again or even more than before. Along the way I met a friend who did business along the Cairo – Lagos route and he promised to help me to invest my little money in the business. It was a good idea for me so I gave out my shop to raise more money. I got my passport and every document ready for the journey.

Before we made the journey I decided to see my brother in Minna so I traveled North to see him and to tell him the latest development. He was happy and prayed for me. Once again I felt the presence of God with me. The joy and peace that was lost came back to me again. During the time of my visit one of my relatives was traveling to the Southern-east so I decided to use the opportunity to see my family at home. We went in his car and it was a successful journey. At home we had a

nice time and we spent a few days there. The day we decided to leave he came to pick me up in his car to drop me in the nearby city where I could pick up a bus for Lagos, while he proceeded North. At the time he came to pick me up I was still sleeping so I could not go with him. So we chatted and said goodbye and he left. I decided to leave either in the evening or the next morning. In the evening the weather changed and it was raining heavily so I decided to leave in the morning. Next morning on the way to the bus stop, one of my relatives who lived in the nearby city was coming home early that morning. He saw me and stopped. He asked where I was going and I told him I was going back to Lagos. He asked me to come back with him as "something had happened." We went back to his house and he told that my cousin whom I came home with had had an accident on the way and had died and his body was in a nearby hospital. This news was a shock to me and fear gripped me. The burial was scheduled within a week as we made contact with our families in the North and in Lagos, including his wife and one year old child. Within a few days my friend was put in the ground and covered forever.

Now my troubles began, sleepless nights and fears because it was only I who knew what kind of life we lived within that few days with girls. Many thoughts disturbed me as I remembered everything my brother told me about God, death, judgment and the need for Jesus Christ in our lives. I was very sorry for myself and for my cousin and I asked God to forgive me.

Now the burial was over and I had to go back to Lagos to continue preparations for my journey to Cairo. I was still afraid even to enter a bus. At last I

boarded a bus for Lagos. On the way a young preacher of my age entered and he introduced himself as “Evangelical Promise.” Everywhere was quiet, he said a short prayer and he began to preach. His preaching added more fear to me as the words hit me and I started to cry, especially as I remembered what was going on in my life. It seemed that there was no more hope for me, like as if he understood what was going on inside of me. He said “There is hope again for you.” Then he opened up his Bible and read Acts 16:30-31, “Sirs what must I do to be saved?” They answered “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved.” This time again, I renewed my decision for Jesus, instantly and with fear.

Now back in Lagos with this zeal and fear in me I bought a Bible for the first time in my life – that was in 1992. With this Bible I went around my area and surroundings where there were churches, searching for a church where I could attend Bible Studies and within that week the Lord led me to one through a convention held in Lagos Trade Fair complex which was close to my house. After the meeting I started to attend the church that organized it and it was a Bible believing church. I started to attend a class on the book of John, for new converts. They were very nice lessons and I made new friends who were Christians and I was happy. Unfortunately I did not complete the lessons before I left of Cairo with my friend. I missed the church so much. We arrived in Cairo and my friend took me around as he introduced me to his customers. We made orders of goods and within a few days everything was ready and we took them to the cargo house and our agent finished everything. Within a few days our goods reached

Nigeria where my friend’s brother was waiting. He cleared the goods and within one week he sent the money to us. This was the only way I could raise my little capital so I had to stay in Cairo for at least one year to build my capital before I could be traveling to and fro. After two months my friend had to go back to Lagos as he had taught me everything. Also, he is a married man, so he sent his junior brother to stay with me. Thank God, everything was going well until I met some Nigerian businessmen at the cargo house and we became friends. One of them was interested in my goods and he wanted me to help him when he next came to Cairo to buy them. I agreed to help him buy the goods because he came from northern Nigeria, and secondly I would get some commission from my customers for taking him there.

For two months this guy did not show up, so I thought he was not interested anymore and I forgot about it. One day at the airport (3rd march 1994) he arrived and we met. He told me that he would come to me in a few days so that I could take him to buy the things. He delayed in coming and some days past, until on 9th he came and we went to his friend- an Egyptian – where he told me he has some money to collect before going to the market. We reached the man’s house and he was not in. We waited till the afternoon when the man came home and gave some excuses that it was too late to go to the bank. So he promised we should come tomorrow morning. This time I still didn’t understand what was going on. The next day, as was promised, my friend came and we went to the man’s house, he was in and he took us in his car to the bank as he had promised my friend. Shortly after, we drove off he branched into a small, quiet

street and parked. He brought out his briefcase and told my friend that he had some money in it, maybe it would be enough. So he gave the money to my friend and was counting it while I was sitting in the back. Suddenly cars surrounded us, armed men dragged us out of the car, our hands were chained and we were pushed inside their cars. One of them spoke English "You brought drugs into this country so we are going to put you in prison for life!" At this my heart jumped and I fainted. We were taken in different cars to the headquarters of the Drug Enforcement Agency. In that place we were locked up separately. It was during the interrogation that I realized what had happened. At midnight I was taken to a big office where about five senior officers continued with the interrogation. They said that this time around they wanted to know the truth from me and at the same time asked for my help to recover the remaining drugs. They said they would jail me along with him, unless I helped them recover the remaining drugs. I now knew it was a set up by the Egyptian guy he called his friend. I explained everything to them, my business in Cairo, my business with the guy at the moment I was arrested, that I was only trying to help him and that I knew nothing about this drug dealings. These people did not believe me. That night they took me to my house, searched my apartment, took away my passport and receipts of my airways bills and those of the goods I had bought. Nothing was found in my house. That night they made phone calls to my customers asking if they knew me and about the business I was doing. Back in their office, they still insisted that I should help them get the drugs they were looking for.

At last after six days in their office they sent us to the police station and a case was made against us. There I met my friend face to face. He confessed to me that he actually brought the drugs for his friend because he asked him to do so. Instead of paying him as they agreed so that he could buy his goods for Nigeria, the Egyptian guy took all the drugs and set him with a small quantity to the police, so that he would get his money. So I asked him what was this had to do with my business? He said we should be freed as they did not find any drugs on us. When we were taken to the D.A. we made out statements and denied the accusations. We hired a lawyer who defended us giving us hope that we would be released. The case was tried for 7 months until at the end we were both sentenced to 15 years in jail with hard labor and a fine of LE 100,000 on completion of the sentence or 3 more months in jail in place of the fine. This is how my journey to Egypt ended in prison and my business dreams shattered.

We were sent to a hard labor prison which was supposed to last for only 3 years but actually lasted for 5. Those 5 years were a hell of its own and something I cannot write about now. No visits, no letters and I was cut off from the world. I wrote many letters to my Embassy and my family. All were confiscated until I "surrendered". My friend Michael who was with me in this case died after 2 years. Before his death he confessed Jesus Christ as his personal Lord and Savior. He confessed secret things in his life to me which I noted down in my book and he apologized to me for involving me in the case when I was trying to help him. After Michael passed away life was very difficult for me, no one to talk with in the midst of

Arab speakers. I felt sick and lonely, not sure if I would survive the whole of this long 15 years in the conditions in which I found myself, but the little faith I had in God was carrying me on. I resorted to prayer and gave my life to Jesus completely, to do what seemed good to Him. Gradually peace was coming into my heart and I began to have a little strength and courage. One day an Orthodox Priest came to visit and I was sent for by the authorities to visit with other (Egyptian) Christians who were already in the visit. I went last, and knowing I was a foreigner, I was well received by the priest and others who came with him. One of them spoke good English and he encouraged me a lot. He went to his car and brought me a New Testament pocket Bible. He took my particulars and contacted my family for me. To this day they still visit us and we became good friends.

One good thing about my imprisonment was the opportunity to think about my life, the areas I was still lacking and the need to change and give my life completely to God. During this time God spoke to me in many ways- through dreams, thoughts, Bible reading and through people. On one occasion it was in something like a dream half awake and half asleep. I found myself in a garden, lonely, worried and wanting to go home. A man that I could not identify stood before me in the form of a cloud. He asked what I wanted and I said I wanted to go home. He gave me a written paper and asked me to read it but I could not because the language was strange to me. He then took it back from me and read it. It read, "The day I minister to you I will lead you." Then he disappeared and I woke up – it was a dream. Without anyone telling me I knew it was Jesus who spoke to me to

calm my worries. As time went on I started to understand the plans God had for my life – to transform me. This time around, it is not necessarily the imprisonment, but what God actually wanted to do in my life. So I continued to come closer and closer to God in prayers and meditations and I started to have inner peace and joy.

On another occasion God gave me a song. Twice it came, and then he asked me to write it down. It came in a language that I did not understand but the sound was beautiful to my ears, so when I woke up it was still fresh in my ears and I started to write it in English. After writing the words I wrote the real meaning to me and I titled it. It reads:

My Number One

Jesus, You are the true Son of God,
You are the best friend I have
Jesus Christ, You are my number one.

Holy, is the Son of God
He is the one who died,
Jesus Christ my Redeemer lives!

I remember the suffering of the Son of God,
Christ died on the cross for me.
He was raised from the dead for my sake.

Glory, be to the God of all!
Holy! Holy!
Jesus the Son of God.

Praising Jesus Christ my Lord,
Magnify the Son of God.

After this many more songs started to come and I was writing them down as the Lord commanded me. With this my

joy in the Lord started to grow and my pains eased – not that I didn't have physical pains again, they are there, but the inner healing (spiritual) that I have helps me to live above them. Gradually the Lord started to change my focus from my imprisonment and what I was going through, to the transformation that was going on in my life.

On January 9th 1999 I was transferred to Kanater Prison not knowing that the Lord had prepared me during all those years in the hard labor prison to meet a bigger Fellowship in Kanater. I arrived here in Kanater on Saturday. I was well received and on Sunday morning, to my surprise I heard a sound like worship songs. I asked someone what it was and he told me it was church worship by the Christians. At that time my things had not been put in order and I had not got a room, and some other protocol still had to take place, like going for thumb prints and photographs. But I joined the church here and it was great, as I found more joy and people to share with.

Like I said earlier, I never knew the Lord was preparing me in the hard labor prison to meet the bigger Fellowship in Kanater. Some of my songs became useful to the Fellowship and in a short while the Elders made me Assistant Choir Master. Later on they made me a Worship Leader as it was clear that this was my area of calling. Since then the Lord has blessed the Fellowship through this ministry (just like every other ministry in the Fellowship) and I am working hard to develop it. My prayers are that the Lord will prepare me here to be useful and to be a blessing to the outside world when I leave here, just as He prepared me in the hard labor prison to be useful in Kanater.

One other interesting thing about the Church in Kanater is the introduction 3 years ago, by sister, Jenny Hargreaves, of Cell Church Groups. These we call Family Groups. They help a lot in uniting us into a kind of family in teaching, learning, edification and growth. Out of these groups came certain responsibilities to share within the prison as a way of witnessing to Christ as the Lord has called us to be the Light and Salt of the world. The Lord is being praised by the outsiders (non-Christians) for the good works being done by these Family Groups. Also another brother's ministry is very active, as he and his group organize collections and make contributions once a month to help the sick and aged men among us who cannot work and do not have visits.

Here in Kanater the Lord has blessed us a lot through friends – brother and sisters – from many parts of the world. They contribute much to our spiritual growth, through their prayers, letters, cards, visits, material support, correspondence courses etc. I also thank the Lord for His special gifts to most of my brothers here that are being used to build the body of Christ in Kanater.

I thank the Lord for permitting me to write my story and I hope that in parts it does not make the reader sad. Be glad and rejoice with me for His saving Grace. The Lord has His own way of bringing people to Himself. Mine may be this imprisonment as He allowed it. The evil one may mean destruction but our Lord can turn it to good and for His glory. So I am happy for what the Lord is doing in my life through my circumstances. The suffering and pain I was going through are normal as a Christian and it is a process of purification so that I become what God

wants me to be. I was only able to endure it with patience because of the hope of what is waiting for me at the end. "Glory!" (Rom 8:8) I find strength in the following Bible verses: Philippians 4:4-7, 13, Joel 2:25, Galatians 2:20

One great thing I have learned from my situation is this – we should not look down on our circumstances or focus on them. No matter how ugly or hopeless they may look, if we focus on Jesus, God can work through them for our good and to His own glory. Also, God can allow certain things to come out way, not because of our mistakes or sins, but for a purpose. In situations like this I think the best advice I can give out of my experience is, "Just accept it without questioning. Focus on Jesus only, with thanks and praises for what He is about to do." With this you can find peace and joy to move on. Like my own case, I am still in the prison, still undergoing pains and sufferings but my focus on Jesus

only changed everything. He strengthens me inwardly and gives me the peace, ability and strength to live above my circumstances and move forward with my life. I am not saying that the Lord cannot remove the circumstances, He can, because He has every power and authority as the Creator of Heaven and earth and all that is in them, but I am talking about the one that is still there. Because of our focus on Him He gives us the inward strength to live above them, as if they are not there. That is what keeps me surviving my long sentence and I thank God for the strength given to me to live above my imprisonment – and it is running down

God bless you,

Your brother in Christ

Natty Ebuka Nwajiaku

Letters that Express it All

These are actual quotes from some of the different incarcerated individuals. The names have been removed. Our first newsletter went out October 2003 (over 4 ½ years ago). These are many of the letters recently received. If one of these letters is yours, let us know how you are doing now. We always invite letters of testimony or success from inmates, relatives, and friends.

A Life Time

A lifetime of miseries surrounded by troubles that the devil keeps giving me. I was lost in a world of confusion, with bad choices. I was constantly choosing living recklessly and dangerously with out any direction, too busy in the streets to show any love and affection.

To my children and those that cared, because I was caught up in selfish life of despair. I was blind with a twisted spirit. I turned a deaf ear on the Lord, because I wasn't trying to hear it. I was living in corruption and hiding in the dark, in a mode of self destruction. The devil had me marked, carrying out his orders and living a life full of sin. It took me 34 years to realize that with him, I'll never win.

Tired and feeling so defeated, I called upon the Lord and told him what I needed. I gave it all unto Him and placed it all into His hands, and now I pray everyday that He helps me understand, and bestows true conviction to my faith and belief. So, that is my life – no longer consumed by agony and grief.

I'd rather feel peace with a smile upon my face, than continue in a life full of sin and disgrace. **JR**

I am blessed with Heavens best.

I want to thank you for the extra copy you sent me of the November 2007 newsletter. I also want to thank you for the nice Christmas card I received. Yours is on the way. I sent one of the copies of the newsletter to my mother. She in turn is sending a copy to my sisters, and so forth. Having my testimony in a newsletter makes me feel good, because I feel that there are others out there, who, like me, need to see how the Lord can change lives. I know that the Lord has really changed mine. I have never in my life felt like I do with Jesus in my heart, soul, and mind. This is an awesome thing and I praise God each and every day for the awesome feelings I get when I read and worship Him. "Thank you Jesus!!" **RB**

'Studying' God's Word

Boy, I've opened a big ol' can of worms. I decided to sit down and do a personal study on Christ's resurrection and what it meant, right? Well, then I figured you can't have a resurrection without a crucifixion, and no crucifixion without a birth, and so on and so on. Well now I've got something going from the creation to the 1000 year (millennial) reign. Man, I'm having a blast with it and I'm learning a bunch. I'm sure it'll be just short of a small book by the time I'm done. **SK**

NOTE from Bob;

This letter is supportive of what Chaplain Bob says, "The Bible is not a reading book, it is a 'study manual' and actually the 'Owners' maintenance manual for life

Needs after Release

Individuals being released from incarceration have the same common needs of all individuals. There is a need of self-respect and self esteem. Many have a need of housing. Most are coming back looking for employment. Some are facing classes for AA, NA, or Domestic Violence. Some need to enroll in educational or vocational programs. Most would appreciate someone to just talk to or have a mentor. Fellowship with the right people is ALWAYS needed. For many these are totally new expectations and experiences.

One inmate expressed wonderfully the problem of being released. He stated that everything is slow to happen while incarcerated. It seems like an eternity as you wait for your next transfer or assignment. You feel like you are running at 5 miles per hour. Then, when released to the world, you are put into an environment that is running at 200 miles per hour. This drastic change of environments tends to overcome individuals and they have a hard time adapting. We hear of transitions from one area to another in each of our lives. Someone to just talk with about the feelings and changes the individuals are going thru is a great healer. The Bible says that each of us should be a "brother" to help the other one up when he falls. Other scripture talks about "sticking closer than a brother" we can often help with sharing life experiences or just listening to someone in need. We don't always have to solve the problems, but many times need to just "lend an ear" so that someone might share their needs or hurts with us. Many men have heard from their wives "I don't want you to fix it, just listen". We need to just listen.

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

God will make all things new

What are some things I should finish once I start?

"For if we are faithful to the end, trusting God just as firmly as when we first believed, we will share in all that belongs to Christ."

Hebrews 3:14

New life in Christ. We must maintain the confident faith we had when we first believed.

Scripture is from the New Living Translation (Tyndale House Publishers, 1996).

Our testimony is to give hope to others; our fruit is to give proof to God

CONQUERING COMPROMISE Daniel 1:1-21

I had read an article written by Lane Palmer. The following message is an extension of that article and one I shared at Corcoran State Prison in California on Sunday, July 23, 2006, during four chapel services the wife and I conducted.

Many of you have heard my wife, Linda, give her testimony. Some of you may have read a part of it in **volume 15** or **volume 32** of **Letter From M.O.M.** Linda talked about compromise and the consequences. She lost her 19 year old son to drunk driving - consequences. But yet she perseveres through the hard times just like the good times.

Those that have heard, or read, my testimony, know that I was living what I considered a “safe” life, but I would have been headed to hell – consequences. I ended up in some ungodly situations with women I had met – consequences. I did not make as strong of spiritual stand with my family as I should have – consequences. I gave into lust – consequences. Then as I let Christ take over more of my life (even today I am still doing the letting go and letting Christ) I saw the better results in my life, my children’s life, and grand-children’s life – consequences. (See the article titled “**My Heart, Christ’s Home**” in **this volume 12** of **Letter From M.O.M.**)

My youngest brother was found dead with two fresh tracks from heroin – consequences.

Intro: In the early part of this century, an American ship was wrecked off the Sicily Isles near the coast of England. The sea had been calm and the weather clear, but the vessel was caught in a treacherous current that slowly lured it off its course. Before the captain and the crew realized what had happened, the ship had crashed into the rocks.

In life, too, powerful currents of compromise can catch the soul and carry it to shipwreck. Spiritual drifting is usually a slow and imperceptible process. We know it has occurred when we have lost the strong resistance to evil and the passionate desire for truth that we once knew.

Compromise is defined as

1. a settlement of differences by mutual concessions; an agreement reached by adjustment of conflicting or opposing claims, principles, etc., by reciprocal modification of demands.
2. the result of such a settlement.
3. something intermediate between different things

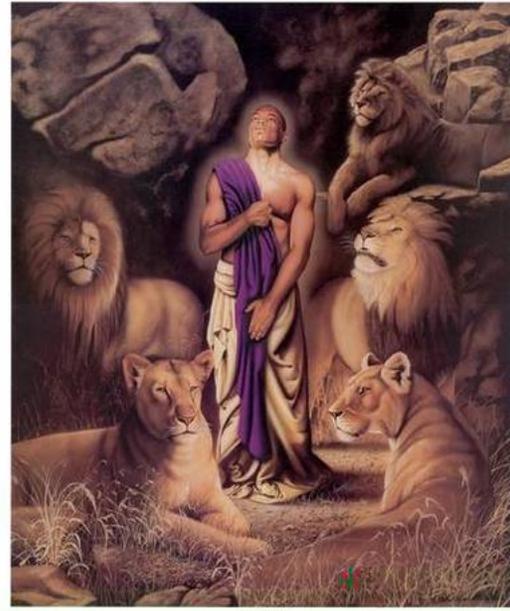
Often, life is filled with compromises. We are given a choice as to how we will live our lives and what path we are going to follow through life. When we come to these times of decision, it is imperative that we make godly choices. Because the choices we make at the cross roads of life will determine our usefulness

to God and our effectiveness in His kingdom work. We look at the effectiveness of the fruit in our life through our children, our friends, etc. Who do we hook up with?



Three Men Invited to a Bar-B-Q

Our text today is about four men who came to a time of decision in their lives. They could either compromise and go with the flow, or they could stand their ground and live for the Lord. The circumstances they faced and the decisions they made set the course for the rest of their lives. Since this incident occurred, the names of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego have stood tall as the names of great heroes of the faith. These three men were not only invited to the “Bar-B-Q” but were to be the Bar-B-Q (which was cranked up 7 times as hot). As the story went, they could not get them cooked above “rare.”



A Man and His Cats

And, what of Daniel? Who would have ever have heard of Daniel if he had compromised at this early stage of life? His name would be unknown to modern man, and we would never have received this wonderful book. With that in mind, it is good to be able to say that these young men stood their test and as a result, we are all blessed this day. We want to realize that we are remembered for only two things, our accomplishments, and our failures.

As you and I go through life, there will always be times where we are going to have to make decisions to do the right thing. When these times come, and they most certainly will, we will either decide to go with God despite the cost. Or, we will choose to compromise. The truths contained in this passage will help us as we face the serious crossroads of life. Today, I would like to speak for a little while on this thought, Conquering Compromise. My prayer

is that we can glean the strength that we need to always make our stand for the Lord.

I.. V. 1-7 **THE PROBLEMS AT HAND**

A. These Hebrew boys faced several problems. Each of these had the potential to derail them and lead them off on a spiritual tangent. However, the problems they faced, were not that different from those we face daily in our world.

See how the following four items compare to prison or military life.

1. V. 1-2 A New Home - These boys had been brought up in and around Jerusalem. There they were constantly reminded of their God and of His importance to life. The Temple with its sacrifices was there. The priests and the scribes were there teaching. The prophets were preaching the message of Jehovah. Now, they are slaves and have been hauled off the Babylon. Here, they are surrounded by heathen worship, heathen images and heathen people. It would be easy to conform just to fit in (for the Christian, the danger is just as real). It is easy to be spiritual in church. It is easy to be Godly around Godly people. However, when we separate from the Godly influences around us (how many spend lots of time with ungodly friends/relatives), we are placing ourselves in a dangerous position. We are opening up our lives to the possibility of compromise. Therefore, it is important that we are consistent in our church attendance, Heb. 10:25. It is essential that we

surround ourselves with God's people, 1 Cor. 15:33 It is easy to compromise and conform with the world when we are away from the influence of Godliness. Let us examine the music we listen to, the television we watch, the people we have over, and the things we display in the home.

2. V. 3-4 New Knowledge - These young men were taught a new language and new ways of looking at life. All their lives, they had been exposed to Jewish wisdom. Now, they are being taught the wisdom of Babylon. They are being exposed to things they have never been exposed to before. It is becoming a dangerous time for them. There is much pressure being exerted on them to conform to the new world around them. (The same dangers face the Christian in this world today. We are constantly being exposed to new ways of thinking and are being told that our way of looking at the world, through the eyes of God in the Bible, is outdated, ancient and intolerant. There is much pressure being placed on the Christian community to conform to the world's way of thinking. We are told to accept homosexuality, alcohol usage, cursing, promiscuous sexual activity, etc. However, God has not changed His mind about a single thing! What He said 4,000, 3,000, or 2,000 years ago still stands today! It doesn't matter if it hairlips the devil and if the entire world stands against it, the Word of God is sure, it is settled and it is right! Psa. 119:89; Isa. 40:8)

Do we have a new set of rules and expectations?

3. V. 5 A New Diet - All their lives, these four young men had lived by the dietary laws handed down by the Lord. Now, they are faced with new food. Most likely, this food was unclean, by Jewish standards, and most of the meat had probably been sacrificed to idols. Therefore, it would have defiled these men and made them unclean before the Lord. (As Christians, we too are faced with choices that run contrary to the best that God has purposed for us. There are decisions about our choice of entertainment, our music we listen to, choices in our personal relationships. We are confronted daily by choices to either do or not do certain things that can cause us to be defiled. Now, I am saved, (if really saved) and nothing will ever change that! But, the choices I make in life can either build me up, or tear me down as a servant of God. I can never be lost again, but I can become defiled and put on the shelf by God, 1 Cor. 9:27. Therefore, it is extremely important that we constantly guard ourselves in this matter of what we take into our lives. (David had a good plan - Psa. 101:3))

We all know that the diet in prison and military is not the same as the diet on the outside of the walls.

4. V. 6-7 New Names - When these young men arrived in Babylon, they came carrying wonderful names. Each name carried with it a testimony to the person of God.

- a. Daniel - God is my judge
- b. Hananiah - God is gracious
- c. Mishael - God is without equal
- d. Azariah - The Lord is my helper

When they arrived in Babylon, they were given new names.

- a. Daniel became Belteshazzar - Which means, "Bel will protect."
- b. Hananiah became Shadrach - Which means, "Inspiration of the Sun."
- c. Mishael became Meshach - Which means, "Belonging to Aku."
- d. Azariah became Abednego - Which means, "Servant of Nego."

Nebuchadnezzar's goal was to change their identity and hopefully their way of thinking. However, it is plain to see as one reads the book of Daniel, that even though their names were changed their character remained in tact. (The world and the devil will try every tactic to force us to fit into their mold. However, no matter what they say to us, call us, do to us or throw at us in life, they will never be able to change what we are, 1 John 3:1-2! We must never forget that we are the twice born children of the living God!

B. As we journey through life, there are going to be constant attempts by the enemy to get us to let down our guard, to conform to the world's standards and to do things we know to be wrong. However, these times

of testing and trial can be weathered safely and securely. God Himself has promised to help us when we face times of testing - 1 Cor. 10:13; Heb. 4:15.

C. Looking at the stand these four young men took there in Babylon will help us when we are faced with a crossroads in life. We see not only **The Problems At Hand**, but next we see **The Purpose Of Their Hearts**.

II. V. 8-16 THE PURPOSE OF THEIR HEARTS

A. V. 8 Their Dedication - The Babylonians could change their homes, their diet, their names, and their education, but they could never change their hearts! These men had decided that they were going to serve the Lord, whatever the cost! It would have been easy to say, "Well, it's all right, everyone else is doing it!" Or "We had better do what the king says." Or "We'll obey the king outwardly, but we'll just keep our faith to ourselves." These options weren't good enough for these men! They were willing to commit themselves to God's will despite the consequences. In the military and prison, we become a number. We are still the same individual and we must separate the lie from the truth. Christians need this same level of determined commitment! Many of us seem to find it too easy to give in to compromise. We need to dedicate ourselves to God and His plan for our lives, even if it costs us our lives! Our duty is to faithfully serve the Lord with all we have and are, the details are His problem, Rom. 12:1-2; 1 Cor. 15:58!

B. V. 9-14 Their Desire - In an effort to maintain their ceremonial purity before the Lord, they requested that they not be forced to eat the king's meat. They knew they would be fed defiled and defiling foods, therefore, they requested that they be allowed to have vegetables and water for a ten-day period. Daniel and his friends knew that a vegetarian diet would not defile them and they knew that God would honor their faith in Him. They were willing to put God to the test. It will not always be the easiest thing, nor will it be the most popular thing for you to take your stand with God. It will not always be understood by those around you. However, it is always the right thing! If we will be willing to stand our ground for the Lord, He will certainly honor our stand and bless us. Matt. 6:33. God's Word says that to him that is faithful in a little, to him will He give much.

C. The whole point of this section of the text is that these young men made up their minds that they were going to live for the Lord, and they allowed nothing to change them or to turn them from their purpose! As you follow them through the rest of their lives, you see they stuck to their guns more than once. In chapter 3, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were willing to die rather than compromise. In chapter 6, Daniel, an 80+- year old man, risked death in the lion's den rather than compromise in his walk with God. What about us, do we have that same level of resolve and commitment to the Lord and His work? Would you be willing to die before compromising with the

enemy? What do we allow in our homes? How do we raise our children? Do we speak with boldness and no apology?

D. Probably not! We compromise in many ways. In our speech, in our dress, in our lifestyles, in our music. They had decided in their hearts that they would die before they would compromise with the world, the flesh or the devil. We need to strive for that same standard in our own lives. There are a lot of God's children who need to recommit (or perhaps "really" commit) themselves to the Lord today! There are many who have let down their guard and have compromised in one or more issues. Others are flirting dangerously close to doing the same thing. It is time for God's children to resolve in their hearts that come what may, they will not disgrace the name of Jesus, and they will not compromise in any area of their life!

E. The dedication of these men can be summed up in 2 words, **Faith** and **Obedience**. They were willing to trust God to do what He had promised, and they were willing to follow Him, regardless of the personal cost. What about you? If you do not want the destination, don't start the trip. We do not need to see how far down the road we can go, when we have no business on it.

III. V. 17-21 THE PROMOTION FROM HEAVEN

A. V. 15-16 **Their Experience** - Daniels experiment worked! God honored His Word and these men were healthier than the others.

These 4 men knew something that many of us never get, and it is this: "If we will do as God says, He will never fail us, even in the slightest way. He will be absolutely faithful to honor His Word and His servants who trust that Word and do as He says. Lam. 3:23; Heb. 6:13-19. Come what may, you can count on the Lord!

B. V. 17-20 **Their Excellence** - After 3 years, (Notice that they maintained their resolve all during this time!), they stood before the king. When he interviewed them, He found that they were head and shoulders above all the others and that they were 10 times better than his wisest counselors. Again, this reminds us that God honors those who honor Him. This does not teach that serving God faithfully will make you smart, attractive and famous. It does teach us that serving God has with it the benefit of being promoted in His work. God placed these men where He could use them in that day, and He did use them in wonderful ways for His glory. He will place us in this day and use us here and now if we will serve Him as we should. The key is to never compromise, even in what we think is the smallest of areas! This is not just a day, week, month, or year, it is for eternity with integrity. God's Word says "**Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father in Heaven is perfect.**" Matt. 5:48

C. V. 21 **Their Endurance** - We are not told how long Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego served there in Babylon, but we are told that Daniel endured, in a place of power

and prominence, for over 70 years. In fact, he was nearing 90 when he faced the lions. This just encourages my heart because it reminds me that no matter how long I live, or where I go in life, if I will always seek to honor the Lord, He will consistently bless me and use me for His glory. God is always looking for vessels which He can fill up and pour out for His glory. However, to be usable, we have to be clean, and to be clean, we must learn to never be guilty of compromise - 2 Tim. 2:20-21. God's house is filled with all kinds of vessels. Some are honorable and are being used for His glory. Others are defiled through compromise in one or more areas of life and cannot be used. Which best describes your life? I tell the individuals that I visit, the **CDC** on their pants (**C**alifornia **D**epartment of **C**orrections) actually stands for "**C**an't **D**efeat **C**hristians" or "**C**an't **D**efile **C**hristians"

Conc: "A giant 400-year-old redwood came crashing down one day, no one could figure out why. The tree had survived four centuries of storms, lightning, and earthquakes--what had felled it?"

"On closer inspection, investigators found that tiny beetles had found their way inside its trunk and had begun eating away its life-giving fibers, weakening its mighty bulk from the inside out.

"In much the same way, the devil tries to bring Christians down through a steady drone of small, seemingly insignificant temptations. While we are fighting and resisting him in one area, he may be setting

up house in another area of our lives. Satan will find ways to creep into our lives for the purpose of eroding our foundations until our fibers have become undone and we come crashing down to the ground. **"Show me a person who has fallen away from their walk with the Lord, and I will show you a person who started making compromises in his or her life long ago."** Are there areas in your life where you have begun to let your guard down? Are you allowing things in you life that you used to think were wrong? **If you have begun the downward spiral of compromise, I am glad I can tell you that Jesus allows u-turns!** He has promised us that we can find unconditional forgiveness when we come home to Him, 1 John 1:9. Where do you find yourself today? If the little beetles of compromise are whittling away at your walk with God, then come back home and allow the Lord to put you back where He wants you to be. Will you look deep inside and do what you need to do tonight? If so, then come to the lord and allow Him to have His way in your life.

As I was getting ready to finish this article, the Lord said, "**Bob, what about tolerance?**" I thought, "Lord, what do you mean?" The Lord replied, "If you tolerate something that goes against My teachings, are you not supporting the sinful nature that I said for you to turn away from?" "But Lord, there is so much sin accepted in the world today." Christ replied, "Remember my Word says to be in the world, but not of it." Do as you say, "Sharing God's Word with **BOLDNESS** and **NO** apology."

Lighter Side

So there I was . . . just relaxing in front of the T.V .. when the kids yelled, 'Hey Mom, come and see the kittens.'

